

THE CALLING DOWN OF BLESSING: THE BLESSING OF THE PROPHET

Taşliya, Durūd (in Indian manuals)

At the very least, one third of the manuals on which this book is built consists of variations on a single sentence, "May God call down blessing on our Lord Muḥammad and on the family of our Lord Muḥammad and greet them with peace."

Here is the *taşliya*, the commonest of phrases on Muslim lips; the commonest of phrases in Muslim books, where some form of it follows every mention of the Prophet of Islam and has done so since the days of Hārūn ar-Rashīd; the commonest of phrases in Muslim devotion, whether it be as the sole and sufficing subject of whole books, or whether it be as the sudden conclusion applied to prayers and praises of the most various character, since all prayers should both begin and end with *taḥmīd* and *taşliya* (*Adhkār*, an-Nawawī, p. 56). There is no end to its uses:

A member of the Māliki school said: The calling down of blessing on the Prophet is an ordinance of Islam to which no numerical limit has been set and no fixed time has been allotted. *al-Ḥirzu 'l-manī'*, as-Suyūṭī.

IN THE ĀDHĀN

The *Taşliya* rings down from the minaret in the *mu'adhḥin's* call. At what moment in Muslim history it was inserted there it is hard to decide. An oft-quoted tradition may mark a stage at which the *ṣalātu 'alā 'n-nabī* was known as a response to the *ādhān*, but was not yet part of the *ādhān* itself.¹

When you hear the call to prayer, say after him what the *mu'adhḥin* says, then call down blessing on me, for whoso calls down one blessing on me,

¹ As was the case, Tor Andrae points out, as late as Al-Bukhārī † 256/870, whose whole section on the *Ādhān* shows no sign of the *taşliya*.

God shall call down on him ten blessings. (Muslim, from 'Abdullah b. 'Umar; also Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhī, an-Nasā'ī.)

(Many variants of this tradition of ten-fold reward are quoted in the manuals. It is said to be based on the Qur'ānic text: "He who does a good deed shall have attributed to him ten more" (6.160); "for there is no doubt that to bless the Prophet is one of the most important of good deeds." *Faṭḥu 'l-karīmi 'l-Khāliq*, p. 11. (Commentary by 'Alī al-Makkī on Muṣṭafā al-Bakri.)

What work can arrive at such a result? What power or means can attain it? How could it come about that the Mighty King should call down blessing on his poor and lowly servant, but for his care to obey the Prophet, and the greatness of that Prophet's influence with the Almighty? *Ibid.*, p. 8, quoting from Al-Fāsi, *Muṭāli'u 'l-musarrāt li sharḥ Dalā'ili 'l-khairāt*.

One of the manuals, an abridgment by as-Suyūṭī of a work on *Taṣliya* by Shams ad-Dīn as-Sakhāwī †902/1496, would even place the insertion of the *taṣliya* in the *ādhān* as early as the end of the first Islamic century:

And this insertion of the *ṣalāt* began in Sha'bān of the year 91 when An-Najm ibn al-Ṭandī the *Muhtasib* ordered that they should call down blessings on the Prophet at every Call to Prayer except that of sunset when time did not permit of it (no source given). *al-Ḥirzu 'l-mamī'*, p. 104.¹

IN THE PRAYER-RITE

There is silence in the manuals as to the moment when the *taṣliya* became obligatory also in the prayer-rite itself,² an obligation on which the devout conscience could still suspend judgment as late as ash-Sha'rānī (†973/1565).

As for the position of those who do not make the *ṣalātu 'alā 'n-nabī* obligatory in the last *tashahhud* they hold that the preoccupation of (the man engaged in) the prayer-rite is continuously with the presence of God himself, and perhaps the awe of that presence may so strongly dominate the heart of the worshipper that he may be unable to turn from the greatness of the divine interview to the thought of anyone else. One of the divines has said

¹ The *Muhtasib*, though not a mosque official, had to see that the *ādhān* was duly given. The date 91 A.H. was perhaps suggested by the fact that that year (the year of the donation of the first golden waterspout) was one of changes and enlargements in the mosque.

² For references supporting a tenth-century date see Massignon, *Al-Ḥallāj*, p. 745, notes 4-7.

that in such a case the calling down of blessing on the Prophet is an approved but not an obligatory practice, thus differing from those great ones whose vision includes both God, High in Majesty, and his creatures, and whose vision of God Most High does not preclude the vision of created beings. Nor should it, for the calling down of blessing on the Prophet in the presence of God only means that the Prophet is their *imām* in that worship.

And we have a saying of Junaid that for the perfect man neither does the vision of God preclude the vision of his creatures nor *vice versa*, but to each is given his rights. He then who said that the calling down of blessing on the Prophet was not obligatory, did not do so from any belittling of the Prophet's rank, but only because of the overwhelming greatness of the divine irradiation in the heart of the worshipper. Al-Qushairī quoted from Abū Bakr ash-Shiblī that he once gave the call to prayer and when he reached the *shahādātāin* he stood and said, "By Thy Might and Thy Majesty hadst Thou not commanded me to make mention of Thy Prophet, I should not have been able to mention him!" Possibly this happened to ash-Shiblī before he had reached perfection.¹ *Laṭā'ifu 'l-minan*, p. 127.

The prayer-manuals now in popular use, even though much of their material goes back to a date earlier than that of al-Sha'rānī, show no such suspension of judgment. For them the *ṣalātu 'alā 'n-nabī* is both primitive and of overwhelming importance:

Know that the command to call down blessing on the Prophet was given in the second year of the *Hijra*, and it is said that it was on the night of the *Isrā'*; there is a tradition, without *isnād*, in *Faḍlu Sha'bān* by Ibn Abī 's-Saif, that the month of Sha'bān is the month of calling down blessing on the chosen Prophet because the verse commanding it was sent down in that month (i.e. *Qur.* 33.56). *Al-Ḥirzu 'l-manī'*, p. 16.

ESSENTIAL

The *taṣliya* has become an essential, sometimes it would seem, the essential of the life of salvation and devotion:

If a man brings on the Day of Resurrection good works many as those of all the people in the world and does not bring with them the calling down of blessing on the Prophet, his good works are returned to him, unacceptable. *Faṭḥu 'r-Rasūl*, M. 'Uthmān al-Mirghanī,

¹ Cf. the other anecdote in al-Qushairī concerning al-Kharrāz (died at Cairo in 286/899) who greeted a night vision of the Prophet with the words: "Pardon me! Loving God makes me forget to love thee," and heard the response: "Thou blessed one, he who loves God loves me also." *Risāla Qushairiyya*, Malijī's edition. Cairo 1319, p. 160.

and conversely:

One of the saints saw in sleep a hideous form, and he said, "Who art thou?" It answered, "I am thy misdeeds!" He said, "And how can I be delivered from thee?" It said, "By much calling down of blessing on the Prophet." *al-Ḥirzu 'l-manī'*, As-Suyūṭī, p. 23.

Muḥammad said: Gabriel came to me and said, "O Muḥammad, he who passes Ramaḍān without obtaining forgiveness and enters the Fire shall be banished from God Most High." And I said, "Amen." Then he said, "He who sees his parents or one of them and behaves without filial piety, when he dies and enters the Fire shall be banished from God Most High." And I said, "Amen." Then he said "He who, when thou art mentioned, fails to call down blessing on thee, when he enters the Fire shall be banished from God Most High." And I said, "Amen." *Faṭḥu 'r-Rasūl*, M. 'Uthmān al-Mirghani, p. 13.

And Ubayy b. Ka'b said, "O Apostle of God, many a time do I call down blessings on you for love of you. How much of my prayer shall I devote to you?" He said, "What you will." Ubayy said, "A quarter?" He said, "What you will, but if you do more it will be for your good." He said, "Half?" The Prophet said, "What you will, but if you do more it will be well for you." He said, "Two-thirds?" The Prophet said, "What you will, but if you do more it will be for your good." Then Ubayy said, "I will devote my whole prayer to you." The Prophet replied, "Then your anxieties will be met and your sins forgiven." *Ibid.*, p. 12, note.

THE MEANING OF ṢALLĀ 'ALĀ

Ṣallā 'alā with the general meaning "to pray for" is found in the Qur'ān (9.103) where Muḥammad is told to pray for (perhaps with this is included the sense of praying *over*) misdoers who have at length made application to enter Islam. In Christian Arabic the same phrase is used in the passage in James 5.14 where the sick man is told to send for the elders of the Church and they will pray over him¹ (here of course including the sense of for him). It is used in the Qur'ān (9.85) and in tradition for some kind of funeral prayer, whether that means praying over or for the dead man, or both. Our prayer-manuals use it for Muḥammad's prayers for *himself*.

That which the greatest of lords prayed for his noble self. *Faṭḥu 'r-Rasūl*, p. 3.

¹ *Ṣallā 'alā* is here used both in the modern versions and also in a ninth- or tenth-century manuscript in the convent of St Katherine on Mt Sinai. (Gibson Catalogue, No. 154.)

But in the Qur'ānic verse which is basic for the whole of this devotion, the *ṣalātu 'ala 'n-nabī* is described as the action of God and His angels.

“Verily God and His Angels call down blessing on (*yuṣallūna 'alā*) the Prophet. O ye who have believed, call down blessing on him and greet him with peace.” (53.56.)

Here then is a universal communion in honouring Muḥammad:

God Most High informed His worshippers of the rank which His Prophet holds with Him in the heavenly host, by praising Him in the presence of the angels of access, and by the *ṣalāt* of those angels for Him. Then He commanded *ṣalāt* and a greeting of peace from the people of the world below, so that the people of both worlds, above and below, might unite in His praise. . . .

The honour with which God Most High honours Muḥammad is fuller and more universal than that with which He honoured Adam when He commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before Him, for it is not possible that God Himself took part with the angels in that earlier honouring. *al-Ḥirzu 'l-manī'*, p. 12.

There lies the rub. Some explanation must be given of the word *ṣalātun 'alā* which covers an activity in which God Himself takes part. We do not attempt to trace the history of Muslim thought on God's *ṣalāt* but only to note the explanations in our collection of manuals.

The early suggestion that God's *ṣalāt* means His forgiveness (*al-Baidāwī* in *Qur.* 2.152 gives the sense of forgiveness) is quoted but glided over in favour of the more acceptable idea that it means His magnifying of His servant.

It has been transmitted to us from Ibn 'Abbās that it means that God praises your Prophet and forgives him and commands the angels to ask forgiveness for him. *al-Ḥirzu 'l-manī'*, as-Suyūṭī, p. 114.

Opinions differ as to the meaning of *ṣalāt*. It is said that from God its meaning is mercy and complaisance, and from angels and men petition and asking forgiveness. And it is said that the *ṣalāt* of God is His mercy and the *ṣalāt* of angels prayer for blessing. And it is said that the *ṣalāt* of God is His mercy combined with magnifying and that of the angels is asking for forgiveness, and that of men, humble beseeching and petition. And it is said that God's *ṣalāt* for His prophets is praise and magnifying while His *ṣalāt* for others is His mercy.

Ibn al-'Arabī said: *Ṣalāt* from God is mercy, and from human beings and others, angels and jinn, it is bowing and prostration and petition and praise, and from birds and owls it is praise. Each creature knows his own *ṣalāt* and

tasbīh . . . and al-Ḥalīmī set forth the meaning of God's *ṣalāt* for His prophet as His magnifying of him. *Faṭḥu 'l-karīmi 'l-khāliq*, 'Alī al-Makkī, p. 15.

This last meaning is preferred because, with the sense of "magnifying",

One meaning can be given to the word *ṣalāt* whether it is attributed to God or to angels or to the believers who are commanded to it. *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

Perhaps the happiest English translation that can be used alike of God, angels, and men, is "to call down blessing upon . . .".

One form of the *ṣalātu 'alā 'n-nabī* asks God to take our place in this blessed action, just as God is frequently asked to reward the Prophet on behalf of his people.

And replace us, with Thy pure and generous favour, in calling down blessing on him. *aṣ-Ṣalātu 'l-ghaibiyya*, Aḥmad at-Tijānī.

But here another explanation is felt to be necessary and is found in several of the manuals as follows:

If you say, what is the explanation of the fact that although God commands us to call down blessing on the Prophet, we yet say, "O God call down blessing on Muḥammad," asking God to call down blessing instead of doing so ourselves, I reply that this is because the Prophet is pure, without blemish or failing, while we have both blemishes and failings. How shall one full of blemishes and failings call down blessing on the pure and perfect Prophet? Therefore we ask God to call down blessing on him, that the blessing may be called down by a pure God on a pure Prophet. *Faṭḥu 'l-karīmi 'l-khāliq*, 'Alī al-Makkī.

After all explanations the worshippers feel themselves in the presence of a mystery on which some have loved to ponder, picturing a Divine *ṣalāt* continuous from before all worlds, in the *miḥrāb* of the essence of the Divine Being. Others have dwelt on it as a communion of love, "the calling down of blessing by the Beloved on his beloved". (Aḥmad at-Tijānī.)

Call down blessing on him with that *ṣalāt* with which Thou didst call down blessing on him in the *miḥrāb* of Thy transcendent holiness and the Ipseity of Thine intimacy. *aṣ-Ṣalātu 'l-ghaibiyya*, Aḥmad at-Tijānī.

FOR OTHERS THAN MUḤAMMAD

While the overwhelming mass of this devotion is reserved for Muḥammad, its pattern sentence "O God call down blessing on our Lord Muḥammad *and on his family*", opens the door for a wider use.

It is extended to other prophets, and by Shī'a books to all the 'Alids. Shī'a writers prefer the form "On Muḥammad and his family" to "and upon his family", which might place the family in a different category.

May God call down blessing on Muḥammad and on his family and his companions and his wives and his descendants and the members of his house [i.e. his descendants]¹ morning and evening. And bless and greet with peace, O God, him and his father Abraham Thy Friend, and David Thy Caliph, and Moses Thine Interlocutor, and 'Isā Thy Spirit, and Isaac Thy Sacrifice, and all their brethren the Prophets and Apostles. *Wirdu 'l-Aṣḥār*, Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, p. 61.

The mention here of Isaac instead of Ishmael is surprising. Such lists of blessings on prophets are common, e.g. *Wirdu 's-saḥr* of Aḥmad al-Mar'āshī, or that which 'Abd al-Wahhāb ash-Sha'rānī is said to have learnt from al-Khidr (*Majmū'atu 'l-aḥzāb*, p. 196).

Similar callings down of blessing on Muḥammad's "brother Gabriel" and on all the angels are often found:

O God, call down blessing on Thine Angels of Access and on Thy purified Prophets and Thine Apostles sent forth as messengers, and on the Bearers of the Throne, and on Gabriel and Michael and the Angel of Death, and Raḍwān treasurer of Paradise, and Mālik treasurer of the Fire, and Raumān and Munkar and Nakīr. And call down blessing on the noble Recording Angels, and call down blessing on all the people of Thine obedience, people of heaven and people of earth. *Ṣalātu Kumūzi 'l-Asrār*, 'Abd Allah al-Fāsi in *Faṭḥu 'r-Rasūl*, p. 51.

The Prophet's family, always included in the blessing formula, are in *Dalā'ilu 'l-khairāt* spiritualized in a manner strongly reminiscent of the Gospels. (Mark 3.33-5):

It was said to the Apostle of God, "Who are the family of Muḥammad whom we are enjoined to love and honour and treat with piety?"

He said, "The people who hearken and fulfil their dues, whosoever believes in me and is true to me."

It was said, "And what are the signs by which they may be known?"

¹ Evidently a widely used explanation. In *al-Hirzu 'l-Manū'*, as-Suyūṭī says that he could read this explanation in *Sharḥ muqaddimāti Abī 'l-Laith* of al-Imām Muṣṭafā 't-Turkumānī. Goldziher quotes the same passage as from *Al-As'ila wa 'l-Ajwiba* of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-'Abbāsī, a ninth-century Egyptian catechism (*Über die Eulogien der Mohammedaner*, Z.D.M.G., vol. 50, p. 97).

He said, "The preference of love for me over all other love, and inward occupation with the remembrance of me, second only to the remembrance of God." *Dalā'ilu 'l-khairāt*, p. 21.

"The Family" in prayer means the whole community, although there should be a reference of special respect to his relatives. *al-Faṭḥu 'r-rabbānī*, M. 'Abd Allah b. Ḥasanain, p. 66.

The spiritualizing of Muḥammad's family makes it possible to include all believers in the prayer of blessing, and this blessing of the whole family is a kind of spiritual almsgiving.

Muḥammad said, "If any Muslim has nothing wherewith to give alms, let him say in his petition, O God call down blessing on Muḥammad Thy servant and apostle, and call down blessing on the believers, men and women, and the Muslims, men and women. For that (petition) will be to him a giving of the legal alms." *Faṭḥu 'r-rasūl*, M. 'Uthmān al-Mirghānī, p. 32.

REWARDS OF TAṢLIYA

No part of Muslim devotion is more of the people, more full of popular anecdote and traditions quoted without the dignified support of *isnād*. These may be trite and homely like that which says that the best way of finding a lost object is to say *ṣallā 'llāhu 'alā'n-nabī*. But for the most part they deal with the *ṣalāt* as a means to forgiveness of sins, and of escape from the terrors of the tomb and the Judgment Day to the joys of Paradise. We quote only a few examples from the lush growth of these popular sayings.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Muḥammad said: Gabriel came to me one day saying, "Muḥammad, I have brought you such good news as I never brought to anyone before. It is that God Most High announces to you that any one of your people who calls down blessing upon you three times will have his sins forgiven; if he be standing, ere he sits down; if he be sitting, ere he rises up." *Faṭḥu 'r-rasūl*, p. 13.

It is said that written on the base of the Throne are the words: I have mercy on him that yearns for Me; I give to him that asks of Me; and whoso approaches Me calling down blessing on Muḥammad I forgive him his faults be they as the foam of the sea. *Dalā'ilu 'l-khairāt*, p. 17.

It is narrated in a tradition that there was in Banū Isrā'īl a man given to excesses. And when he died they cast out his body. But God said by inspiration to his prophet Moses that he should wash the body and pray over it

(*salli 'alayhi*), "for I have forgiven him". Moses said, "Why hast Thou so done?" He said, "The man one day opened the Torah and found in it the name of Muḥammad and he called down blessing on him and for that blessing I have forgiven him his sins." *al-Ḥirzu 'l-manī'*, p. 73.

And, though dignified as a tradition, a real folk-story:

I heard a man in the Ḥaram at Mecca most abundant in his calling down of blessing on the Prophet, wherever he was, in the Ḥaram, or at Mount 'Arafat, or at Minā. I said, "O man, every prayer station has its appointed form of words. How is it that you do not employ yourself in petitions or offer performances of the prayer-rite to the extent that you call down blessing on the Prophet?" And he said, "I came as a pilgrim from Khorasān to this House, my father travelling with me. And when we reached Kūfa he fell ill, and his sickness increased. He died, and I covered his face with a veil and left him for a time. When I came back I unveiled his face that I might look on it and lo! it had taken on the form of a donkey's face. When I saw that, I was deeply impressed and disturbed and terribly grieved. And I said to myself, 'How can I display my father to the people (at the funeral prayers) in this condition which has come over him?' And I sat down beside him full of care. And sleep overcame me, and while I slept, behold I saw what seemed to me a man entering our room; and, coming to where my father lay, he uncovered his face and gazed at him, then covered it again. Then he said to me, 'Why so greatly troubled?' And I said, 'How should I not be concerned when this trial has come upon my father?' Then he drew back the cover from my father's face and behold it was like the rising moon.

"And I said to that man, 'By God, who art thou whose coming was thus blessed?' He said, 'I am the Chosen One', and when he said that I rejoiced greatly and caught hold of the hem of his garment and raised it on my hand saying, 'By God's truth, my Lord the Apostle of God, wilt Thou not explain to me this story?'

"He said, 'Your father used to take usury, and by God's command usurers shall have their faces changed to asses' faces at death, either in this world or the next, but it was your father's custom to call down blessing on me a hundred times every night before he lay down on his bed. And when he was exposed to this trial for his usury, the angel came to me who reports the doings of my people and informed me of what had happened to him and I besought God, who gave me the right to intercede for him.'

"Then I awoke and uncovered my father's face, and there it was like the moon when it is full, and I praised and thanked God and made my father ready and buried him and sat down by his grave for an hour. And as I was half asleep and half awake I heard a voice calling, 'Dost thou know the cause of this grace done to thy father?' I said, 'No.' The voice said, 'Its cause was

his *Ṣalāt* and *salām* on the Apostle of God', and he enjoined me never to forsake the calling down of blessing on the Apostle of God under any condition or in any place." *al-Ḥirzu 'l-manī'*, as-Suyūṭī, pp. 120, 121.

RELIEF FROM THE TERRORS OF THE TOMB

A calling down of blessing which widens the narrowness of the tomb and solaces for me its loneliness and which will be companionable to me in my grave. *Faṭḥu 'r-rasūl*, M. 'Uṭhmān al-Mirghani, p. 130.

And in the niche of the tomb there will be spaciousness for thee, and a garden of rest a creation within it. The pleasaunces of that garden are freedom and it is lofty, magnified by the calling down of blessing on Muḥammad. *Tashṭīru 'l-qasīdati 'l-ḥaḍramiyya*, anon.

A curious thought about the after-death efficacy of the *ṣalātun 'alā 'u-nabī* is that it will create a passage between the believer's tomb and the Tomb of the Prophet.

A calling down of blessing by which there may be for me a road from my grave to the Prophet's Tomb. *Faṭḥu 'r-rasūl*, p. 130.

RELIEF FROM THE TERRORS OF JUDGMENT

Muḥammad said: When a man is ordered to the Fire I shall say, "Bring him back to the scales," and I shall add to the scale (of his good deeds) something small as a finger tip, and that is his calling down of blessing on me. And the scale will be balanced and the cry will go up, "Happy is so and so." *al-Ḥirzu 'l-manī'*, p. 94.

A REWARD OF GLORY

It is related that after the death of al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Maṣṣūr, a man of Shīrāz saw him standing in the miḥrāb of the mosque of that city, clad in a robe of honour and crowned with a jewelled diadem. And the man said to al-'Abbās, "What did God do with you?" He said, "He forgave me and honoured me and crowned me and gave me entrance to Paradise." He said, "And why?" al-'Abbās replied, "Because I was so abundant in blessing the Prophet of God." *Faṭḥu 'r-rasūl*, p. 72.

And God Most High will say, "Oh My angels, here is one of My servants who abounded in calling down blessing on My Beloved. By My Might and Majesty and Generosity and Glory and Exaltedness, we will give him for every letter of his *ṣalāt* a palace in Paradise, and he shall come to Me on the Resurrection Day under the banner of Muḥammad, the light of his face like the shining of the moon when it is full, and his hand in the hand of Muḥammad My Beloved." *Dalā'ilu 'l-khairāt*, p. 124.

SPIRITUAL VALUES

But the worshippers have seen in this devotion other and more inward values. That double *ṣalāt* of heaven and earth announced in the basic Qur'ān verse, gives to the believer's *ṣalāt* a semi-sacramental character, for it is an earthly and audible sign of a heavenly and potent activity. The humble little act of the earthly *ṣalāt* is believed, as we have seen, to set in motion the heavenly forces "and move the Hand that moves the world to bring salvation down". A phrase of such potency is felt in popular religion to be more full than most of mysterious half-magical *baraka*; but more spiritual minds see it as an inward purification and education, even a stepping-stone to the very presence of God.

A calling down of blessing which disciplines our (lower) selves with the best of discipline. . . .

A calling down of blessing which saves us from pleasures and lusts. . . .

A calling down of blessing which helps us to perform the prescribed ritual. . . . *ad-Durru 'l-fā'iq*, Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī.

A calling down of blessing, the light of which irradiates our hearts and spirits and minds, and of which the secrets are intermingled in our total being and our inmost life. *Yāqūtu 'l-ḥaqā'iq*, Aḥmad at-Tījānī.

And make our calling down of blessing on him a key, and by it open to us O Lord, the veil of acceptance, and accept, by the blessing of my Beloved (M), the litanies and invocations which I now recite, and my love and magnifying of Thyself. *Tashfiru 'l-qasīdati 'l-ḥadramiyya*, anon.

VISION OF THE PROPHET

But the most characteristic thought about this Muḥammad-centred devotion is that it is a sovereign means of vision of the Prophet and communion with him. His people rest assured that he appreciates each individual calling down of blessing upon him.

Muḥammad said: "No one greets me with peace without God returning my spirit (to my body) that I may respond to his greeting." *Adhkār*, an-Nawawī.

It was said to the Apostle of God: "Wilt thou see the blessing of those who call down blessing on thee, even though they are absent from thee or live after thy time? What is their standing with thee?" He said, "I hear the blessing of the company of my lovers and I know them, and the blessing of those who come after me is all made known to me." *Dalā'ilu 'l-khairāt*

He busies himself in calling down blessing on the Prophet until the Prophet's greatness masters his heart and pervades his inmost being. So that he is stirred by emotion at the mention of him, and the Prophet's graces are abundantly poured on him outwardly and inwardly, and he receives favours from no created being save the Prophet, and he sees him waking and sleeping and asks him concerning what he will. *ad-Durratu 'l-fardiyya*, Ahmad b. Sayyid as-Sanūsī.

FORMS OF THE ṢALĀTU 'ALĀ 'N-NABĪ

The forms of the *taṣliya* are an endless, intricate embroidery on the short basic phrase, ever seeking greater intensity, greater inclusiveness, greater duration. And when the worshipper has piled up all that his tongue can frame of extent and duration, he will ask God to double this!

My God, make every one of these blessings of the Prophet to exceed and excel the blessing of him by all and every the people of the heavens and of the earths who have ever blessed him, exceed and excel these as he excels all the rest of mankind through the excellence with which Thou hast favoured him. *Wirdu 'ṣ-ṣalāti 'l-kubrā*, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī.

Whole books are devoted to the embroidering of this one short sentence, many of them famous in Muslim devotion. Of these *Dalā' ilu 'l-khairāt*, the work of the Berber saint, Al-Jazūlī († 870/1465), is the most famous of all. It is known and recited from Morocco to Malaya, much as the *Imitation of Christ* is known in the Western Church. In Egypt its Litanies are often sung by the *fuqahā'* as the dead are carried to the grave.

Second only to it in fame are the *Ṣalawāti 'l-mashīhiyya*, the work of 'Abdu 's-Salām ibn Mashīsh († circa 625/1227), the Moroccan saint whose tomb on Jabal 'Alam attracts a huge annual pilgrimage. Like *Dalā' ilu 'l-khairāt* these *ṣalawāt* have had special commentaries devoted to them, and are used to-day by men of many types of piety.

Thus after morning and sunset prayer, the beginners in the *Shādhiliyya* Order are told to gather together in a circle for the orderly recitation "with attention of heart" of these *ṣalawāt*, after which follows the daily *dhikr*¹. Similarly Aḥmad b. Idrīs († 1253/1837) founder of the Qādiriyya-Idrīsīyya Order and inspirer of the founders of the yet more popular Sanūsī and Mirghanī Orders, said that nothing equals the

¹ See *as-Silsilatu 'dh-dhahabiyya*, Muḥammad Aḥmad Al-Madanī.

ṣalawāt of Ibn Mashish except the prayers that were used by the Prophet or prayers that have a similar meaning.¹

FORMS CONNECTED WITH SAINTS

Shorter forms (*ṣiġha*) of the *ṣalātun 'alā 'n-nabī* are innumerable. Many are connected with the names of great saints of Islam. Thus 'Alī Zain al-'Ābidīn when he called down blessing on his grandfather, is held responsible for the much-used form:

O God call down blessing on Muḥammad to the satisfaction of Thine own good pleasure, to the weight of Thy throne, to the inexhaustible supply of Thine imperishable words.

or again, Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, the famous saint of Baghdad, is said to have invented another much-used form:

O God call down blessing on Muḥammad to the fullness of this world and the fullness of the next.

NAMED FORMS

Many famous forms have their own names, we give only a few examples.

The Kamāliyya (beloved of the Bakriyya Order).

O God bless and greet with peace and benediction our lord Muḥammad and his family—blessing to the number of the perfections of God and befitting those perfections.

The Fātiḥiyya (recommended above all other forms by Aḥmad at-Tijānī).

O God call down blessing on our Lord Muḥammad, the Opener of what was closed, the Seal of that which went before, the Succourer of truth with truth, the Guide to the straight path, and on his family, as befits his status and his great position.

The Kalāmiyya (said to have been learnt by ash-Sha'rānī from al-Khidr).

- O God bless Muḥammad at the beginning of our speech
- O God bless Muḥammad in the course of our speech
- O God bless Muḥammad at the close of our speech

¹ Quoted in *Faḥu 'r-rasūl*, p. 24.

The 'Azīmiyya (best-loved form of the Sanūsī Order).

My God, I ask Thee by that light of the Face of the great God which filled the bases of the Great Throne, and by which uprose the worlds of the Great God, to call down blessing on our Lord Muḥammad the great in rank, and on the family of the Prophet of the great God, etc.

FORMS WITH PROPHETIC SANCTION

But most characteristic of this devotion is the great number of forms for which a Prophetic blessing (generally given in a vision) is claimed by the author. It is interesting to note that these visions continue into modern times.

Space forbids our quoting more than one of these accounts of Prophetic sanction :

THE SMILE

It is narrated from aṭ-Ṭabarānī . . . that in sleep he saw the Prophet as he was when he was among us and said to him, "Peace be to thee O Prophet and the mercy and blessing of God. God has inspired me with some words to say." And he said, "What are they?" "They are: O God . . . bless Muḥammad to the number of those who have called down blessing on him and to the number of those who have not called down blessing on him. And bless Muḥammad even as Thou desirest that he shall be blessed."

And the Apostle of God smiled a smile that revealed his teeth, and light could be seen issuing from the spaces between his front teeth. *Faṭḥu 'r-rasūl*, p. 24.

NOTE ON CHRISTIAN EQUIVALENTS

In countries where the *taṣliya* is on every lip from morning to night, the Christian Church should probably hearten herself by greater use, at least in her services, of ejaculations of praise to her Prophet, Priest, and King. The Urdu-speaking Church has a great popular cry for festivals, *melas*, processions and moments of emotion, *Jai Yishu*, Victory to Jesus! The common greeting of Christians in Chota Nagpur is *Yishu sahay*, "Jesus be your Helper!" Should the Arabic Church in her services return to the fundamental affirmation of the primitive Church, "Jesus is Lord"? Or should she, not only in her services, but in all moments of gladness, make fuller use of the old Hebrew joy-cry which is the closest equivalent to the *taṣliya*, *Hosanna*?

For indeed the *taşliya* is the *Hosanna* of the Muslim world, with an almost parallel history. Like *Hosanna* (Save now!) the *taşliya* is in form a prayer, but has taken to itself the value of an acclamation, a cry of praise, just as "God save the King!" in English hovers between the two meanings.

At what time in its history *Hosanna* became a popular acclamation is not clear, though the transition would be easy enough, from the fact of its use (with its context in Psalm 118.25,26) at an exultant moment in the joyful Feast of Tabernacles. We do not know whether "the people of the Hebrews" were consciously quoting the Psalm or only using a customary acclamation on the day when "the multitudes that went before, and that followed cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matt. 21.9), but the doings of that day consecrated *Hosanna* for ever to the Christ.

THE SAINTS IN WORSHIP

Awliyā' u 'llah, Ahlu 'l-Bait

Ah surely the friends of God, to them is no fear neither shall they grieve—who believed and were God-fearing, theirs are good tidings in the life below and in the other life. To the words of God there is no reversal, that is the supreme attainment. *Qur. 10.62-4.* (The “good tidings” are often interpreted as visions.)

These are the glowing words which the Muslim recites as he visits the tombs of the saints, adding his voice to the testimony of his Book on “the supreme achievement”. The *Qur'ān*, in no set doctrine, since that is not its way, but in many a promise, makes certain the blessedness of those whose beliefs and actions were alike Godward, “Who will pay them in full their reward and of His free grace give them more.” (4.117.) In the world to come they shall hear the greeting of “Peace, a word from a merciful Lord.” (36.58.) And surely their beatitude, *Tūbā lahum*, the word of the Sermon on the Mount (13.29), has its beginning in this life also.

Islam has been rich in saints, and if, as with those of other religions, her scribes and lawyers have sometimes made life hard for them, her people honour them.

There are humble folk-devotions, relics of a dim past of animistic belief in sacred stones, “high places”, and haunting spirits. Such devotions, obscure, ignorant, and often full of faith, may play their part when an Egyptian peasant woman vows oil or lentils to the inhabitant of a whitewashed tomb among the mudbrick houses, or when an Arab village sacrifices a sheep to the wali of the neighbouring hilltop.

Our business here is not with these but with what the prayer-manuals have to tell us of the place of the saints in more literate devotion.

THE PORTRAIT OF THE SAINTS

The picture of the saints given by these books (not written for instruction but for devotion) is not very clear as to the saintly

hierarchy which Muslim thought has evolved (and which differs slightly from author to author) under the leadership of the *quṭb* of his age, the Pole-saint, pivot of the world, of whose kind only one at a time is on earth. The following prayer shows such a hierarchy.

Peace be to you, ye men of the mysterious other world! Peace be to you ye sanctified spirits! Ye lieutenant saints (*nuqabā'*), ye overseeing saints (*ruqabā'*), ye saints of permutation¹ (*budalā'*). Ye pillars of the earth, four pillars (*awṭād*), ye two imāms, thou Pole-saint (*quṭb*) thou unique! Ye faithful ones, aid me with succour, turn to me a glance, be merciful to me, bring me my desire, my aim. Rise up to fulfil my need with our Prophet Muḥammad. May God Most High greet you with peace in this world and the next!² *al-Fuyūḏātu 'r-rabbāniyya*, p. 104 (*Qādiriyya*).

Few prayers are as definite as this concerning the hierarchy, but many are clear that God has His friends everywhere on earth and in heaven. *Walī*, *awliyā'*, is the most general word for saints, combining the ideas of nearness, protection, and friendship. Thus the time-keeper of the Yūsufiyya Mosque at Fez, after greeting the Prophet, his Companions and Followers, Mūlai Idrīs and the local saints of Fez and Marrakesh, continues:

May God reward, on our behalf, the saints (*awliyā'*) of the east and the saints of the west, south, and north, of land and sea, of heaven and earth, of the Throne and the Seat, with even greater favour than is their desert, and may He be well-pleased in them. *Majmū'atu 'l-wirdi 'l-āmm*, p. 91.

The general portrait of the saints we can put together from many touches in our manuals. They are:

God's purified, God's friends, those that are brought near, *al-muqarrabūn*. (A word which Nicholson translates, "the favourites of God", those who in the Scottish phrase are "far ben".) *Ibid.*, p. 8.

They are dear to God. On the tomb of Mu'īnu 'd-dīn Chistī, Ajmīrī, is written "This is the dear friend (*ḥabīb*, a friend loving and beloved) of God, who died in the love of God."

¹ Of whom only a given number, often forty, are in charge of the world at one time. They relieve one another and hence are saints of permutation.

² This prayer which is taken from al-Jilānī's *Ghunya* has a note appended to it explaining that the saints are on different days of the month at different points of the compass, a matter, which, with knowledge and care, can be arranged for in addressing them.

Make me one of the lovers that are beloved, that are brought near, that have personal knowledge, that yearn for Thee. *Dalā'ilu 'l-khairāt*, p. 63.

Poverty is their bride:

When you see one burning with the fire of poverty, broken by his exceeding destitution, draw near to him, for there is no veil between Me and him. Prize as a spoil the intercession of the poor, for they are with Me and I with them. *al-Ghawthiyya*, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī.

In regard to struggling mortals they are "Lamps in the darkness". (*Dalā'ilu 'l-khairāt*.)

For they are the people of protection and hope and deliverance and penetrating vision. (Preface to *Majmū'u Ṣalawāt*, Muṣṭafā 'al-Bakrī.)

THEIR WORK OF INTRODUCTION AND INTERCESSION

We have already spoken of these "near ones" as sharing with the Prophet in the work of mediation which his people assign to him. (See Chapter 2.) Before dealing with what our prayer-books have to show us of reliance on the intercession of the saints we must note that in several directions in our day (as by Ibn Ḥanbal in his day) this is regarded as a non-Islamic development, derogatory to the soleness of God. In Arabia the Wahhābites will have none of it; and in India (a land of saints) a modernist Aḥmadiyya author writes:

However glorified the position of these Awlias in the eyes of God and the world, the fundamental creed of Islam cannot tolerate the slightest thought of their being sought help from. It will not do for us to forget that in every prayer, a Muslim is required to pray in the terms—"Thee (i.e. Allāh, Thee alone) do we worship."

WASĪLA WITH THE PROPHET

It is a strange development that the Prophet who is regarded as his people's Mediator should himself be approached through saintly mediation. Yet the guide to the Pilgrimage by an official of the Azhar orders this indirect approach to him through the saints buried in his neighbourhood. We give two examples:

Then he shall move opposite Abū Bakr and say, Peace be to thee O caliph of the Apostle of God! Peace be to thee O true friend of the Apostle of God! I bear witness that thou didst fight the good fight in God with true endeavour. May God reward thee with good on behalf of the community of Muḥammad. May God be well-pleased with thee and make thee well pleased. And may

He make Paradise thy future and thy dwelling place. And may God be well pleased with all the Companions. *Then he (the pilgrim) shall seek his mediation with the Apostle of God. . . . Then he shall go out from the mosque to (the cemetery) Al-Baqī' and greet its inhabitants and offer any prayer that suits him and seek the mediation of the people of those graves with the Apostle of God. Dalīlu 'l-hajj, Ḥasanain Makhḷūf, Wakīlu mashā'ikhati 'l-Azhar.*

IN SHĪ'A DEVOTION

For Shī'a worshippers, the royalists of Islam, whatever other saints God may have graced, the saints *par excellence*, the intercessors, the mediators, are *ahlu 'l-bait*, the people of the household, the family of the Prophet. And this because, for them, the *Nūr Muḥammadī*, the primal, pre-creation light from which all other prophets, angels, saints and common mortals were created, passes down unimpaired, in all its heavenly authority through the blood-royal, through 'Alī and Fāṭima and the imāms descended from them. Here then is a "divine right" and an "apostolical succession" of more than royal authority.

Prayers for Pilgrims to the Tomb of the Imām 'Alī ar-Riḍā at Mashhad (Meshed).

(From the "Permission for the First Entrance".¹) I have come to Thee, my God, drawing near to Thee through the son of the daughter of Thee, the Prophet Muḥammad.

(From the "Permission for the Second Entrance".) Here am I seeking Thy permission and the permission of Thine Apostle.

Let me enter, O God!

Let me enter, O Apostle of God!

Let me enter, O our Lord, Commander of the Faithful.

Let me enter, O our lady Fāṭima the Fair, mistress of the women of the two worlds.

Let me enter, our lord Ḥasan, son of 'Alī.

Let me enter, our lord Ḥusain, son of 'Alī.

Let me enter, our lord 'Alī, son of Ḥusain, ornament of worshippers.

Let me enter, our lord Muḥammad, son of 'Alī.

Let me enter, our lord Ja'far, son of Muḥammad.

Let me enter, our lord Mūsā, son of Ja'far.

Let me enter, our lord 'Alī, son of Mūsā.

Let me enter, our lord Muḥammad, son of 'Alī

Let me enter, our lord Ḥasan, son of 'Alī.

¹ I.e. the entrance to the first building.

Let me enter, our lord Hujjat, son of Hasan, lord of the age.

Let me enter, O ye angels on duty, standing, surrounding, guarding this noble and blessed precinct, and the mercy of God and His blessings be upon you. (From a pilgrim's leaflet kindly contributed by Dr Donaldson from Meshed.)

At the still holier shrine of Najaf, before the visit to the tomb of 'Ali, the worshipper says:

Facilitate my visit to him, O my Lord, through his goodness. And as Thou hast not deprived me of a visit to him, so let me not be deprived of his protection; but continue Thy gifts of grace to me O God, and as Thou hast given me the grace of knowing him, so make me of his party (*shī'a*) and bring me into Paradise through his intercession. *Miftāḥu 'l-Janān*. The Arabic of these prayers written by a Persian scribe in Lahore is a little doubtful.

That this coming to the sanctuaries of the *imāms* is felt to be a real grace of God, the following prayer, to be said on entering the *ḥaram* at Najaf, bears witness:

Praise be to God who has guided us here, and had not God guided us we should have had no guidance. Praise be to God who brought me through His lands and mounted me on His beasts and led me by stages from afar, and kept off from me what was dreadful. . . . O God this *ḥaram* is Thy *ḥaram* and this place is Thy place. *Majmū'u suwarin wa ad'iya* (Delhi), p. 52.

How this overwhelming belief in the spiritual potency of the *imāms* colours daily life is shown by some notes from Miss E. Mitchell who lived among Shī'a Muslims in Faizabad.

When the child can speak clearly it is taught the names of the twelve *imāms*. At the New Year the requests of the household for the year are written down—the paper is folded up and fastened and weighted with a little ball of flour to make it sink. The head of the house rises early to take it to the river and throw it in. "It will find its way to the *imām*", the women say hopefully. The idea is prevalent that daily when the lamps are lit in the evening and the rooms swept after the evening meal, the spirits of the *imāms* enter the homes and, making circuit of the rooms, pass out again leaving a blessing behind them.

Second only in popularity to *Ganj il-'Arsh* in the Indian Shī'a manuals is the cry to 'Ali.

Call on 'Ali, the manifestor of marvels, thou wilt find him a help to thee in necessities. All care and gloom will be lightened by thy Prophethood, O

Muḥammad, and by thy sanctity, O 'Alī! O 'Alī! O 'Alī!¹ *Majmū'u suwa wa ad'iya*, p. 52.

PLENARY INTERCESSION

If for the *Shī'a* world the *imāms* are the intercessors *par excellence*, for the Sunnī world that place is held by a small inner group of saints of the twelfth and thirteenth Christian centuries to whom has been given the office of universal and accepted intercession. These are Aḥmad ar-Rifā'i, Aḥmad al-Badawī, Ibrāhīm ad-Dasūqī, and 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī. While the *Shafā'a* of the Prophet is his people's great hope for the life of the world to come, these four are intercessors concerning the life that now is.

The manuals in our collection give only a few *awrād* of the first three but many details concerning 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī as Succourer (*al-Ghawth*) and Intercessor. They tell (quoting from Shaikh Ibrāhīm al-Qāsim ibn Bakr Aḥmad in *Bahjat al-asrār*) of his heavenly ordination to the universal ministry of intercession:

And the Truth Most High said to him in the language of mysterious ecstasies: "Verily to-day art thou firmly installed before us and trusted." And he caused him to sit with the spirits of the prophets on a seat between this world and the next, between the Creator and the created, between the visible and the spiritual, between the perceptible and the imperceptible. And he gave him four countenances, one to look towards the earth, one to look towards the other world, one to look towards created beings, and one to look towards the Creator.

The claim to a seat among the spirits of the prophets is remarkable because entrance to that rank had been regarded as closed since the coming of Muḥammad, and 'Abd al-Qādir could not without legal penalties have claimed it. Was there in his subconscious a resentment at the barrier which (if the saying is genuine) he thus came near to leaping in his ecstatic state? The whole corpus of sayings, writings, and traditions attributed to him, seems to reveal a character in which deep saintliness and natural ambition strangely worked together. He was perhaps an exemplar of the inward state behind the traditional prayer:

Lord make me in my own eyes small and in the eyes of mankind great
Du'ā'un nabawī.

¹ A Persian manuscript from Lahore translated in *Revue des Études Islamiques* 1927, p. 251, shows that this cry to 'Alī is one of the guild-prayers of the water-carriers, to be sung on returning from the well.

We quote a typical poem of the Qādiriyya Order which is an invitation to men to come with their cry for help (*istighātha*) to the founder's tomb:

My tomb is the house of God. He who comes to visit it, hastening thither, will be granted might and exaltation.

My mystery is the mystery of God, current in his creation. Cleave to my side if thou wouldst have my affection.

My command is the command of God: If thou sayest, "Be," it shall be. And all things are under God's command; then judge of my power.

I was seated in the holy vale¹ on Mount Sinai;

I was exalted in my robe of honour.

And all men in all lands call me blessed. . . .

And all the countries of God are truly my kingdom,

And their Pole-saints under my command and obedience.

Manzūma bi 'l-wasīla (Qādiriyya).

The method of seeking al-Jilānī's help (*istighātha*) by members of the Order is as follows. After the evening prayers or the prayers of a night vigil, having given the final "peace", the worshipper is told:

Prostrate yourself again before God after the "peace" and ask for your need. Then raise your head and call down blessing on the Prophet eleven times. Then rise and take eleven steps in the direction of 'Iraq to the right of the *qibla*, and say as you take the first step, "Oh Shaikh Muḥyī 'd-dīn!" (a cry on al-Jilānī is then given for each footstep, ending up with), "O Lord of Lords 'Abd al-Qādir, Muḥyī 'd-dīn!"² Then say, "O little servant of God help me (*aghīthnī*) by permission of God. Oh Shaikh of the heavy-laden, help me and grant me supplies to meet my need." (Finally there is a *du'ā'* to be read three times, which returns from the saint to God:) "O God, Thine are all things and through Thee are all things and from Thee are all things and to Thee are all things, and Thou art the All and All of the All." *Al-Fuyūḍātu 'r-rabbāniyya*, p. 45.

The visitor approaching the tomb at Baghdad should thus address the saint:

Peace be to thee O King of the age, O *Imām* of the place, O wielder of the command of the Merciful, O heir of the Book and representative of the

¹ Scene of the revelation of the Burning Bush (*Qur.* 20.12).

² Was this slow advance with a cry at each footstep a relic of some far older ritual? It recalls the dragging footsteps of the priests of Baal about the altar (1 Kings 18.26 R.V. marg.) as they cried, "O Baal hear us", and which D. B. Macdonald compared to the gait for encircling the *Ka'ba*.

Apostle of God, O thou whose benefit is heavenly and earthly, O thou whom all the people of the time are his family. Thou through whose petitioning help comes down, through whose blessing supplication is efficacious. Ibid., p. 194.

But many another saint than these great four is believed to have power and will to help struggling men. Was not the tomb of Ma' al-Karkhī known in the jargon of Baghdad as *tiryāq mujarrab*, "proved remedy"?

O saints of God, lo I am sick, and before you is medicine and healing. Then of your favour look on me for treatment, and grant me of your goodness what is needed.

How many a sick one sought you at your door, and left it, sickness gone from him in healing.

How many a chronic sufferer have you helped, bedridden, whom your bounty has sufficed.

You are the door, and God is generous.

He then who comes to you finds grace and health.

Tawassulun bi 'l-awliyā', Muḥammad 'Alī, Muftī 'l-Jazā'

THE SPIRITUAL HELP OF THE SAINTS

These direct petitions to the saints for their help and intercession represent an extreme usage. A less direct way of seeking their mediation is by offering one's own prayers to God "through the reverence due to them". Thus we have Shī'a prayers *bi ḥurmat* the Shī'a imān Sunnī prayers *bi ḥurmat* Uwais al-Qaranī, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and the whole list of Ṣūfī saints (the regular usage of the 'Ushshāqiyya Order Sunnī prayers also in the names of all "the people of Badr":

And they are the mediators for all purposes, the key of the doors on his *ash-Shāfiya li'l-aṣqām*, 'Abd as-Salām ash-Shaṭṭī.

But even these indirect petitions through the saints are not in the main line of Islamic prayer and would be disapproved by many. We must ask, then, what difference is made to the devout worshipper who does not so use their names, by the fact that Islam, the beloved community not limited to earth, includes so many God-devoted saints? Is there indeed a "communion of saints" in Islam?

We have to own that these Muslim prayers show nothing comparable to the fuller sense of communion in the sacramental life of Christians.

in which believers become "one bread, one body", and the "one body" which they become is "the body of Christ".

But if those depths of communion are outside the ken of these prayers we have also gratefully to recognize in them a sense of spiritual kinship between all whose goal it is to worship in spirit and in truth. We have noted that the greeting in the prayer-rite is a kind of rudimentary sketch for a communion of saints, as also the idea that all, in this world and the next, unite in the *taṣliya*.

The goal of the petition by the first and the last being one blessing by God Most High. *al-Hirzu 'l-manī'*, as-Suyūṭī, p. 12.

There is further the sense of a share in the prayers of the blessed.

O Lord give us a share in (*ushriknā fi*)¹ the prayer of the righteous, and allot for us an endowment and a portion in their prayer. *Majmū'u tabāraka dhū 'l-'ulā'*, p. 8.

There may be a strong sense of their spiritual presence when their *awrād* are being used. Thus, part of the preparation for reciting the famous *ḥizbu 'l-baḥr* is:

Then let him seek the presence of the spiritual personality of Sīdī ash-shaikh Abū 'l-Ḥasan ash-Shādhilī. *Al-Fuyūḍātu 'r-rabbāniyya*.

One who was setting out to write a commentary on *ad-Durru 'l-fā'iq* of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī says:

When, without the company of helper or friend, I put out upon that deep sea, to gather its pearls and jewels, the sea-monster of earthly desire was about to swallow me as I was submerged and all but lost in its depths. And I cried for help to the high majestic one of unapproachable majesty, and lo I was washed up on the other shore and a voice cried to me as I was half asleep and half awake, "Adventure as thou wilt and fear not, O so and so." And through this I rejoiced and was glad, cheered and light-hearted, and I began that work relying on the lord (*Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī*) the Ascetic Traveller. *Fathu 'l-karīmi 'l-khāliq*, 'Alī al-Makkī.

In reading the Qur'ān too, the thought of all the devout who have brooded over it night and day may lead to spiritual aspiration:

¹ The verb used here is that adopted by some Churches in Arabic lands for Holy Communion which they call *ash-sharikatu 'l-muqaddasa*. This was probably an effort to give more of the idea of communion than is found in the commonly used *mumāwala*, which gives the sense of reception into the hand. As a noun for Communion, *sharika* is somewhat external but has deepened with use.

Give us the fair qualities of the righteous.

Make us to stand in the footprints of those who rose up with it (Qur'ān recitation) in the night season and the daylight hours, till we are purified with its (the Qur'ān's) purification, and made to stand in the footprints of those who were enlightened with its light, whose hope failed not, and who were not cut off from the work by the imposture of deceptions. *Du'ā'un 'inda khatmi 'l-Qur'ān*, 'Alī Zain al-'Ābidīn.

THE OPEN PATH

When the Muslim worshipper prays:

Make fair our course of conduct that we may behold the people of heaven near as the people of earth. *ad-Durru 'l-fā'iq*, Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī.

the sequel to that vision commonly hoped for is a learning of their secret and a following in the footsteps of the saints. For while the rank of prophethood is closed, the rank of sainthood is open to all who can accept the cost of following it.¹ Even 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, with his high doctrine of his own spiritual rank, realized the communion of leader and led, and in his opening prayer before a sermon used to say:

O God set right the *imām* and the community, the shepherd and the flock, and unite their hearts in good things and defend each of them against the evil in the other. *Du'ā'u 'l-istifāh*. *Awrād 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*, p. 4.

So the worshipper can say:

Deliver us from lower companionship and make us the companions of Thy saints. *al-Munājātu 'l-injiliyyatu 'l-wuṣṭā*. *Saḥīfa sajjādiyya*, p. 219.

And make me one of Thy saints for "surely Thy saints, no fear is upon them, neither shall they grieve." (Qur. 10.64.) *Prayer for Tuesday, Miṣṭāḥu 'l-janān*, p. 51.

¹ As, in the New Testament, the humblest members of a little Church in a foully wicked city are addressed as not only permitted but "called" to be saints.