

Seeking God's face: Ibn 'Arabi on right action and theophanic vision: part 1

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'Seeking God's Face'

Ibn 'Arabi on Right Action and
Theophanic Vision

Part 1

James Winston Morris

**And God's is the place-of-Shining-forth and the
place-of-Darkening: so wherever you all may turn,
there is the Face of God!**

(Qur'an 2:115)

O Friend/Beloved, through Friendship/Love we are conjoined with
You:

Wherever You put Your foot, we're the ground for You!

In this school/path of Loving, how can it possibly be

That we see the world through You, and yet we don't see You!?

(Rumi, quatrain)¹

The theme of the beatific 'vision' of God, for anyone familiar with the Qur'an, would almost automatically recall the last part of the famous passage from *Surat al-Baqara* translated above. And few Qur'anic verses could more concisely convey the enduring popular images of Ibn 'Arabi and the school of his subsequent philosophic interpreters in Islamic culture. Indeed it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that all the writings of Ibn 'Arabi and his generations of commentators, with their complex ontological schemas of divine 'Manifestations' and 'Apparitions' (*tajalliyât, mazâhir*), could be viewed as a sort of vast, ongoing commentary on that single Qur'anic verse. But in the end the intellectual brilliance and fascination of the all-encompassing metaphysical systems elaborated by that tradition cannot quite conceal a more difficult and troubling question, an unavoidable

dilemma that is beautifully expressed in Rumi's own short comment on that verse. What *practical* difference, ultimately, does that bold Qur'anic statement – or its complex elaborations in later Islamic thought – really make in the life we actually live? Even assuming all human beings have some inherent sense of what true theophany and vision of God might involve – if only in our deepest memories of what the Qur'an portrays (7:172) as the primordial 'Covenant' between each soul and its Creator (the 'Last Night' memorialized by all the Islamic mystical poets) – that mysterious awareness itself only seems to highlight, as Rumi's poem suggests, the poignant distance between such rare moments of spiritual realization and our ordinary mundane existence. However one may imagine the divine 'Face', skeptics and believers alike would probably agree that our days are more often spent, if not in complete blindness, then at least in profound heedlessness of that state of true Vision. And other Islamic interpreters have of course attempted to defuse the dramatic existential challenge posed by this verse, with its radical immediacy and unequivocal universality, by relegating the whole problem to that vague eschatological 'next world' and yet-to-arrive point in time where they would situate the many scriptural allusions to the vision of God's Face.

Fortunately, there is another, less well known Ibn 'Arabi whose teachings are in fact centrally focused on precisely the sort of recurrent existential questions and fundamental issues of spiritual practice that are raised – and illuminated – by verses such as this. Nowhere is that more clearly the case than in his magnum opus, the immense 'Meccan Illuminations' (*al-Futûhât al-Makkîya*). Indeed it is probably the much wider popular influence of this 'second' Ibn 'Arabi, whose insights have been continually borrowed and (usually tacitly) quoted and applied by many generations of Muslim preachers, theologians, Sufi masters, jurists and artists down to the present day, that eventually won for him the widespread honorific title of *al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, 'the Greatest Teacher'.² One reason for the paradox of the relative anonymity and near-universal influence of this particular aspect of Ibn 'Arabi's work in later Islamic culture, of course, may be precisely the eminently *practical* focus of such writing and the occasions for studying or teaching it: one usually

consults a pharmacopoeia to find the right treatment for this or that specific illness, not to add a commentary.

However, a more profound and fundamental reason for this characteristic anonymity (and pervasiveness) of the Shaykh's wider influence is the unique role of Islamic scripture – both Qur'an and hadith – in the distinctive composition and rhetorical form of the *Futûhât* itself.³ Virtually every line of that monumental work, even where there is no explicit reference to a specific hadith or passage of the Qur'an, in fact constitutes a kind of complex spiritual 'hologram', simultaneously interweaving allusions to dozens of Qur'anic verses and hadith (as well as many later Islamic religious disciplines), that is designed to awaken the engaged reader's awareness of the underlying 'realities' or 'meanings' (*ma'ânî*) connecting those scriptural teachings, along with their *recognition* of the corresponding exemplification or 'descent' of those particular divine Names within this particular situation and personal experience.⁴ Only the masterpieces of Islamic mystical poetry in Persian and other eastern Islamicate languages, using very different literary forms, can approach something of the same density of expression and scriptural allusiveness, and the same effective power of transformation. And one unintended result, in both those cases, is that any attempt at a continuous, adequate translation for modern audiences is almost inevitably overwhelmed by the massive annotation needed to detail the underlying context of allusions and symbolic interconnections originally presupposed by this kind of writing.

Ibn 'Arabi's discussion of the divine 'Face' – and the corresponding human possibilities of theophanic perception – in the long opening section of the *Futûhât* (Chapters 1–73) provides an illuminating case-study of his distinctive methods of rhetoric and spiritual pedagogy throughout that work. Given his characteristic reliance on scriptural allusions and interpretation, we must begin (in Section I) by outlining the many Qur'anic passages on the divine 'Face' and the right orientation of human action and intention that can mysteriously transform our ordinary experience into the realization of theophany (or of desperate estrangement from God's Regard), and by summarizing (in Section II) the particular hadith which are the primary vehicle for Ibn 'Arabi's teach-

ing about this problem throughout the *Futûhât*. (The actual imagery and specific language of those Prophetic sayings, some of them fairly long, are so important that the relevant hadith have been translated in full in a separate Appendix.) Following this essential scriptural background, the Shaykh's own discussion of the human meaning of the 'vision of God' in these initial chapters of the *Futûhât* naturally falls into four successive divisions, which become increasingly explicit and more practical in their focus as his teaching unfolds. Not surprisingly, bringing together these related facets of a common problem from so many separate chapters beautifully illustrates Ibn 'Arabi's typical pedagogical method of intentionally 'scattering' his most profound spiritual teachings throughout this book, a distinctive approach he describes to his readers – while also explaining its underlying motives – in several key passages of his Introduction.⁵

The first explicit allusion to this problem of theophany in the *Futûhât* is to be found in Ibn 'Arabi's decisive, openly autobiographical remarks (Section III, Part 2 of this article) indicating the experiential source and context for all the rest of his account, a confession rooted in his own unforgettable unitive vision of 'the Splendor of God's Face'. Secondly, in a number of passages summarized in Section IV, he gradually introduces some basic terminological allusions (*ishârât*) and premises, both practical and metaphysical, which provide the intellectual foundations for his later, more elaborate symbolic developments of this theme based on the Qur'an and hadith. The next and richest stage of his discussion is a complex phenomenological survey (in Chapters 61–5, Section V) of the full range of actual human awareness of – or blindness to – the divine 'Face', conveyed in the symbolic language of Qur'anic (and hadith) eschatology, moving from the sufferings of Gehenna to the beatific vision of the blessed on the 'Day of the Visit' with God in Paradise. And finally (Section VI), Ibn 'Arabi turns to some more practical advice on how we can begin to move from the sufferings of the 'Fire' to the joys of the 'Gardens' and the ecstasy of the beatific vision, in his long discussions of the 'inner secrets' of the basic forms of Islamic worship.⁶

I THE 'FACE OF GOD' AND HUMAN FACES: THE QUR'ANIC SOURCES

The symbol of the divine and human 'face' (*wajh*) is a central one in the Qur'an, occurring more than seventy times, and at least sixty of those passages use that key Arabic term in extended or metaphorical senses directly related to the practical spiritual problem of theophany, to *our* need for seeking and properly 'facing' the ever-present illumination of the divine Face. As is so often the case, the metaphysical and practical allusiveness of the Qur'anic usage greatly depends on the multiple, overlapping meanings of the original Arabic root. To mention only the most important elements of that semantic field in this particular context, the word *wajh* itself can refer not only to the physical face and the emotions conveyed by its expressions, or to the 'front' and visible appearance of something, as in English, but also to a direction or orientation; an intention, aim or goal; a way or manner of proceeding; a particular meaning or sense; a perspective or point of view; and the substance or essential reality of something. All of these meanings are already present to varying degrees in the relevant Qur'anic passages, and the interrelations of these themes in that scriptural context are constantly mirrored in Ibn 'Arabi's own subsequent development of the metaphysical and practical dimensions of our awareness of God.

The scattered Qur'anic references to the Face of God and human faces clearly fall into five groups: there are the celebrated ontological references to the eternity of the divine Face Itself; passages prescribing the 'seeking' or 'desiring' of God's Face as an essential inner condition for *spiritually* effective action; verses enjoining the proper orientation of each individual's face toward the right 'direction' of prayer and true Religion; similar references to the 'surrender' of one's face or innermost intention to God; and a host of vivid eschatological descriptions of the torments or blessings of the 'faces' of human beings after the final Judgment.

Surprisingly enough, considering the prominence given to these particular verses in later Islamic intellectual and mystical traditions, there are only three Qur'anic passages actually focusing on the divine Face 'in Itself', so to speak, rather

than as the ultimate or ideal object of human striving. In addition to the verse with which we began (2:115), the other two are ' . . . every thing is perishing except for His Face. . . .' (28:88); and 'Everyone who is upon it is passing away, but the Face of your Lord remains (forever) . . .' (55:26-7). The unequivocal emphasis in each of these three passages on the absolute permanence and omnipresence of the divine Presence only serves to heighten the apparent paradox posed by so much apparent human indifference to this ultimate reality of things, by the perverse spiritual 'blindness' (and deafness, incomprehension, forgetfulness and heedlessness) repeatedly condemned throughout the Qur'an.

The essential practical connection between our own actions and intentions and our corresponding degree of realization or actual awareness of theophany already begins to emerge as soon as we turn to the eight Qur'anic passages that speak of 'seeking (or 'desiring') God's Face'. To begin with, in each of those cases this special state of spiritual intention is specifically connected to corresponding actions such as '*expending* (one's efforts or possessions) for the good' (2:272, 13:22) and *giving* in charity to those who are needy (30:38-9), of continually 'calling upon God' in *prayer* ('morning and night': 6:52; 18:28; 13:22), and of obliging one's soul to *persevere* in each of these activities (13:22, 18:28). An especially revealing and memorable passage – in light of the connections Ibn 'Arabi repeatedly draws to the famous hadith concerning the discovery of God's Presence through helping the hungry, thirsty and sick – is the description (at 76:8-9) of the true 'servants of God' who ' . . . provide food to feed, for the love of God, the one who is sick, the orphan and the prisoner, (saying): "We are only feeding you-all for the Face of God; we do not desire from you any reward or thanks!"' The second major point tying together these passages is their common stress, either explicitly (as in the passage just quoted) or implicitly, on the dimension of spiritual psychology: that is, on this special state of purely 'God-centered' motivation as an *essential precondition* for the effective spiritual impact or (to use the most common Qur'anic expression) the ultimate 'recompense' of these particular actions – a demanding prerequisite that strongly suggests the

manifold dangers of hypocrisy and worldly social aims (or inner psychic 'compensation' and self-gratification) often accompanying and underlying such outwardly pious activity. Indeed many of these verses on 'seeking God's Face', in their wider Qur'anic context, are actually parts of longer descriptions of the ultimate fate of the blessed in the hereafter. This third, eschatological dimension of the problem, which also provides the dramatic setting for several of the key hadith on the beatific vision used by Ibn 'Arabi (Section II below), is quite explicit in the memorable Qur'anic verse which most radically insists on the spiritual necessity of acting *only* 'for God's Face': 'And there is no one (who has) with him any blessing as a reward, except only for seeking the Face of his Lord the Most-High!' (92:19-20).

The inner, spiritual nature of this special state of receptivity and openness to the divine Presence is especially emphasized by the first group of verses on the individual *human* 'face', which offer a vivid contrast between the special, near-prophetic condition of those who truly '*surrender* their face' (in the sense of will, intention, honor, true self, etc.) to God and the fearful state of those who are '*crouched over their face*' or have '*turned their back on their face*'.⁸ Especially telling here, given the essential connection that both Ibn 'Arabi and the famous hadith of Gabriel make between the highest, all-encompassing spiritual virtue of *ihsân* ('right and beautiful action') and the theophanic awareness of God, is the way the Qur'an itself links this condition of '*surrendering one's face to God*' to the rare and difficult state of '*being muhsin*' at 31:22.

The second group of Qur'anic verses referring to the individual human face, those enjoining the '*turning*' or '*raising up*' of our faces toward the object of prayer or the true primordial religion, continues to stress the same essential connection between the outward and inner, intentional aspects of religious action. Thus the many references to the proper '*direction*' or *qibla* of the ritual prayer (six times at 2:144-50) are followed by the celebrated insistence at 2:177 that '*true piety is not that you turn your faces toward the east and the west . . .*', and the even more explicit and all-encompassing injunction at 7:29 to '*raise up your faces in every place of prayer and call upon Him, keeping Religion*

totally sincere for Him. . . The model for this inner transformation (at 6:79) is Abraham's exclamation that **'I have turned my face toward the Creator of the heavens and the earth, in pure faith (*hanîfan*)'**, which is echoed in the three other passages calling on the Prophet (or each addressee of the Qur'an) to **'raise up your face to Religion, in pure faith'** (10:105, 30:30) or **'to The Eternal Religion'** (*al-dîn al-qayyim*, at 30:43).

The ultimate – or inner – consequences of this proper 'turning' and 'surrender' of the soul's 'face', and of our frequent failures to do so, are described in more dramatic terms in some thirty verses that include many of the most vivid and unforgettable eschatological descriptions in the Qur'an. Although the beatific *vision* of God is not mentioned explicitly in most of those passages (in contrast to the eschatological hadith discussed in the following section), the 'faces' of the blessed are consistently described there as **'glowing'**, **'radiant'**, **'shining'**, and resplendent with grace and laughter and joy – all terms that could readily be understood as a kind of mirrored 'reflection' of the Light of the divine Face.⁹ In contrast, the faces of the suffering ones are often described, among other torments, as **'darkened'** or **'dust-covered'** or **'blackened'** and covered over by the consuming 'Fire' of Gehenna. Even before taking up the hadith referring more openly to the vision of God, one effect of this dramatic eschatological symbolism of the Qur'an, combined with the recurrence of the 'face' as an apparent synonym for the human soul in so many of these passages, is to suggest the sort of profound inner connection between the problem of theophany and human suffering which becomes so prominent in Ibn 'Arabi's own interpretation of these passages.

Often the practical spiritual meaning of otherwise mysterious terms and concepts in the Qur'an is revealed most strikingly in the symbolic 'tales' (*qisas*) of earlier prophets, which – like the hadith discussed in the following section – more dramatically point to the recurrent circumstances and human dilemmas in which those spiritual realities are actually realized in peoples' lives. Certainly this is true for the problem of theophany and 'seeking God's Face' in the two passages where the Qur'an employs the active, verbal forms of this same root (*w-j-h*) to speak of particular prophets'

'turning their faces' toward God. For one of those passages begins with Moses (at 28:22), **'When he turned his face toward Midian and said: "Perhaps my Lord will guide me in the right way"',** and continues through to the very end of that chapter to detail *'The Story'* (the title of this particular Sura) of Moses' search, intertwined with its significance for Muhammad's own prophetic mission, in terms which constantly evoke the perennial difficulties and challenges encountered in seeking, recognizing, and then acting upon our awareness of the divine Presence. The second passage, more condensed and directly focused on the symbolism of theophanic 'vision', describes, in its own terms: **'How We cause Abraham to see the (divine) Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, so that he might be among those-knowing-with-certainty'** (6:75). All of Ibn 'Arabi's own more phenomenological discussions of the problem of realizing or recognizing theophany (and many of the following hadith) reflect and presuppose that telling symbolic account of the divinely guided process of spiritual pedagogy by which Abraham successively takes as 'my Lord' the apparitions of a planet, the moon, and the sun, until, finally enlightened by their eventual passing, he is able to exclaim: **'Now I am liberated from what you-all are associating (with God); indeed I have faced my face toward the One Who Creates the heavens and the earth, in pure faith. . . !'** (6:79).

II THEOPHANY AND RIGHT ACTION: THE HADITH ON THE VISION OF GOD

Surprisingly enough, given the prominence and profusion of these Qur'anic references to the problem of theophanic vision, Ibn 'Arabi's own elaborate treatment of the vision of God's Face and the practical ways to its realization throughout the opening chapters of the *Futûhât*¹⁰ proceeds with almost no explicit discussion of these Qur'anic verses, relying instead on repeated allusions to a selected handful of extraordinary Prophetic sayings, including several 'divine sayings' (*hadîth qudsî*) in which Muhammad reports teachings that are ultimately referred back (sometimes through the angel

Gabriel or earlier prophets) to a divine Speaker. Now these particular hadith are almost all included in the canonical Sunni collections (especially Muslim and Bukhari) and were therefore familiar, at least in their general outlines, to the vast majority of Ibn 'Arabi's intended readers. In addition, two or three of these hadith have such a basic doctrinal importance for Ibn 'Arabi's own ideas and perspectives, or for Sufism and Islamic spirituality in general, that allusions to them can be found on virtually every page of his major works.¹¹ And like many of the other well-known hadith, each of these sayings artfully summarizes and draws together, in dramatically memorable literary form, references to all the Qur'anic themes we have already discussed, as well as a great many other related scriptural topics and passages. In that respect, these particular hadith beautifully illustrate one of Ibn 'Arabi's most characteristic metaphysical and practical doctrines, an insight fundamental to his own understanding of the problem of theophany: the decisive, irreducible importance of the divinely inspired 'creative Imagination' (*khayâl*) in virtually all spiritual experience and teaching. Thus we can at least surmise that his strict reliance on these hadith (rather than the corresponding Qur'anic verses) in presenting this subject is itself meant to be a visible application of the key spiritual virtue of *adab*, of truly 'appropriate action' and insightful respect for the *Prophet's* own inspired example in relying on these particular stories to teach his Companions how to go about 'seeking God's Face'.

The most important of these hadith on the vision of God for Ibn 'Arabi's own development of this topic include the following sayings, which are briefly summarized here in order of their relative length. Since the exact wording and dramatic sequence of these hadith, as well as their implicit references to the Qur'an, are often important for Ibn 'Arabi's exposition, literal translations of the relevant sections, with some further explanations, have been provided in a separate Appendix at the end of this study. The names given in quotation marks at the beginning of these summaries reflect the shorter Arabic 'titles' or catch phrases which Ibn 'Arabi sometimes uses as an abbreviated reference to each of these hadith.

- The 'hadith of the (divine) Veils' is short enough to quote in its entirety (according to the most commonly cited version, from Ibn Maja): *'God has seventy thousand veils of light and darkness: if He were to remove them, the radiant splendors of His Face would burn up whoever (or 'whatever creature') was reached by His Gaze.'*¹² In order to grasp the importance of this image for the question of theophanic vision, especially from Ibn 'Arabi's perspective, it is essential to emphasize that, in accordance with the underlying Arabic term,¹³ the divine 'veils' must be understood here not as total barriers or obstacles to any sort of perception, but rather (as is often the case with a cloth curtain or veil) as allowing one to *'see through'* to the underlying reality as much as is appropriate or safely possible.

- In the famous divine saying (*hadith qudsi*) of 'the supererogatory works of devotion',¹⁴ the immediately relevant section is God's statement that: *'My servant continues to come nearer to Me through the further acts of devotion until I love him. Then when I love him I am [or: (already) 'was'] his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he holds, and his foot with which he walks.'* From the point of view of the spiritual problem of realizing theophany, the fundamental points in this hadith, for Ibn 'Arabi, are first of all its insistence on the essential interplay between the individual human effort of devotion, initially grounded in the universal religious obligations, and the wider transforming power of divine Grace and Love. The second essential point, which is characteristic of Ibn 'Arabi's metaphysical teachings and concretely illustrated in his autobiographical descriptions of his own decisive experience of enlightenment (Section III below), is the resulting emphasis on the active *divine* role in the theophanic experience of spiritual 'vision' (or 'hearing') – that is, on the soul's 'becoming' (or realizing) what in reality already was (and always is) the case.

- The 'divine saying' that Ibn 'Arabi even more frequently cites to illuminate the necessary interplay of spiritual realization and right action is the famous 'hadith of the Questioning' at the Resurrection, beginning with the divine complaint (to an overly confident soul at the Judgment) that

'I was sick, but you did not visit Me. . .'. While this hadith of course parallels a familiar section of the gospel of Matthew (25:41–5), two further reminders may be helpful for readers unfamiliar with this type of literature in its specifically Islamic context. First, in its original context this particular hadith immediately recalls a multitude of Qur'anic verses exhorting the feeding of the hungry (thirsty, travelers, etc.) and closely related acts of charity and sacrifice, as well as the often overtly symbolic and considerably more extensive *spiritual* nature of the 'hunger', 'thirst', and 'illness' mentioned in so many Qur'anic passages. Likewise, it is important to know that the dramatic usage of the *eschatological* setting in this hadith (and several others below) to convey the sense of a revelatory 'unveiling' and making-visible of what is in fact *already* the spiritual reality of things is considerably more compatible with the 'literal' language and likely meanings of the corresponding Qur'anic eschatological passages than either available English Qur'an translations or prevailing modern habits of thought (reflected in those translations) might otherwise suggest.

- The hadith describing Gabriel's questioning of Muhammad regarding the three dimensions of Religion (*al-dîn*), as *islâm*, *îmân*, and *ihsân*, has a prominent place in the two *Sahîh* collections of Muslim and Bukhari, and has long been widely used in popular religious instruction throughout the Islamic world. The problematic interrelation between 'acting rightly' or 'doing good' (the ordinary meaning of *ihsân*) and the realized vision or awareness of God is of course already clearly highlighted in the Prophet's description of *ihsân* there – following the usual understanding, rather than the more revealing reading adopted by Ibn 'Arabi¹⁵ – as '*Worshipping God as though you see Him; for even if you don't see Him, surely He sees you.*' At least equally important, though, for Ibn 'Arabi's understanding of the wider significance of this teaching about theophany and spiritual perception, is the dramatic exemplification of that spiritual lesson in the 'punch-line' of the story, where only the Prophet is able to *recognize* this mysterious stranger (outwardly visible to all the Companions) *as* the angel Gabriel, as a divine emissary 'come to teach the people their Religion'.

• The Prophet's lesson, recounted by Abu Hurayra, commonly known as the 'hadith of the Visit (of the blessed with God)' or of the 'Dune of Musk' (referring to a symbolic locality mentioned in the saying), with its explicitly eschatological setting, is one of the classic Islamic scriptural accounts of the 'beatific vision', included in most of the major Sunni hadith collections. Even without entering into the enigmatic complexities introduced by the different 'platforms of Light' and gem-like 'pedestals' distinguishing the different ranks of the prophets and saints¹⁶ – with their suggestive symbolic parallels to the visionary circles of Dante's *Paradiso* or later Buddhist soteriological teachings – the most basic images in this saying of the '*unclouded sun*' (blinding in itself, like the divine Face in the hadith of the Veils above) or of the '*full moon*' immediately evoke, for any Muslim audience, a whole intricate network of mysterious, presumably symbolic allusions to the sun and moon in many celebrated Qur'anic passages, including the famous episode of the 'testing' (or revelation) of Abraham's faith already mentioned above. At the same time, the implicit application to the problem of theophany of the wider 'natural symbolism' of both these heavenly luminaries, including the radically shifting phases of the moon and the 'beclouding' and cyclical 'setting' of the sun (alluded to in the verse 2:118 with which we began), immediately suggests a more immediate, 'this-worldly' spiritual relevance of this hadith, an interpretive stance that concords with that underlying Qur'anic usage and is clearly assumed in many of Ibn 'Arabi's own references to this saying. Finally, the powerful stress in this hadith – and perhaps even more so in the following 'hadith of Intercession' – on the continuous workings and awareness of divine Grace, Love and Forgiveness as essential preconditions not only for any 'vision' of God, but even for undertaking the sort of human actions eventually leading to that vision, points to one of the primary *scriptural* sources for the characteristically dominant role of the divine 'Creative Lovingmercy' (*Rahma*) in virtually all the distinctive features of Ibn 'Arabi's own spiritual teaching.

• The 'hadith of the Transformation through the Forms' and the 'hadith of the Intercession' are actually names (referring

respectively to incidents at the beginning and end) for different sections of two long and closely related eschatological hadith, ascribed to Abu Hurayra and Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and recorded in several versions in the canonical collections of both Muslim and Bukhari, which open in each case with virtually the same question as in the preceding hadith, regarding the certainty of our 'vision' of God after death, and with the same Prophetic comparison to our viewing of the full moon or the unclouded sun in this life. The next section, introduced as a kind of amplification of that initial response, is perhaps the most frequently cited hadith passage (usually in the form of implicit allusions) in all of Ibn 'Arabi's work. It describes the testing of 'this Community' with regard to their true ultimate objects of worship on the Day of the Resurrection. According to this account, God will present Himself to those souls *in a form other than (or: 'farthest from') what they know, and will say to them: "I am your Lord!"* But the 'hypocrites' among them – who, for Ibn 'Arabi, ultimately include most of mankind with the exception of the rare 'friends' and 'true servants of God' – will repeatedly fail to recognize the divine Presence, or even turn away from It, until God finally appears to them in the particular form they already imagined and expected, according to their inner beliefs in this world. The connections between this particular story and the earlier 'hadith of the Questioning', and their practical spiritual implications, are especially obvious.

The final, much longer section of this same hadith details in openly symbolic terms the vast cosmic process of universal redemption by which the activities of 'intercession' of the angels, prophets, and people of faith – and finally of God, 'The Most-Merciful and Loving of all' – gradually draw out of the 'Fire' even the worst and most complete sinners, *'who have done no good at all!'* This extraordinary hadith, with its all-encompassing soteriological scope and remarkable wealth of allusions to the Qur'an (as well as other hadith), compresses into a single coherent and dramatically compelling vision the inner meaning and ultimate conclusion of the entire course of human existence. It is no exaggeration to state that the entire *Futûhât*, and indeed the rest of Ibn 'Arabi's writings as well, can all be read as a detailed (if often tacit) commentary on the implications of this particular

hadith (including of course the multitude of corresponding Qur'anic passages). Yet given the repeated, overwhelming stress on the all-encompassing saving power of the divine Love and Forgiveness throughout this hadith, it is not difficult to imagine why it has not been the subject of much more open discussion and commentary.

- Although it is not recorded in the standard, earlier Sunni hadith collections, the long hadith of 'The Stages of the Resurrection', which Ibn 'Arabi cites according to oral chains of transmission going back from his own source in Mecca to either Muhammad or Ali, can be read as a more detailed commentary on the symbolic implications and scriptural associations of the preceding hadith. Almost as long as a book, this strictly eschatological 'divine saying' contains several allusions to the beatific vision in its conclusion. It is quoted in its entirety in the concluding eschatological chapters (64–5) of the *Futûhât*, where it provides the extended symbolic groundwork for Ibn 'Arabi's presentation there of the wider process of human ethical and spiritual perfection.¹⁷

As we turn to the ways Ibn 'Arabi actually uses these scriptural themes in the *Futûhât* to illuminate the different practical, intellectual and theological dimensions of the problem of theophany, it is extremely important to keep in mind the way those 'sources' are actually evoked and were originally intended to operate on his readers.¹⁸ We have to place ourselves, at least imaginatively, back within the lengthy process of *self*-discovery and realization that Ibn 'Arabi consciously intended for his original readers to pass through as they gradually pieced together, over many weeks of reading, reflection, prayer and contemplation, his widely scattered allusions to this theme (or any of the book's many other topics), in the necessary light of their own spiritual intentions and motivations. As the Shaykh explains in his Introduction to the *Futûhât* – and as readers of that vast work in any case quickly discover for themselves – his allusions to these hadith (or to the underlying Qur'anic verses) are rarely presented as the objects of an intellectual, discursive 'commentary' or explanation in their own right. Instead, he typically presumes a profound familiarity with all these hadith – and all the more

so with the entire Qur'an – and therefore inserts these scriptural allusions as the potent occasions for evoking each reader's own concrete and quite particular corresponding experiences of spiritual realities they can only suggest. His aim is that intimate process of self-recognition, necessarily both reflective and spiritual, which Su'ad al-Hakim¹⁹ has so aptly described as *mi'râj al-kalima*: 'the spiritual ascension of the Word', as the inspired symbols of these hadith (or Qur'anic verses) gradually begin to interpenetrate, coalesce and eventually become illuminated by the corresponding 'realities' in one's own experience.

Another, possibly simpler way of describing this procedure of spiritual pedagogy is to note that Ibn 'Arabi obliges each of his readers, in the *Futûhât*, to pass through something like the actual inner process – at once imaginative, experiential and intellectual – that connects the scattered verses of the Qur'an with their dramatically effective re-expression in the hadith. But one cannot successfully complete that process without at the same time coming to recognize the *contemporary*, more immediate expressions of both those scriptural 'sources' in the particular concrete forms (cultural, literary, social and religious) of one's own experience. This is a kind of teaching meant to generate teachers.

Appendix: the Hadith on the Vision of God

The following translations, without the entire chain of transmitters (*isnâd*) included in the canonical collections, are based on popular, uncritical editions of each hadith (compared with the Arabic texts of the *hadîth qudsî* given in the works by W. Graham and M. Vâlsan, translating Ibn 'Arabi's own hadith study, cited below). These versions and notes should be sufficient for illustrating the general themes alluded to in Ibn 'Arabi's often implicit and unacknowledged references to them, but they are not intended as an adequate critical study of each hadith. (Often there are several significantly different versions, with different chains of transmis-

sion, contained within a single collection, and the differences between versions of the same hadith appearing in several collections are typically even greater).

Readers without Arabic interested in exploring Ibn ‘Arabi’s own use of these hadith, as well as related ‘Divine Sayings’ and eschatological hadith (including the long ‘Halting-places of the Resurrection’), will find indications of his allusions in the notes to *The Bezels of Wisdom* (trans. R. Austin) and *The Meccan Illuminations / Les Illuminations de la Mecque* (ed. M. Chodkiewicz) – although the indexes of those volumes do not make it possible to look up a particular hadith – and in W. Chittick’s *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, with a more useful and detailed index of hadith and related sayings. Especially interesting is Ibn ‘Arabi’s own personal collection of 101 *hadith qudsi*, the *Mishkât al-Anwâr* (trans. M. Vâlsan, *La Niche des Lumières*, Paris, 1983). Most of the hadith included in Ibn ‘Arabi’s book which are found in the standard early Sunni collections are also translated and helpfully annotated in the concluding section of William Graham’s *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*, Mouton/Paris, 1977.

THE ‘HADITH OF THE VEILS’²⁰

God has seventy [or 700/70,000] veils of light and darkness: if He were to remove them, the radiant splendors of His Face would burn up whoever²¹ was reached by His Gaze.

THE ‘HADITH OF THE SUPEREROGATORY WORKS’ (HADITH AL-NAWAFIL)²²

The Messenger of God said that God said: ‘Whoever opposes a Friend (*wali*) of Mine, I declare war on them. And My servant does not come near to Me with anything more lovable (*ahabb*) to Me than what I have made a duty²³ for him.

And My servant continues to come nearer to Me through the further acts of devotion²⁴ until I love²⁵ him. Then when I love him I *am*²⁶ his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he holds, and his foot with which he walks.

And if he asks Me, I most surely give to him. And if he seeks

My help, I surely help him. I have never hesitated about anything I do as I hesitate about (taking) the soul of the person of faith who dislikes death, since I dislike hurting him.'

THE 'HADITH OF THE QUESTIONING'
(AT THE RESURRECTION)²⁷

God says on the Day of the Rising: 'O son of Adam, I was sick and you didn't visit Me.'

He said: 'O my Lord, how could I visit You, and You are Lord of the worlds?!'

God said: 'Didn't you know that My servant so-and-so was sick, yet you didn't visit him? Or didn't you know that if you had visited him *you would have found Me with him?*'

[Then God says:] 'O son of Adam, did I not ask you for food, but you refused to feed Me?'

He said: 'O my Lord, how could I feed You, and You are Lord of the Worlds?!'

God said: 'Now didn't you know that my servant so-and-so asked you for food, but you didn't feed him? And didn't you know that if you had fed him *you would have found that with Me?*'²⁸

[Then God says:] 'O son of Adam, I asked you for a drink, but you didn't give Me anything to drink.'

He said: 'O my Lord, how could I give You a drink, and You are Lord of the Worlds?!'

God said: 'My servant so-and-so asked you for a drink, but you didn't give him any. But if you had given him a drink *you would have found that with Me.*'

THE 'HADITH OF GABRIEL' (ON THE MEANING
OF RELIGION)²⁹

The Prophet came out for the people (to meet him) one day, and a man came up to him who said: 'What is faith (*îmân*)?'

He replied: 'Faith (means) that you have faith in God, His angels, His Books, in (your) meeting Him, in His messengers, and that you have faith in the Resurrection.'³⁰

Then he asked: 'What is *islâm*?'³¹

He answered: '*Islâm* is that you worship God and don't associate (anything) with Him, that you perform the prayer (*salât*),

give in charity,³² and fast during the month of Ramadan.³³

Then he asked: 'What is *ih̄s̄ân*?'³⁴

He replied: 'To worship God as though you see Him. And if you don't see Him, surely He sees you.' [The last sentence could also be translated, as it is in Ibn 'Arabi's interpretations below, as 'And if you are not, you see Him; and surely He sees you.']

Then he went off, and (the Prophet) said: 'bring him back'. But they couldn't see anything. Then he said: 'This is Gabriel, who came to teach the people their Religion (*dīn*).'

THE 'HADITH OF THE VISIT' OR 'HADITH OF
THE DUNE (OF VISION OF GOD)'³⁵

Abu Hurayra said to Sa'id: 'I ask God to bring you and me together in the Market of Paradise!'

And Sa'id asked: 'You mean there's a Market there?'

Abu Hurayra replied: 'Yes, the Messenger of God informed me that:

"When the people of the Garden (of Paradise) enter it they settle down in it according to the excellence of their *actions*. After that, during the period corresponding to the Day of Reunion³⁶ among the days of this world, they are called and they visit their Lord: He shows them His Throne, and He manifests Himself to them in one of the meadows of the Garden.

Then there are set up for them platforms ('*minbars*') of Light and pearl and ruby and emerald and gold and silver.³⁷ The lowest ones of them and those among them who are beneath them take their seats on dunes of musk and camphor. And those sitting down do not see that those who are on the pedestals have more excellent seats than them."

I asked the Messenger of God: "Do we see our Lord?"

And he replied: "Yes indeed! Do you all have any doubt about (your) seeing the sun, or the moon when it is full?"

"No", I said.

"So likewise you all do not have any doubt about seeing your Lord! Now there does not remain a single person in that gathering but that God is present and conversing with him so intimately that He will say to (each) one of you:

'Don't you remember so-and-so to whom you did such and such?' – and He reminds that person of some of their (acts of)

treachery and deceit in this world.

Then that person says: 'O Lord, didn't You forgive me?'

And He says: 'Indeed it was through the vastness of My Forgiveness that you have reached your station here.'

And while they are together like that clouds will form above them and perfume will rain down upon them, sweeter and more fragrant than anything they have ever experienced.

Then He says: 'Rise up, all of you, to that which I have readied for you from My Grace, and take what you desired.' "

[Muhammad] continued: "So we are brought a Market that has been enclosed and surrounded by the angels, containing that whose like 'no eyes have seen, ears have not heard, and has not occurred to hearts'."³⁸

He said: "Then whatever we desired is brought to us. There is no selling in it, nor any buying there. And in that Market the people of the Garden encounter one another. So if a person who has a higher station meets someone who is below them – yet there is no lowly place there – and that (second) person is delighted with the garment (the first one) is wearing, even before they have finished speaking a garment even more beautiful than that appears³⁹ to them upon that person. And that is because there must not be any sorrow there."

[He continued:] "Then we return to our stations and meet our spouses,⁴⁰ who say: 'Welcome back! But now that you've come back your beauty and your fragrance are much finer than when you left us!'

And we answer: 'This Day we gathered in the company of our Lord, and He gave us the right to come back transformed⁴¹ the way we are.' " "

THE 'HADITH OF THE TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE FORMS' ⁴²

[This whole hadith can be understood in part as a sort of extended commentary on the Qur'anic verses at 39:42–75, especially the following:

God receives and greets⁴³ the souls at the moment of their death and those which haven't died in their sleeping.⁴⁴ So He takes those for which He decreed death and He sends⁴⁵ the others until a named limit. Indeed there is a Sign in that

for a people who reflect and penetrate deeply! (39:42)

. . . Say: 'O My servants who have gone to excess against their (own) souls, do not despair of the Loving-Mercy of God!' Surely God forgives the sins altogether! Indeed He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful/Loving. (39:53)

. . . 'And they did not conceive of God according to the Truth/Reality of His *Qadr*⁴⁶ . . . on the Day of the Rising . . .' (39:67).]

[. . . By 'Ata' ibn Yazid, from Abu Hurayra, who reported that:]

Some people said to the Messenger of God, 'O Messenger of God, do we see our Lord⁴⁷ on the Day of the Rising?'

Then the Messenger of God replied: 'Do you have any trouble⁴⁸ in seeing the moon on the night when it is full?'

'No, O Messenger of God', they said.

'Do you have any trouble', he said, 'about (seeing) the sun when there are no clouds beneath it?'

'No, O Messenger of God', they said.

'Then surely you do see Him⁴⁹ just like that!', he replied.

'God brings together the people⁵⁰ on the Day of Rising and says: "Let whoever was worshipping something pursue that."

So whoever was worshipping the sun pursues that, whoever was worshipping the moon pursues that, whoever was worshipping the *Tâghûts*⁵¹ pursues them, and there remains this Community (*umma*), including its 'hypocrites' (*munâfiqûn*).

Then God comes to them in a form other than His form that they recognize (or 'know'), and He says: "I am your Lord!"

And they say: "We take refuge with God from you! This is our place until our Lord comes to us. And when our Lord does come we'll recognize him (immediately)!"

Then God comes to them in His form that they do recognize and says: "I am your Lord!"

Then they say: "You are our Lord, and they pursue (*that form*)."

And the 'Bridge' (*al-sirât*) is set up over the two sides of Gehenna, and I and my community are the first to cross. No one speaks that Day but the Messengers, and their petition (to God) that Day is: "O My God, grant (them) salvation, grant salvation! . . ." ⁵²

Then the people are seized by the 'Hooks' (of Hell) according

to their *actions*: among them is the person of faith who remains behind because of his (bad) actions, and among them the one who receives his recompense (of a limited punishment) until he is saved.

(This process proceeds) until when God has finished judging the servants and wished, in His Loving-Compassion, to bring out those whom He wishes among the people of the Fire, He ordered⁵³ the angels to bring out of the Fire those – among those on whom God wishes to show Loving-Compassion – who did not associate anything with God, among those who say *“There is no god but God.”*

For the angels do recognize them in the Fire. They know them by the effect of their praying,⁵⁴ for the Fire eats up everything of the descendants of Adam but the effect of their praying. Because God has forbidden the Fire to consume the effect of praying.

So they are brought out of the Fire, all scraped and torn apart. And the Water of Life is poured over them, so that through it they spring back to life just like the seedling carried along in the silt by the flood.

Next, God finishes judging among the servants, and still there remains a man whose *face* is turned looking toward the Fire, who is the last of the people of the Garden to enter the Garden.

Now that person says: “O My Lord, turn my face away from the Fire! For its wind (or: “smell”) was hurting me and its flames were burning me up!” So that person calls upon God and asks Him for what God had wished that person would ask of Him.

Then God says: “Wouldn’t you want to ask for something else, if I did that for you?”

And that person says: “I’m not asking you for *anything* else!” And he gives his Lord all sorts of pledges and promises (not to ask for anything more), as God wishes.

Then God turns his face away from the Fire, and when He has brought that person close to the Garden and he has seen It, he is silent (or: ‘becomes calm’), as (long as) God wishes for him to be silent.

So then that person says: “O my Lord, bring me close to the Door of the Garden!”

And God says to him: “But didn’t you just give all your pledges and promises that you wouldn’t ask Me for anything but what I’d given you?! Woe unto you, O son of Adam – look how untrustworthy you are!”

So that person says: "O my Lord!", and they keep on praying and pleading with God until He says to them:

"Now won't you want to ask for something else again, if I grant you that?"

And that person replies: "No, by Your Majesty!", and he gives his Lord all the pledges and promises that God may wish.

Then God brings him up to the Door of the Garden, and when he is standing next to the Door of the Garden, Paradise is opened up to him, so that he sees all the good and the joyful pleasures It contains.

Now that person will be silent and calm as long as God wishes for him to be so, and then he says: "My Lord, bring me into the Garden!"

So God says to him: "Didn't you give Me all your pledges and promises that you wouldn't ask Me for anything more than what I'd given you!? Woe to you, O son of Adam, how untrustworthy you are!"

Then that person says: "O my Lord, don't make me the most wretched of Your creatures!" And he keeps on praying and calling on God until God laughs because of him!

So when God laughs because of him He says: "Go on, enter the Garden!" And when He had caused that person to enter Paradise, God said to him: "Wish (for whatever you desire)!"

So that person keeps on asking his Lord and wishing as long as God keeps pointing out to him (all sorts of things), reminding him first of this and then of that . . . until, when all his wishes and desires are quite exhausted, God says to him: "All that is yours, and its like along with it!"

Now 'Ata' ibn Yazid [the reporter of the whole hadith] continued:

Now Abu Sa'id al-Khudri was with Abu Hurayra all along, and he didn't correct him about anything in it until Abu Hurayra mentioned that God had said to that man ' . . . and *its like* along with it.'

Abu Sa'id said: '(No, God said) "And *ten times as much* like it, along with it!", O Abu Hurayra.'

Abu Hurayra said: 'I only remembered His saying "All that, and its like along with it!"'

Abu Sa'id said: 'I swear that I learned it by heart exactly from the Messenger of God, that he said: "That, and ten times as much like it!"'

Abu Hurayra concluded: 'And that man was the last of the people of the Garden to enter the Garden.'

THE 'HADITH OF THE INTERCESSION'⁵⁵

[. . . from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, who said:] Some people during the time of the Messenger of God asked him: 'O Messenger of God, will we see our Lord on the Day of the Rising?'

The Messenger of God said: 'Yes! Do you have any trouble seeing the sun at noon, on a bright clear day when there are no clouds? Or do you have any trouble seeing the full moon on a clear and cloudless night?'

'No, O Messenger of God!', they replied.

He said: 'You will have no more trouble in seeing God on the Day of the Rising than you have in seeing either of them!'

[The Prophet continued:] 'Now when it is the Day of the Rising, a Caller called out "Let every *Umma*⁵⁶ follow what it was worshipping!"

Then there is not a one of those who were worshipping idols or graven images other than God, but that they all go on falling into the Fire, one by one.

(This continued) until none remained but those who were worshipping God, both the pious and the sinners, among the People of the (revealed) Book who lived long ago . . . [But most of them also turn out to have 'associated' others in their worship of God, so that their 'thirst' is recompensed by the 'mirages' of the Fire.]

(This continued) until none remained but those who are worshipping God (alone), both the pious and the sinners. The Lord of the Worlds came to them *in the form farthest from the one in which they imagined ('saw') Him*. He said (to them): "What are you-all waiting for?! Every *Umma* is pursuing what they used to worship!"

"O our Lord", they replied, "we kept away from *those* people⁵⁷ (while we were) in the world,⁵⁸ no matter how much we were in need of them, and we had nothing to do with them!"

So he says (to them): "*(But) I am your Lord!*"

"We take refuge with God from you!", they say. "We don't associate anything with God!" (And they keep on saying this) two or three times, until some of them are just about to turn around and go away.

Then he says: "Is there any Sign (*âya*) between you-all and Him by which you would recognize Him?"

And they say: "Yes."

Then (the True Reality) is revealed . . . ,⁵⁹ and the only ones who remain, who God allows to pray, are those who used to bow down to God spontaneously, out of their soul's own desire. As for all of those who used to bow down in prayer out of social conformity and to protect their reputation (out of fear of what others might say or do), God makes them entirely into 'backs', so that whenever they want to bow down in prayer, instead they keep falling back on their backs!

Then they will raise up their heads (from prayer), and He will already have been transformed (back) into His form in which they saw Him the first time (that is, in this world).

Then after that He said: "I am your Lord", and they are saying: "(Yes), You are our Lord!"

Then after that the Bridge (*al-jisr*) is set up over Gehenna, and the Intercession takes place and they are all saying: "O my God, protect, protect!"⁶⁰

Then someone says: 'O Messenger of God, what is this "Bridge"?'

He said: 'It is a slippery, precarious toehold, covered with hooks and spikes and thorns like a bush in the desert they call '*al-sa'dân*'. The people of faith pass over it as quickly as the glance of an eye, or like lightning, the wind, birds, fast horses or camels. Some escape untouched; some are scratched and torn, but manage to get away; while others tumble into the Fire of Gehenna. (And this continues) until the people of faith are safely free from the Fire.

Now by Him Who holds my soul in His Hand, not one of you could implore and beseech (someone) in seeking to gain what is (your) right and due any more intensely than the people of faith plead with God, on the Day of the Rising, on behalf of their friends who are in the Fire!

They are saying: "O our Lord, those (friends of ours) used to fast with us, and they were praying and they were loving!"

Then it is said to them: "Bring out whoever you-all knew (among them)!" So their forms are kept protected from the Fire, and they bring out a great many people whom the fire had already consumed halfway up their legs, or to the knee.

Next they say: "O our Lord, there does not remain in the Fire

a single one of those whom You ordered us (to bring out)."

So He says: "Return, all of you, and bring out anyone in whose heart you find even a dinar's weight⁶¹ of good!"

So they bring out a great many people, and then they say: "O our Lord, we did not leave in the Fire a single one of those whom You ordered us (to bring out)."

Next He says: "Return, all of you, and bring out anyone in whose heart you find even *half* a dinar's weight of good!"

So they bring out a great many people, and then they say: "O our Lord, we did not leave in the Fire a single one of those You ordered us (to bring out)."

Next He says: "Return, all of you, and bring out anyone in whose heart you find even '**an atom's-weight of good!**'"⁶²

So they bring out a great many people, and then they say: "O our Lord, we didn't leave in the Fire any good at all!"'

Now Abu Sa'id al-Khudri was saying [as he recounted what the Prophet said]: 'If you-all don't believe what I'm recounting in this hadith, then read, if you will, (the Qur'anic verse) "**Surely God does not do even an atom's-weight of wrong, and if it be a good-and-beautiful (action), He multiplies it many times, and He brings from His Presence an immense Reward!**"(4:40).

Then God says: "The angels have interceded; and the prophets⁶³ have interceded; the people of faith have interceded. Now none remains but '**the Most Loving and Compassionate of all!**'"⁶⁴

Then He grasps a handful from the Fire, and He brings out of it a group of people *who never did any good at all*, who have already returned to charred ashes. Then He throws them into a river in one of the openings of the Garden, a river that is called "the River of Life". And they come out of (that River) like a seed that grows out of the muddy silt carried along by the flood: haven't you seen how it grows up next to a rock or a tree, green on the side facing the sun, and paler on the shady side?'

He continued: 'They will come out like pearls, with seal-rings on their necks. Then the people of the Garden recognize them: "These are those who have been set free by the All-Compassionate, Who has admitted them into the Garden without any (good) deed that they did or sent before them."

Then He says: "**Enter the Garden** (cf. 89:30) – whatever you see there is yours!"

They say: "O Lord, You have granted us blessings which you did not grant to anyone else in the world!"

And He says: "There is with Me (a blessing and favor) better than this."

And they reply: "O our Lord, what could be better than this?"

He answers: "My absolute Love-and-Satisfaction:⁶⁵ I will never be angry with you after this!"'

THE HADITH OF 'THE HALTING-PLACES OF THE RESURRECTION'⁶⁶

This extremely long hadith, which is not recorded in the early Sunni collections, is quoted in full by Ibn 'Arabi in Chapters 64 and 65 of the *Futûhât*. Near the beginning of Chapter 64 (IV, 436–7), and again at the end of his *Mishkât al-Anwâr*,⁶⁷ he explains that he studied it personally with 'our shaykh (the *sharif*) al-Qassar', in front of the Ka'ba at Mecca in the year 599 AH (the same year he wrote the *Mishkât al-Anwâr*), and gives the full *isnâd* going back to 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, who heard it 'from 'Ali b. Abi Talib, surrounded by a number of the Companions of God's Messenger' – a picture evidently intended to emphasize both its importance and the public reliability of the transmission.

The hadith itself begins (IV, 437): 'There are fifty Halting-places (*mawâqif*) in the Rising, and *each of them is for a thousand years*,⁶⁸ after the people have left their tombs . . . ', and the first forty-nine stages or tests, concluding with seven 'bridges' constituting the famous 'Bridge' (*al-sirât*) over Hell, are discussed in the sections quoted in Chapter 64 (IV, 437–42). Most of these stages involve the description of a complex spiritual or moral virtue – beginning with 'faith' (*îmân*) – which is said to immediately 'save' (from the ensuing tests and sufferings) those souls who fully realize that particular virtue. The final halting-place consists of a detailed, highly poetic portrayal of God's welcoming of the blessed in Paradise (V, 78–82), including the selections translated in Section V, Part 2 of this article – most of which are also recorded as separate 'divine sayings' in the *Mishkât al-Anwar*.

Notes

1. *Kulliyât Shams-i Tabrîz*, ed. B. Furuzanfar (Tehran, 1341 h.s.), p. 64 (no. 11) of the *Rubâ'îyât*.
2. Claude Addas' recent biographical study (*Ibn 'Arabî, ou la Quête du Soufre Rouge* (Gallimard: Paris, 1988, translated into English as: *Quest for the Red Sulphur* (Islamic Texts Society: Cambridge, 1993)) has underlined the relative anonymity – or at least the lack of any widespread *public* following and notoriety – of Ibn 'Arabi's writing and teaching during his own lifetime, a fact which only highlights the paradox of his constantly widening and deepening influence in later centuries, including the remarkable spread of his writings in the West in this century. For the broad outlines of his subsequent historical influences, see our survey of 'Ibn 'Arabi and His Interpreters' in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106 (1986), 539–51 and 733–56, and 107 (1987), 101–19.
3. The *Futûhât* and Ibn 'Arabi's other writings contain a number of autobiographical allusions to the inspired roots of those distinctive qualities in the Shaykh's own decisive youthful experience of his spiritual 'identity' with both the Qur'an and the 'Muhammadan Reality'. See our translation of several such key passages from Chapter 366 of the *Futûhât*, in *Les Illuminations de la Mecque/The Meccan Illuminations*, ed. M. Chodkiewicz (Sindbad: Paris, 1988), Chapter II: for example, 'I and the Qur'an are brothers. . . ,' and ' . . . everything about which we speak, both in my (teaching) sessions and in my writings, comes only from the presence of the Qur'an and Its treasures; I was given the keys of Its understanding and divine support from It. . . '. For further explanation, see the related biographical discussions in Addas, *Ibn 'Arabî, ou la Quête du Soufre Rouge*; the detailed illustrations of Qur'anic influence throughout M. Chodkiewicz, *Un Océan sans Rivage: Ibn 'Arabî, Le Livre et la Loi* (Seuil: Paris, 1992, translated into English as: *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn 'Arabi, The Book and the Law* (Islamic Texts Society: Cambridge, 1993)); and the detailed discussions of Ibn 'Arabi's self-conception as 'Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood' in M. Chodkiewicz, *Le Sceau des Saints: Prophétie et Sainteté dans la Doctrine d'Ibn 'Arabî* (Gallimard: Paris, 1986, translated into English as: *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi* (Islamic Texts Society: Cambridge, 1993)).
4. Much closer to Ibn 'Arabi's own Andalusian cultural roots, although in an outwardly different form, the nearly contemporary

Zohar exhibits in its distinctive approach to earlier scripture – as well as its extraordinarily pervasive eventual influences – many of the underlying rhetorical methods and metaphysical assumptions of the *Futūhāt*.

5. See our translation of that critical section of his Introduction in 'How to Study the *Futūhāt*: Ibn 'Arabi's own Advice', pp. 73–89 in *Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi: a Commemorative Volume*, ed. S. Hirtenstein and M. Tiernan (Element Books: Shaftesbury/ Rockport, 1993), as well as a discussion of some of its wider political and practical spiritual implications in our article on 'Ibn 'Arabi's "Esotericism": the Problem of Spiritual Authority', in *Studia Islamica*, LXXI (1990), 37–64.

6. The '*ibādāt*: prayer and purification, charity, fasting and pilgrimage, Chapters 67–72; the length and importance of these chapters within the opening section (*fasl al-ma'ârif*) of the work as a whole is suggested by the fact that they alone comprise most of Vols V–XII in O. Yahya's new critical edition of the *Futūhāt*.

7. Or '*its face*', as this verse is sometimes read by Ibn 'Arabi and others, a reading that is grammatically allowable and quite meaningful in itself, given the sense of *wajh* as 'essence' and the eschatological context of this verse [which concludes '**His is the judgment, and to Him you are all returned**'], as well as the many verses mentioned below which use 'face' to refer to the essential, surviving aspect of souls in the other world.

8. See verses 2:112, 3:20 (applied to Muhammad), 4:125 (of '**one who is best/most beautiful in Religion**', *man ahsana dīnan*, and truly follows Abraham), and 31:22. The contrasting state of inwardly 'facing away' from God is described at 22:11 and 67:22.

9. Given the pervasiveness of this usage in these eschatological contexts, it is quite possible that the Arabic term (*wajh*) here is being used to refer to the substance or soul or essential spiritual being of each person in the other world, as Ibn 'Arabi often seems to presume (see selections in Sections III–V, Part 2 of this article). Passages where the 'faces' of the *blessed* are referred to include 10:26–7, 20:111, 48:29 (on 'the marks of prayer'), 75:22, 80:38–9, 83:24, and 88:8–16. There are more than twenty corresponding descriptions of the 'faces' of those suffering torments, often in immediately contrasting sections of the same Qur'anic passages just cited.

10. This 'first section, concerning the (fundamental) forms of (divine) Knowledge' (*fasl al-ma'ârif*: I, 75–83, in the author's own *fihrist* or Table of Contents), Chapters 1–73 (of 560 in all), is the longest of the six major subdivisions of the entire book; it comprises Vols I–XIII in the new critical edition, and all of Vol. I and almost a quarter of Vol. II in the older four-volume lithographed editions of the *Futûhât*.

11. This is particularly true of the hadith on *iẖsân* and the three dimensions of Religion (commonly used as a sort of catechism in popular religious teaching throughout the Islamic world), and, for Ibn 'Arabi's own metaphysical teachings, with the 'hadith of the supererogatory works' and that of God's 'transformation through the forms'. See the more detailed references in the Appendix below.

12. For references to other chapters of the *Futûhât* (outside the focus of this study) where Ibn 'Arabi also discusses this hadith in some detail, see the section on this hadith in the Appendix below.

13. *Hijâb*, in the singular: the term is probably to be understood here in the context of the much wider symbolic imagery of the divine 'Court', referring to the series of curtains and dividers, and corresponding ranks of courtiers and nobility, setting off different degrees of access and intimacy to the 'King' and His 'Throne'. This, in any case, is the context assumed in Ibn 'Arabi's own amplified discussion of the divine 'Visit' and beatific 'Listening' of the blessed in Chapter 65 (translated in Section V, Part 2 of this article).

14. *Al-nawâfil*: see the longer explanation of this key term at note 24 in the Appendix below.

15. That is, 'And *if you are not*, then you *do* see Him . . .', as explained in the translated passages (and related notes) in Section IV, Part 2 of this article.

16. For some of Ibn 'Arabi's own interpretations of these details, see the translated passages from Chapter 72 of the *Futûhât* in our article 'Seeing Past the Shadows: Ibn 'Arabi's "Divine Comedy"', in the *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*, XII (1993), 50–69, as well as the more extensive selections translated in Chodkiewicz (ed.), *Les Illuminations de la Mecque / The Meccan Illuminations*, pp. 177–84 and 588–93.

17. See the extended references to this long hadith and Ibn 'Arabi's use of it in other contexts in the discussion at the end of the

Appendix below. (A volume of complete translations from those and other eschatological chapters is now in preparation.)

18. See our translation and discussion of the key passages from his Introduction to the *Futûhât* in 'How to Study the *Futûhât*: Ibn 'Arabi's own Advice', pp. 73–89 in Hirtenstein and Tiernan (eds), *Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi*.

19. In her recent pioneering study of the Shaykh's mystical language, *Ibn 'Arabi wa Mawlid Lughâ Jadîda* (Dandara: Beirut, 1411/1991), pp. 59–90.

20. See Wensinck, *Concordance*, I, 464 (mentioning versions in Muslim, Ibn Maja, and Ibn Hanbal). This celebrated hadith is usually given according to the version recorded in Ibn Maja, I, 44. (Muslim, *îmân*, 293 cites a similar hadith which mentions simply 'a veil of Light', without any specific number.) Ibn 'Arabi interprets this hadith in greater detail in Chapter 426 of the *Futûhât* (IV, 38–9), focusing on the question of how 'light' can be a 'veil'; in Chapter 73, question 115 (II, 110; end of Vol. XII of the new critical edition), on the meaning of the 'Splendors of God's Face'; and in his *Kitâb al-Tajalliyât* (ed. O. Yahya, Beirut, 1967), VI, 728. Other discussions, usually mentioning the different versions of this hadith, can be found in the *Futûhât* at II:80, 460, 488, 542, 554; III:212, 216, 289; and IV:72.

21. When Ibn 'Arabi discusses or paraphrases this hadith, including the passages cited in the preceding note, he usually adds here the phrase 'of the creatures (or 'creation': *al-khalq*);' it is not clear whether he is simply paraphrasing (and qualifying) the hadith, or actually quoting it in another version.

22. This classical *hadîth qudsî* is one of the best-known and most influential of the 'divine sayings', since it so clearly states the essential inner link between religious 'action' and spiritual realization ('*ilm* and '*amal*) and its ontological underpinnings. It is the ninety-first Divine Saying included in Ibn 'Arabi's own *Mishkât al-Anwâr* (M. Vâlsan, *La Niche des Lumières* (Les Editions de l'Oeuvre: Paris, 1983) pp. 118–21). For a full discussion of the canonical sources (including Bukhari's *Sahîh*) and variants, as well as the special prominence of this hadith throughout the major Sufi writings from earliest times, see W. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (Mouton: The Hague, 1977), pp. 173–4 and notes.

23. From the same root as *farīda*, the technical term for the *obligatory* religious 'duties' (the daily ritual prayers, fasting in Ramadan, etc.) in later schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

24. *Al-nawāfil* in later Islamic tradition becomes a technical legal term referring to the supplementary acts of personal devotion, often mentioned in the Qur'an and described at length in the hadith, which were constantly practiced by the Prophet and his close Companions, especially in the early Meccan period, but which were not made incumbent on the wider body of Muslims in Medina and in later legal schools. These devotions would normally include longer and more numerous *prayers*, especially at night, much more frequent *fasting*, spiritual *retreats* during Ramadan (and some other times), a wide range of *invocations* (*dhikr*), and more specific devotional *vows* (*nadh'r*). Possibly even more relevant, from Ibn 'Arabi's own point of view, is the earlier, more basic meaning of simply '*what comes next*' (that is, after the obligatory forms of worship), originally referring to the end of a caravan.

25. The Arabic root for 'love' (*hubb*) used here, as in the Qur'an, refers to the *individual*, 'particularized' and *reciprocal* divine Response to the devotion of the Friends of God; that 'personal relationship' is always discussed there in terms quite distinct from the universal, creative divine 'Lovingmercy' (*rahma*) that 'encompasses all things'.

26. Literally: '(already) was', a dimension of the saying that is often very important in Ibn 'Arabi's own interpretations. The Arabic conditional used here grammatically requires the past tense, but can be translated in the past, present or future, according to the context and sense.

27. Translated here according to the version attributed to Abu Hurayra, recorded by Muslim, *birr* (45), 43, which is the source for the same hadith (no. 98) in Ibn 'Arabi's own *Mishkāt al-Anwār*. See Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*, pp. 179–80. Wensinck, *Concordance*, VI, 198, mentions another version in Ibn Hanbal (*wasāya*, 7).

28. This literal translation seems to accord with the intentional reference to the 'eschatological' context here – in which the souls of those being judged are themselves understood to be suffering from the spiritual 'hunger' and 'thirst' often mentioned in those contexts in the Qur'an.

29. *Al-dîn*, as *îmân*, *islâm*, *ihsân*: reported by Abu Hurayra, from *Sahîh al-Bukhârî*, Book II (*îmân*), 37, which is the shortest (and probably the earliest) version of this famous story. Wensinck, *Concordance*, I, 467, notes the multiple versions in Bukhari, Muslim, al-Darimi, Ibn Maja and al-Tirmidhi. Ibn 'Arabi was certainly aware of those differences (which, however, do not affect the central definition of *ihsân*), since he sometimes mentions the different ways Muhammad refers to Gabriel and the purpose of his visit in those various versions.

30. All of these points are frequently included in Qur'anic enumerations of the 'objects' of faith (for example, at 2:285), although the Qur'an even more frequently mentions simply 'Faith in God and the Last Day (resurrection)' (at 2:8, etc.).

31. Here, as in some of the later passages in the Qur'an and in a number of hadith, the root *islâm* has taken on a specific association with basic practices typifying Muhammad's nascent religious community. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the primary Qur'anic sense (closer to the Arabic root) refers to the highest spiritual condition of total '*surrender*' to God's will, in which meaning it is often applied in the Qur'an to pre-'Islamic' prophets, messengers and people of exemplary faith.

32. Or 'acts of charity' (*zakât*): the meaning of this Arabic root – originally referring to 'purification' (of the soul) – in the Qur'an itself remains closely linked to acts of charity and the root sense of spiritual 'purification' in general: cf. 2:177, 261, 267; 9:60. In the hadith and later forms of Islamic law the same term was more often applied to the forms of annually *prescribed* charitable giving, as opposed to other more voluntary forms of charity (the *sadaqa* discussed in Section IV, Part 2 of this article).

33. This version in Bukhari (unlike the more elaborate variant in Muslim's *Sahîh*) does not mention the Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) specifically. Muslim's version, reported by 'Umar instead of Abu Hurayra, also discusses *islâm* before *îmân*, adds faith in 'the decreeing of good and evil alike' (a later theological issue), and includes more description of the 'mysterious stranger': each of those additions is a likely indicator of a later literary and theological reworking of the simpler version recorded by Bukhari.

34. Literally (although the definition given here is far more appropriate to its particular Qur'anic usage): '*to do what is both good and beautiful or noble*'. The reference in the hadith is certainly to the

Qur'anic usage of the term, where 'those who do *ihsân*' are referred to frequently (25 times) with the highest praise, promised the highest paradise, associated with the prophets and messengers, connected with the central spiritual virtues, etc. Even more strikingly, the Qur'an insists that 'Verily God is with those who act in awareness of Him and the *muhsinûn*' (16:128; again at 29:69); 'Do *ihsân*, verily God loves the *muhsinûn*' (2:195; the restriction of God's profoundest Love (*hubb*) to them is repeated similarly at 3:134, 3:148, 5:13, 5:93;); and 'God's Lovingmercy (*rahma*) is near to the *muhsinûn*' (7:56).

35. This particular hadith, quoting Abu Hurayra's account of his conversation with the Prophet, is recorded in essentially the same version by al-Tirmidhi (*sifât al-janna*, 15, 25; *birr*, 54) and Ibn Maja (*zuhd*, 39) – from which the quotations are taken here – as well as by al-Darimi (*riqâq*, 116) and in a number of places by Ahmad ibn Hanbal; see the full references in Wensinck, *Concordance*, V, 542–3). This hadith comes at the very end of Ibn Maja's entire hadith collection, and is therefore clearly understood there to concern the ultimate ends and finality of human actions.

36. That is, *yawm al-jum'a*, or Friday; but the reference is essentially to the fact that all the people of Paradise, whatever their rank, are brought together on this 'Day'. The vague phrase *fî miqdâr* underlies the very different nature of whatever 'time' is appropriate in this context.

37. Ibn 'Arabi's own interpretations of the different 'ranks' of the spiritual 'Vision' of the prophets, saints and others alluded to in this hadith are detailed in his responses to the spiritual 'test-questions' of Hakim al-Tirmidhi in Chapter 73 of the *Futûhât* (questions 67–72; II, 84–6 in the older Beirut edn; Vol. XII of O. Yahya's new critical edn). English translations of questions 67 and 71 are included in our eschatological selections from the *Futûhât*, pp. 176–84 and 542–8 in Chodkiewicz (ed.), *Les Illuminations de la Mecque / The Meccan Illuminations*.

38. This same divine description of 'what God has prepared' in the Garden occurs separately, in almost the same words (adding only 'of mortals' [*bashar*] at the end), as an even more famous *hadîth qudsî* that Ibn 'Arabi includes as no. 21 in his *Mishkât al-Anwâr*. That short Divine Saying is included in *all* the canonical collections, and echoes I Corinthians 2:9, Isaiah 64:4, and even more literally the *Gospel of Thomas*, saying no. 17 (trans. T. Lamdin, in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. Robinson, p. 128). See the detailed discussion

of the variants and sources in Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*, pp. 117–19.

39. Literally: 'is imaged' or 'its likeness appears'; the root is that of all the Qur'anic 'likenesses', and the verb is that used to describe all the forms of perception of the blessed in Paradise.

40. Or 'our spiritual twins': the celestial counterparts or companions ('houris' and 'young men') mentioned in many Qur'anic verses concerning Paradise.

41. For this transformation (*inqilāb* and *taqallub*) or 'turning inside-out' in the resurrected state, see the Qur'an 84:9; 7:165; 26:50 and 227; 43:14. The first part of this sentence could also be translated: 'And He obliged us to . . .' or 'authorized us to . . .'.

42. *Al-tahawwul* or *al-taqallub fī al-suwar*: translated here from the *Sahīh* of Muslim, *imān*, 81. This hadith and the immediately following one (in Muslim) are both recorded in almost identical terms, near the end of Bukhari's *Sahīh* (*tawhīd*, 23 and 24; repeated in the chapter on *riqāq*, 52); see additional references in Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*, pp. 134–5 (for the *hadīth qudsī* section only) and Wensinck, *Concordance*, I, 348 (versions also recorded by Ibn Maja, al-Tirmidhi, al-Darimi and Ibn Hanbal). This hadith is obviously similar in meaning and structure to the following 'Hadith of the Intercession', although Ibn 'Arabi tends to cite the opening section of both versions (concerning the 'hypocrites' and their inability to perceive what surpasses their beliefs) independently of the rest of the hadith.

43. *Tawaffā*: the root of this untranslatable term – which the Qur'an also uses several times to describe the angels' 'receiving and greeting' each human soul at the moment of death – also has equally important connotations of (1) giving satisfaction, completion and fulfillment; (2) giving someone their due, fully requiting or compensating them; (3) fulfilling and keeping faith with a vow or promise; and (4) restoring wholeness, perfection, abundance and completion.

44. Or 'dreaming': the root of *manām* can refer to both states.

45. 'Sends (back?)': the verb used here (*arsala*) is actually the same used to refer to the divine 'sending' of the 'Messengers' (*rusul*), a term which in the Qur'an most often refers to the Lawgivers among the prophets (*anbiyā'*).

46. This Qur'anic phrase has two closely related meanings: in its ordinary, extended usage it would mean something like 'They did not value/appreciate/esteem/rank Him properly/truly.' But three more literal and concrete senses of this verb and *masdar* from the root *q-d-r* are even more relevant to the hadith in Muslim. *Qadr*, as an active participle form, is frequently used in the Qur'an to refer to (1) the divine 'determination' or 'specification' of all manifest existence (for example, in *Laylat al-Qadr*, Sura 97). (2) The same root – especially in the divine Name *al-Qadîr*, the All-Capable, 'Omnipotent' – has the common sense of 'ability', 'capacity', 'possibility' (of doing something). And (3), *qadr* commonly refers to the size or extent, 'amount', 'degree' or 'measure' of something (whether qualitatively or quantitatively). This following hadith well illustrates the failure of ordinary human 'estimation' (*taqdîr*) of the ultimate Reality in respect to all three of these meanings of *qadr*.

47. All of what follows becomes clearer if one keeps in mind that the expression *Rabb* ('lord', 'sustainer', 'provider', etc.) here is always used by speakers in the Qur'an to refer to their most undeniable, ultimate, concrete, personal and intimate awareness of the Truly Real, the particular 'Face of God' that is most powerfully and undeniably real to them.

48. Literally, both here and in the following question: 'Does it give you pain to. . . ?' – which suggests other interpretive dimensions of the contrast here (with complex echoes of Qur'anic symbolism) between our direct vision of the moon and the sun.

49. The verb in this reply, as in the original question, is in the ongoing *present imperfect* (as with most of the 'eschatological' language in the Qur'an), here with a further intensive suffix indicating absolute certainty and affirmation. Although such verb forms can be understood as English 'future' tenses, it would be very easy (and common) to add a special future prefix ruling out any ambiguity, had that been desired.

50. *Al-nâs*: the vague, indefinite plural used in the Qur'an as an approximate, loosely pejorative equivalent to the English 'most people' – typically in explicit contrast to those whose spiritual senses ('heart', 'inner vision', etc.) have been awakened.

51. The mysterious recurrent Qur'anic term referring to all the illusory objects of desire and attraction that lead people toward the 'shadows' of illusion and obscure the 'Light' of the divine Presence.

52. Or 'protect (them)' (*sallim, sallim*). [Here we have omitted a few lines describing the 'Hooks' that seize those crossing this Bridge.]

53. As in the Qur'an, these references to the 'Rising', as described from the divine perspective, are all in the past 'perfect', *already accomplished* tense.

54. *Sujûd*: literally, their 'bowing down' in (true) prayer; the word translated as 'effect' here could also refer to a more visible 'mark' (like that left on the forehead after frequent prostrations).

55. This hadith, a somewhat different version of the preceding one narrated this time by the Abu Sa'id al-Khudri who corrects Abu Hurayra at the end of the preceding hadith, comes immediately after that hadith in both Bukhari's and Muslim's *Sahîh*. Ibn 'Arabi himself quotes the central, 'Divine Saying' section of this hadith, from the collection of Muslim, in his *Mishkât al-Anwâr*, no. 26, and this is the version he also tends to cite when discussing the actual wording (rather than the general theme) in the *Futûhât*. In Chapter 64 of the *Futûhât* (IV, 458–62), Ibn 'Arabi quotes another lengthy 'hadith of intercession' – without mentioning any particular source or chain of transmission – that coincides with this version of the hadith only at the very end (IV, 461–2).

56. Usually translated as '(religious) community'. But here – as often in the Qur'an, where the expression is applied to other creatures – the term may be understood in a much more complex and less strictly historicist sense.

57. The term here is *al-nâs*, here in the pejorative sense of what they take to be 'ordinary', 'sinful' people (including those of other religious communities).

58. *Al-dunyâ*: that is, the earthly, material world (since the story has now placed them in the 'other' world, *al-âkhira*).

59. The hadith here presupposes quite literally the situation in the rest of this Qur'anic passage (68:42–3): '**. . . and they are called to bow down (in prayer), but they are not able, their eyes abased, humiliation overcoming them – although they used to be calling (others) to pray, when they were whole and sound!**'

60. The phrase mentioned here (*sallim, sallim*) is exactly the same as in the previous hadith's account of the Intercession, except that the 'they' are not yet specifically identified: these words could be

taken either as the cry of the various 'intercessors' (see below) pleading with God for *others*, or more generally as expressing the inner state of all the souls terrified (for *themselves*) by the events of the Judgment and sight of Gehenna.

61. An extremely tiny, 'feather-weight' gold coin. The version of this same hadith given in Bukhari (see references above) substitutes 'faith' (*îmân*) in each case where this version has 'good'.

62. Alluding to a well-known Qur'anic passage at 99:7 (and several related verses, including the one at 4:40 which Abu Sa'id al-Khudri goes on to quote below).

63. *Al-nabîyûn*: the all-inclusive Qur'anic term for many of the pre-Islamic Messengers, saints and sages.

64. *Arham al-râhimîn*: alluding especially here to the verse 12:92, although the same divine Name is also cited at 7:151, 12:64, and 21:83.

65. *Ridwânî*: alluding to such Qur'anic verses as 57:20, 5:16, 9:21, etc. (mentioned 13 times, in addition to related uses of the root *r-d-y*); the term is often translated as divine 'Satisfaction' or 'Contentment', but such English expressions are obviously utterly inadequate in this context.

66. *Mawâqif al-qiyâma*: Ibn 'Arabi also frequently refers to this hadith as the 'hadith of al-Naqqash', using the name of one of its intermediate transmitters.

67. Ibn 'Arabi's personal collection of 101 'Divine Sayings' (*hadîth qudsî*) includes eight selections (numbers 49, 53, 55, 60, 66, 69, 78 and the concluding 101st) from this hadith, and the conditions in which he learned it (at Mecca in 599 AH, the same year the *Mishkât* was itself composed) are described at the very end. These 'Divine Sayings' are basically parts of the same hadith recorded in full in Chapter 65 of the *Futûhât* and partially translated in Section V, Part 2 of this article. See the translation (with facing Arabic text) by Vâlsan, *La Niche des Lumières*.

68. This is clearly intended as an allusion (given the total of fifty Stations) to the famous Qur'anic description of the 'Rising of the angels and the Spirit' in 'a Day whose extent is fifty thousand years' (70:4).