THE BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE

Being a Translation with notes of
Kitab al-‘Ilm of Al-Ghazzali’s
Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din

by

NABIH AMIN FARIS

SH. MUHAMMAD ASHRAF
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

Online Edition for al-Ghazali.org
Editor's Note:

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate
Praise be to Allah who has allowed us to accomplish this great task of bringing as much of
Imam Ghazali’s works to the WWW. Praise be to Allah who distinguished the community of
the faithful with the lights of certainty and favored the people of truth by guiding them to
the foundation of faith; who saved them from the errors of the unrighteous and the
wickedness of the unbelievers, and with His grace led them to follow the example of the
chief Apostle; who directed their footsteps in the way of the honored Companions of the
Apostle and enabled them to emulate the righteous predecessors, so that they protected
themselves against the dictates of sheer reason with the rope of Allah, and against the lives
and beliefs of the early generation with the clear beaten track, combining thereby the
products of reason and the ordinances of the traditional Law.

The text of this OCR’ed version is from a re-typeset of the original published by Sh.
Muhammad Ashraf. It was only after the book was scanned that I had acquired a copy of the
original published version. Therefore the book will be checked against the original published
edition. Also simple mistakes in spelling were corrected without notice. The translator had
used the translation of the Qur’an by Rodwell. In this version a change Inshallah will be
made to A. Yusef Ali or Pickhall when complete. Additional notes are marked with “ed.”
and in square brackets. Further, all instances of the word “God” is replaced with the Arabic
original “Allah” (779 instances). Also the spelling of the Messenger is standardized to
“Muhammad” in lieu of anything else. Further references to the Qur’an have been modified
to remove the roman numerals which are no longer in vogue. The reference is removed
from the footnote and included the text Surah number: Ayah number. i.e. (2:201): means
the second sura (al-Baqarah, the cow) Ayah (verse) number 201. As this is standard practice
in some Muslim publications and it should come as no surprise.

Note that square brackets in the translation is by the translator as the added material make it
easier to read but are not actual words in the Arabic original. Also the numbers throughout
the text in the square brackets indicate the page numbers in manuscript mentioned in the
preface. I had a chance to personally examine the manuscript and it is of very high quality.

We also ask the kind reader if he finds any mistakes to inform us and Inshallah we will correct
it at the first opportunity. Also we ask the reader to let us of any words of advice on
improving our web site on Imam Ghazali. If you do find any errors in this text or any of our
texts please do let us know and we will make an attempt at correcting the text in a timely
fashion.

Important note to would be publishers. If you are interested in publishing this book please
let us know and we will provide you with the file in word format. We only ask that you do
not make changes to the text for the sake of integrity.

Our intention is solely for Allah (swt).
CONTENTS

Online Editor's note
Preface
Introduction
BOOK 1: The Book of Knowledge Comprising Seven Sections
SECTION 1: On the Value of Knowledge, Instruction and Learning together with its evidence in tradition and from reason.
  1. ON THE EXCELLENCE OF LEARNING
  2. ON THE EXCELLENCE OF TEACHING
  3. EVIDENCE [FOR THE EXCELLENCE OF KNOWLEDGE] FROM REASON

Section 2: is on On praiseworthy and objectionable branches of knowledge

Section 3: On what is popularly considered to be a part of the science of religion, but is (really) not.

Section 4: On the reasons which induced men to pursue the science of polemics, and on revealing the evils of debate and disputation as well as stating the conditions which render them permissible.

Section 5: On the Proprieties of the Student and the Teacher.

Section 6: On the Evils of Knowledge and on Determining the Distinguishing Features of the Learned People of the Hereafter and those of the Teachers of Falsehood.

SECTION 7: On the Intellect, its Noble Nature, its Definition, and its Divisions

Bibliography
PREFACE

This work would not have been possible without the imaginative help of three Princeton scholars: the late Edwin E. Conklin, the great American biologist, the late Harold H. Bender, the great linguistic scholars and philologist, and my own teacher, mentor, colleague and friend, the leading Arab historian Philip K. Hitti. When the work was first started, in 1936, Professor Conklin was a retired scholar actively directing the affairs of the American Philosophical Society for the promotion of useful knowledge in Philadelphia. Professor Bender was then Chairman of the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures at Princeton University and the chief etymologist of Webster's International Dictionary. Dr. Hitti was Professor of Semitic Languages at Princeton University and the moving spirit for the development of Arab studies in the United States of America.

The idea of preparing a translation of the Ihya' Ulum al-Din of al-Ghazzali originated with Professor Hitti. Professor Bender enthusiastically supported it; and Professor Conklin, in spite of his primary interest in biology, appreciated the importance of the work and got the Society to support it, although the Society's exclusive domain was hitherto the natural sciences. To all of these gentleman and to the Society, I am greatly indebted. Without them I could not have had the intimate company of abu-Hamid for four long years.

In preparing the translation, use was made of four texts; three printed and one in manuscript form. The printed ones are: the first is the text printed at Kafr al-Zaghari in A.H. 1352 from the older Cairo edition of A.H. 1289; it is referred to the notes as 'C'. The second is that contained in the text of the Ithaf al-Sadah al-Muttaqin bi-Sharb Ihya' Ulum al-Din; it is referred to in the notes as SM (text). The third is the text which is reproduced in the margin of the same Ithaf al-Sadah; it is referred to in the notes as SM (margin). The fourth and perhaps the most important is the text contained in a four-volume manuscript at the Princeton University Library (Philip Hitti, Nabih Amin Faris, and Butrus Abd-al-Malik, Descriptive Catalog of the Garrett Collection of Arabic Manuscript in the Princeton University Library, Princeton 1938, No. 1481). It consists of 525 folios; 34.1 x 27.6 cm.; written surface 27.8 x 21.5 cm.; 31 lines at a page; on glazed oriental paper; in naskhi; with catchwords; entries in red; with illumination. It probably dates from the late fifteenth century. This text, called 'B' in the notes, corresponds to SM (text), while 'C' corresponds to SM (margin). In the translation of Qur'anic verses, I depended on J.M. Rodwell's version.

It is my hope that by making this important work available, in English, non-Arabic-speaking scholars will draw a benefit even from my mistakes.

The Second World War forced the work to be placed in an “ice-box”. It might have stayed there indefinitely were it not for the interest of Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, sponsor of the Islamic Literature and devoted friend of all Islamic studies. To him I am indeed grateful.

The manuscript was greatly improved by the close and thorough reading of two of my students: Mr. Robert Hazo and Mr. John Dudley Woodberry: To both I extend my thanks.

Nabih Amin Faris
American University of Beirut January 11, 1962.
INTRODUCTION

“What the Apostle gives you, take; and
What he forbids, from it desist.” (59:7)

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

First, I praise Allah, continuously, though the praise of the fervent does not do justice to His glory.

Second, I invoke the blessing of Allah upon His Apostle, the lord of mankind, as well as upon the other messengers.

Third, I ask His help having resolved to write a book on the revival\[1\] of the religious sciences.

Fourth, I proceed to enlighten you, who are the most self-righteous of those who reject belief, and you, who are the most immoderate of the thoughtless unbelievers.

I am no longer obliged to remain silent, because the responsibility to speak, as well as warn you, has been imposed upon me by your persistent straying from the clear truth, and by your insistence upon fostering evil, flattering ignorance, and stirring up opposition against him who, in order to conform to the dictates of knowledge, deviates from custom and the established practice of men. In doing this he fulfils Allah’s prescriptions for purifying the self and reforming the heart, thus somewhat redeeming a life, which has already been dissipated in despair of prevention and remedy, and avoids by it the company of him whom the Law giver (Muhammad S.A.W.) described when he said, (2) “The most severely punished of all men on the day of resurrection will be a learned man whom Allah has not blessed with His knowledge.”\[2\] For, by my life, there is no reason for your abiding arrogance except the malady which has become an epidemic among the multitudes. That malady consists in not discerning this matter’s importance, the gravity of the problem, and the seriousness of the crisis; in not seeing that life is waning and that what is to come is close at hand, that death is imminent but that the journey is still long, that the provisions are scanty, the dangers great, and the road blocked. The perceptive know that only knowledge and works devoted to Allah avail.

To tread the crowded and dangerous path of the hereafter with neither guide nor companion is difficult, tiring, and strenuous. The guides for the road are the learned men who are the heirs of the Prophet\[3\], but the times are void of them now and only the

---

\[1\] Arabic *ihya* has been rendered revivification. I prefer *revival*.


\[3\] Cf. al-Bukhari, *Ilm*, 11. [Note that Sheikh Zaid Shaker has translated into English Ibn Rajab al-
superficial are left, most of whom have been lured by iniquity and overcome by Satan. Everyone of them was so wrapped up in his immediate fortune that he came to see good as evil and evil as good, so that the science of religion disappeared and the torch of the true faith was extinguished all over the world. They duped the people into believing that there was no knowledge except such ordinances of government as the judges use to settle disputes when the mob dots; or the type of argument which the vainglorious displays in order to confuse and refute; or the elaborate and flowery language with which the preacher seeks to lure the common folk. They did this, because apart from these three, they could find no other ways to snare illegal profit and gain the riches of the world. On the other hand the science of the path of the hereafter, which our forefathers trod and which includes what Allah in His Book called law, wisdom, knowledge, enlightenment, light, guidance, and righteousness, has vanished from among men and been completely forgotten. Since this is a calamity afflicting religion and a grave crisis overshadowing it, I have therefore deemed it important to engage in the writing of this book; to revive the science of religion, to bring to light the exemplary lives of the departed imams, and to show what branches of knowledge the prophets and the virtuous fathers regarded as useful.

I have divided the work into four parts or quarters. These are: the Acts of Worship, the Usages of Life, the Destructive Matters in Life, and the Saving Matters in Life. I have begun the work with the book of knowledge because it is of the utmost importance to determine first of all the knowledge which Allah has, through His Apostle, ordered the elite to seek. This is shown by the words of the Apostle of Allah when he said, “Seeking knowledge is an ordinance obligatory upon every Muslim.” Furthermore, I have begun with the book on knowledge in order to distinguish between useful and harmful knowledge, as the Prophet said, “We seek refuge in Allah from useless knowledge;” and also to show the deviation of the people of this age from right conduct, their delusion as by a glistening mirage, and their satisfaction with the husks of knowledge rather than the pith.

The quarter on the Acts of Worship comprises ten books:
1. The Book of Knowledge
2. The Articles of Faith
3. The Mysteries of Purity
4. The Mysteries of Prayer
5. The Mysteries of Almsgiving
6. The Mysteries of Fasting
7. The Mysteries of the Pilgrimage
8. The Rules of Reading the Qur’an
9. On Invocations and Supplications


The quarter on Usages of Life comprises ten books:
1. The Ethics of Eating
2. The Ethics of Marriage
3. The Ethics of Earning a Livelihood
4. On the Lawful and the Unlawful
5. The Ethics of Companionship and Fellowship with the Various Types of Men
6. On Seclusion
7. The Ethics of Travel
8. On Audition and Grief
9. On Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil
10. The Ethics of Living as Exemplified in the Virtues of the Prophet.

The quarter on the Destructive Matters of Life comprises ten books:
1. On the Wonders of the Heart
2. On the Discipline of the Soul
3. On the Curse of the Two Appetites – The Appetite of the Stomach and the appetite of Sex
4. The Curse of the Tongue
5. The Curse of Anger, Rancour, and Envy
6. The Evils of the World\footnote{Nos. 5 and 5 are in reverse order in B.}
7. The Evil of Wealth and Avarice
8. The Evil of Pomp and Hypocrisy
9. The Evil of Pride and Conceit
10. The Evils of Vanity.

The quarter on the Saving Matters of Life comprises ten books:
1. On Repentance
2. On Patience and Gratitude
3. On Fear and Hope
4. On Poverty and Asceticism
5. On Divine Unity and Dependence
6. On Love, Longing, Intimacy\footnote{Only in C.} and Contentment

\footnote{Nos. 5 and 5 are in reverse order in B.}
\footnote{Only in C.}
7. On Intentions, Truthfulness, and Sincerity
8. On Self-Examination and Self-Accounting
9. On Meditation

In the quarter on the Acts of Worship I shall mention some of the hidden (elements) of its etiquette, the niceties of its rules, and the mysteries of its meanings. (These), the active learned man badly needs; without their knowledge no one will be versed in the science of the hereafter. Most of this information has been neglected in theological studies.

In the quarter on the Usage of Life I shall deal with the rules of practical religion current among men, its deep mysteries, intricate technique, and the piety concealed in its rules of conduct, which no religious man can do without.

In the quarter on the Destructive Matters of Life I shall enumerate every abhorred trait whose exposure the Qur'an has ordered, as well as dealing with the purifying of the soul and the cleansing of the heart therefrom. Under every one of these traits I shall give its definition, the truth about it, its origin, its evil consequences, its symptoms, and finally its treatment. To all this will be added illustrations from the Qur'an tradition, and antiquity.

In the quarter on the Saving Matters of Life, I shall enumerate every praiseworthy trait and every one of the desirable qualities of Allah’s favorites (al-muqarrabun) and the saints, by means of which the slave seeks to draw near to the Lord of the Universe. Similarly, under every-quality I shall give its definition, the truth about it, its origin, its fruit, the sign by which it is known, its excellence which renders it desirable, together with examples to illustrate it from [the fields of] law and reason.

It is true that men have written several works on some of these aspects, but this one differs from them in five ways:

First, by clarifying what they have obscured and elucidating what they have treated casually.

Second, by arranging what they have disarranged, and organizing what they have scattered.

Third, by condensing what they have elaborated, and correcting what they have approved.

Fourth, by deleting what they have repeated (and verifying what they have set’ down).

Fifth, by determining ambiguous matters which have hitherto been unintelligible and never dealt with in any work. For although all have followed one course, there is no reason why one should not proceed independently and bring to light something unknown, paying special attention to what his colleagues have forgotten. It is possible that such obscure things are noticed, but mention of them in writing is overlooked. Or again it may not be a case of overlooking them, but rather one of being prevented from exposing them.

These, therefore, are the characteristics of this work which comprises the aggregate of the (previously enumerated) sciences. Two things have induced me to divide the work into

[[words between brackets only in C.]]
four quarters. The first and original motive is that such an arrangement in research and exposition is imperative because the science by which we approach the hereafter is divided into the science of revelation I mean knowledge and only knowledge. By the science of practical religion I mean knowledge as well as action in accordance with that knowledge. This work will deal only with the science of practical religion, and not with revelation, which one is not permitted to record in writing, although it is the ultimate aim of saints and the desire of the eyes of the Sincere. The science of practical religion is merely a path which leads to revelation and only through their path did the prophets of Allah communicate with the people and lead them to Him. Concerning revelation itself, the prophets spoke only figuratively and briefly through signs and symbols, because they realized the inability of man’s mind to comprehend. Therefore since the learned men are heirs of the prophets, they cannot but follow in their footsteps and emulate their way.

Furthermore, the science of practical religion is divided into outward science, by which is meant that of the functions of the senses, and inward science, by which is meant that of the functions of the heart. The bodily organs perform either acts of worship or usages of life, while the heart, because it is removed from the senses and belongs to the world of dominion, is subject to either praiseworthy or blameworthy influences. Inevitably, therefore, this science divides itself into two parts - outward and inward. The outward, which pertains to the senses, is subdivided into acts of worship and usages of life; the inward, which relates to the conditions of the heart and the qualities of the soul, is subdivided into things which are praiseworthy and things which are objectionable. Together these constitute the four parts of the science of practical religion, a classification objected to by none.

My second motive for adopting this division is that I have noticed that the interests of students in jurisprudence (which has, for the sake of boasting and exploiting its influence and prestige in arguments, become popular among those who do not fear Allah) is genuine. It also is divided into quarters. And since he who dresses as the beloved will also be beloved, I am not far wrong in deeming that the modeling of this book after books of jurisprudence will prove to be a clever move in creating interest in it. For this [same] reason, one of those who [4] wanted to attract the attention of the authorities to [the science of] medicine, modeled it after astronomical lists, arranging it in tables and numbers, and called [his book] Tables of Health. He did this in order that their interest in that [latter] type of study might help in drawing them to read it. Ingenuity in drawing hearts to the science which is good for spiritual life is, however, more important than that of interesting them in medicine which benefits nothing but physical health. The fruit of this science is the treatment of the hearts and souls through which is obtained a life that will persist for ever and ever. How inferior, then, is the medicine of the body, which is of necessity destined to decay before long. Therefore we beg Allah for help to [lead us to] the right path and [the way

---

9[9] Ar. ‘alam-al-malakut, it denotes the Attributes as opposed to ‘alam al-jabarut (the world of almightiness), which denotes the Essence.

10[10] I.e. The Qur’an, the sunnah, catholic consent [‘Ijma’ Consensus ed. ], and analogy.

of] truth, verily He is the Generous, the all Bounteous.
BOOK I

THE BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE
COMPRISING SEVEN SECTIONS

The Book of Knowledge comprises seven sections:

1. On the value of knowledge, instruction, and learning.
2. On the branches of knowledge which are *fardʿayn*,\(^{12}\) on the branches of knowledge which are *fard kifayah*,\(^{13}\) on the definition of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalam*) [as disciplines] in the science of religion; and on the science of the hereafter and that of this world.
3. On what is popularly considered to be part of the science of religion, but is [really] not, including a discussion on the nature of blameworthy knowledge.
4. On the defects of debate and the reasons why people have engaged in dissension and disputation.
5. On the proprieties of the teacher and the student.
6. On the deficiency of knowledge, the [drawbacks] of the learned, and the characteristics distinguishing the scholars of the science of the hereafter from those of the science of this world.
7. On reason, its value, categories and what has been said concerning it [in Tradition].

\(^{12}\) Divinely ordained, and binding for every individual Muslim.
\(^{13}\) Divinely ordained and binding for the Muslim community as a whole. Therefore this collective obligation can be discharged for the community by the action of some, and is not necessarily binding for each individual member.
SECTION I

On the Value of Knowledge, Instruction, and Learning together with its evidence in tradition and from reason.

The excellence of knowledge

The evidence for the excellence of knowledge in the Qur’an is manifest in the words of Allah: “Allah bears witness that there is no Allah but He, and the angels, and men endowed with knowledge, established in righteousness.” (3:16) See, then, how Allah has mentioned Himself first, the angels, second, and men endowed with knowledge third. In this you really have honour, excellence, distinction and rank. And again Allah said: “Allah will raise in rank those of you who believe as well as those who are given knowledge.” (58:12) According to ibn-`Abbas the learned men rank seven hundred grades above the believers; between each two of which is a distance five hundred years long. Said Allah, “Say, `shall those who know be deemed equal with those who do not?” (39:12) Allah also said, “None fear Allah but the wise among His servants;” (35:25) and again, “Say, `Allah is witness enough betwixt me and you, and whoever hath the knowledge of The Book!’ ” (13:43) This I mention to you in order to show that it was possible only through the power of knowledge. Allah also said, “But they to whom knowledge hath been given said, `Woe to you! The reward of Allah is better [for him who believes and does right],’” (28:80) showing thereby that the great importance of the hereafter is appreciated through knowledge. And again Allah said, “These parables do we set forth for men: and none understands them save those who know.” (29:42) Allah also said, “But if they were to refer it to the Apostle and to those in authority amongst them, those of whom they would elicit the information would know it” (4:85) He thus made the knowledge of His will dependent upon their efforts to find it out, and placed them next to the prophets in the [ability] to make it known. It has been said that in the following words of Allah, “O Sons of Adam! We have sent down to you raiments wherewith to cover your nakedness, and splendid garments; but the raiment of piety-this is best,” (7:25) the raiments represent knowledge, the splendid garments, truth, and the raiment of piety, modesty. Allah also said, “And We have brought them a book: with knowledge have We explained it;” (7:50) and again, “But it is clear sign in the hearts of those whom the knowledge hath reached;” (29:48) and, “With knowledge will We tell them;” (7:6) and again, “[He] hath created man, [and] hath taught him articulate speech.” (55:2-3) This, however, He said reproachfully.

As to [the evidence of the value of knowledge in] tradition (al-akhbar) the Apostle of Allah said, “Whom Allah doth love, He giveth knowledge of religion and guideth him into the straight path;”’ and again, “The learned men are the heirs of the prophets.” It is well-known that there is no rank above that of prophethood, no honour higher than its inheritance. The Prophet also said, “What is in the heavens and in the earth intercedes for the learned men.” And what rank is higher than that of him for whom the angels of the heavens and earth labour interceding with Allah on his behalf, while he is preoccupied with himself. Muhammad also said, “Wisdom adds honour to the noble and exalts the slave until he attains the level of kings.” The Prophet pointed this out relating to the benefits of wisdom in this world, since it is well-known that the hereafter is superior and more lasting. Muhammad said again, “Two qualities the hypocrite lacks - good intentions and religious insight.” Do not doubt tradition, then, because of the hypocrisy of some contemporary jurists, theirs is not the jurisprudence which the Prophet had in mind. For a jurist to know that the hereafter is better than this world is, after all, the lowest type of knowledge he can possess. Should it prove to be true and prevail, it would clear him of hypocrisy and deceit. The Prophet said, “The best of men is the learned believer who, if he is needed, he will be useful; and if dispensed with, he will be self-sufficient. “ And again he said, “Belief is like unto a nude who should be clothed with piety, ornamented with modesty and should have knowledge for progeny.” And again, “The nearest people to prophethood are the people of knowledge and the warriors of jihad”: the former have led men to what the prophets have proclaimed, and the latter have wielded their

\[14\] Abdullah, cousin of the Prophet; d. A.H. 68/A.D. 687--88. See al-Dhahabi, Tadhkirat al-Huffaz.


\[16\] cf. al-Bukhari, ‘Ilm, 11.


swords on its behalf. He also said, “The passing away of a whole tribe is more tolerable than the death of one learned man.” And again, “Men are like ores of gold and silver, the choicest among them during the Jubilic days are also the best during the days of Islam, provided they see the light.”

He also said, “On the day of resurrection the ink of the learned men will be likened to the blood of the martyrs.” And again, “Whoever preserves the law forty Traditions in order to transmit them unto my people, I shall, on the day of resurrection, be an intercessor and a witness on his behalf.” Muhammad also said, “Any one of my people who will preserve forty hadiths will on the day of resurrection face Allah as a learned jurisprudent.” And again, “Whoever will become versed in the religion of Allah, Allah will relieve him of his worries and will reward him whence he does not reckon.” The Prophet also said, “Allah said unto Abraham, ‘O Abraham! Verily I am knowing and I love every knowing person.’” And again, “The learned man is the trustee of Allah on earth.” The Prophet said, “There are two groups among my people who when they become righteous the populace becomes righteous, and when they become corrupt the populace becomes corrupt: these are the rulers and the jurisprudents.” Again he said, “Should the day come wherein I increase not in knowledge wherewith to draw nearer to Allah, let the dawn of that day be accursed.”

Concerning the superiority of knowledge to worship and martyrdom, the Prophet said, “The superior rank the learned man holds in relation to the worshipper is like the superior rank I hold in relation to the best of men.”

See how he placed knowledge on an equal footing with prophethood and belittled the value of practice without knowledge, despite the fact that the worshipper may not be ignorant of the worship which he observes. Moreover, without this knowledge there would have been no worship. The Prophet also said, “The superior rank the learned man holds over the worshipper is similar to the superiority of the moon when it is [6] full over the other stars.” And again, “They will, on the day of resurrection, intercede [before Allah]: the prophets, then the learned, then the martyrs.” Great then is the state of knowledge which ranks next to prophethood and stands over martyrdom, the merits of the latter notwithstanding. The Prophet also said, “Allah was not worshipped with anyone better than the learned in religion. Verily a single jurisprudent is more formidable to Satan than a thousand worshippers.”

For everything has [its] foundation and the foundations of this religion is jurisprudence. And again, “The best part of your faith is [also] the easiest, and the best form of worship is jurisprudence.” The Prophet also said, “The learned believer holds a rank seventy degrees higher than that of the ordinary believer.” And again, “Verily you have come upon a time whose jurisprudents are many and Qur’an readers as well as preachers are few, whose beggars are rare and givers numerous, wherein deeds are better than knowledge. But there will come a time when jurisprudents are few and preachers many, whose givers are few and beggars numerous, wherein knowledge is better than works.”

The Prophet also said, “Between the learned and the worshipper are a hundred degrees, each two of which are separated by the extent of a racing horse’s run in seventy years.”

The Prophet was also asked, “O Apostle of Allah! What works are best?” To which he replied, “Your knowledge of Allah.” He was then asked, “Which knowledge do you mean?” He answered, “Your Knowledge of Allah.” Again he was asked, “We enquire about works and you reply concerning knowledge.” Muhammad then said, “With your knowledge of Allah, a few works will suffice, but without such knowledge, no works, however numerous, avail.” The Prophet also said, “On the day of resurrection Allah will [first] raise the worshippers and then the learned to whom He will say, ‘O ye company of the learned, I did not imbue you with My knowledge but for My knowledge of you. Moreover, I did not imbue you with My knowledge in order to torment you. Go ye, therefore, for verily I have forgiven you.’”

As to [the evidence of the value of knowledge in] the sayings of the Companions (al-atthar), ‘Ali ibn-abi-Talib,” said to Kumayl, “O thou perfect of knowledge! Knowledge is better than riches; for knowledge

---

7. Cf. al -Darimi, Sunan, Intro. 32.
10. The fourth Rashidite Caliph. [A major force in Islam, that both Sunni and Shia’ Muslims agree on his noble character, intelligence and erudition. Ed.]
guardeth thee whereas thou guardest riches. Knowledge governs while riches are governed. Riches diminish with spending but knowledge increases therewith.” And again, “The learned is superior to the fasting, praying and self-mortifying man. Should the learned die, a gap would be created in Islam [by his death] and no one would fill this gap save one of his successors.” ‘Ali said:

“The learning is the glory of mankind,
The wise are beacons on the road to truth;
Man is worth his knowledge, nothing more –
The fool will be his inveterate foe,
Knowledge is man’s hope of life immortal,
Man may die but wisdom liveth ever.”

Abu-al-Aswad Ṣafīrḍ was said, “Nothing is more precious than knowledge; while kings rule over men, they are ruled by the learned.” Ibn-‘Abbas said, “Solomon the son of David was asked to choose between knowledge, wealth or power, but he chose knowledge and was thereby blessed with wealth and power as well.”[30] Ibn-al-Mubarak[31] was asked, “Who constitute humanity?” To which he replied, “The learned.” It was then said, “And who are the kings?” He answered, “The ascetics.” And who, he was asked, “constitute the lowest class among men?” “Those,” said he, “who, in the name of religion, grow fat in the world.” Thus only the learned did [ibn-al-Mubarak] regard as belonging to mankind, because it is knowledge which distinguishes man from the other animals. Furthermore, man is a human being, not because of his physical prowess for physically the camel is his superior; not because of his size for the elephant is larger; not because of his courage for the lion is more courageous; not because of his appetite for the ox has the greater; not because of coitus for the least of the birds is more virile than he, but rather by virtue of his noble aims and ideals. [As a matter of fact] he was only created to know.

[7] One of the wise men said, “Would that I might know what thing was attained by him whom knowledge has escaped, and what thing has escaped him who has attained knowledge.” The Prophet said, “Whoever has been given the Qur’an and thinks that anyone has been given something better, he has degraded what Allah has exalted.” Fath al-Mawsili[32] said inquiring, “Would not the sick die, if he is given no food or drink or medicine?” They said, “Yes.” To which he said, “Similarly the heart will perish if it is cut off from wisdom and knowledge for three days.” He did indeed speak the truth, for the nourishment of the heart, on which its life depends, is knowledge and wisdom, just as the nourishment of the body is food. Whoever lacks knowledge has an ailing heart and his death is certain; yet he is not aware of his doom because the love of this world and his concern therewith have dulled his sense, just as a shock from fright may momentarily do away with the pain of a wound although the wound be real. Thus when death frees him from the burdens of this world he will realize his doom and will, though to no avail, greatly regret it. This is like the feeling of a person who has attained safety after having been through danger, and like that of a man who has just recovered from his drunkenness. We seek refuge in Allah from the day when all things will be brought to light. Men are asleep but at death they Will awake. Al-Hasan[33] said, “The ink of the learned will be likened to the blood of the martyrs, and the former will prove superior.”[34] Ibn-Mas`ud[35] said, 


[33][33] Al-Basri; the famous early Muslim ascetic (A.H. 110/A.D. 728); see ibn-

[34][34] Cf. Supra, p. 12, Where the saying is ascribed to Muhammad.
“Seek ye knowledge while it be found; it will be veiled when its narrators pass away. Verily, by Him in whose hand is my life, several men who died martyrs in the cause of Allah would rather that, at resurrection, Allah would raise them up as learned men for what they see of the veneration accorded the learned.” No one is born learned, but knowledge is only the result of learning. Ibn-'Abbas said, “I would rather spend a part of the night in learned discussion than in continual prayer.” The same was related of abu-Hurayrah and Ahmad ibn-Hanbal. Al-Hasan said that in the words of Allah, “Give us good in this world and good in the next,” (2:197) the good in this world meant knowledge and worship while that of the next signifies paradise. A wise man was once asked, “What things shall we possess?” He replied, “Those things which you will not lose in the event of shipwreck,” meaning thereby knowledge, while by shipwreck, it is said, he meant the decomposition of the body through death. A certain wise man said, “Whoever takes wisdom for his bridle will be acclaimed by men as their leader, and whoever is known for his wisdom will be looked upon with respect.” Al-Shafi’i said “One of the noble things about knowledge is that he who is given a portion of it, no matter how small, rejoices while he who is deprived of it grieves.” Umar said, “O men! Seek ye knowledge. For verily Allah has a mantle of love which He casts upon him who seeks knowledge even of a single section. Should he then commit an offence, Allah will remonstrate with him thrice in order not to rob him of his mantle, even though that offence may persist with him until he dies.” Al-Ahnaf said, “The learned men came very near being Allahs; and all power which is not supported by knowledge is doomed. Salim ibn-abi-al-Ja’d said, “My master bought me for three hundred dirhams and later set me free. Whereupon I said, ‘What shall I take up for livelihood? Finally I took up learning and no sooner had a year passed than the prince of Makkah called upon me but I would not receive him.” al-Zubayr ibn-abi-Bakr said, “My father had written me while in al-'Iraq saying. ‘Go after knowledge; should you become poor it will be your wealth, and should you become rich it will be your embellishment’. (This has been related among the exhortations of Luqman to his son). He also said, “Sit in the company of the learned and keep close to them; for verily Allah quickens the hearts with the light of wisdom as he refreshes the earth with the rain of heaven.” A certain wise man said, “When the learned dies the fish of the sea as well as the fowl of the air will mourn him; while his face shall disappear his memory will not be forgotten.” Al-Zuhri said, “Knowledge is glorious and is not treasured except by the glorious.”

16.

I, pp. 31-35.
39[39] The second Rashidite Caliph. [He was the first to be titled ‘Amir al-Mum’ineen (Leader of the faithful) and generally called al-Farooq (Criterion) his rule was marked by justice, stability, great prosperity and remarkable growth, online see (http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/mih/isl/umar.htm ed. )
43[43] Legendary figure to whom the Arabs ascribe much wisdom. [He was mentioned in the Qur’an by name see Chapter 31: 13 (And (remember) when Luqman said unto his son, when he was exhorting him: O my dear son! Ascribe no partners unto Allah. Lo! to ascribe partners (unto Him) is a tremendous wrong:) Translation by Pickthall. Also note is chapter 31 is titled by his name. Ed.].
ON THE EXCELLENCE OF LEARNING

The excellence of learning is attested in the Qur'an by the following words of Allah: “And if a party of every band of them march not out, it is that they may instruct themselves in their religion;” (9:123) and again, “Ask of those who have Books of Monition if ye know it not.” (16:45)

[As to the evidence of the excellence of learning] in tradition, the Prophet of Allah said, “Whoever follows a path in search of knowledge, Allah will guide him into a path leading into Paradise.” 46 And again, “Verily the angels will bow low to the seeker after knowledge in approval of what he does.” 47 He also said, “To rise up before daybreak and learn but a section of knowledge is better than prostrating yourself in prayer a hundred times.” 48 The Apostle again said, “One section of knowledge which a man learns is better for him than all the riches of the world.” And again, “Seeking after knowledge is an ordinance obligatory upon every Muslim.” 49 He also said, “Seek ye knowledge even [as far as] China.” The Prophet further said, “Knowledge is like sealed treasure houses, the keys of which are inquiry. Inquire, therefore, for therein lies reward for four: the inquirer, the learned, the auditor, and their admirer.” He also said, “The ignorant one should not hide his ignorance nor the learned his knowledge.” And in a tradition on the authority of Abu Dharr, 50 “To be present in the circle of a learned man is better than prostrating oneself in prayer a thousand times, or visiting a thousand sick men, or joining a thousand funerals.” It was then said, “O Apostle of Allah, is it also better than the reading of the Qur’an?” To which he replied, “What good, though, is the Qur’an except through knowledge?” The Prophet also said, “Whoever is overtaken by death while seeking knowledge wherewith to strengthen Islam, between him and the prophets in Paradise is but one grade.”

As to the evidence of the excellence of learning] in the sayings of the Companions, Ibn-Abbas said, “While I sought knowledge, I was abased, but when I was sought for it, I was exalted.” Similarly, Ibn-Abi-Mulaykah 51 said, “Never have I seen the like of Ibn 6’Abas: to behold him is to behold the most handsome man; when he speaks, he is the most eloquent, and when he hands down a judicial opinion, he [reveals himself] as the most learned.” Ibn-al-Mubarak said, I wonder how one who sought no knowledge could be moved to any noble deed;” while one of the wise men said, “Verily I pity no one as I pity the man who seeks knowledge but understands not, and him who understands and seek it not.” Abu-al-Darda’ 52 said, “I would rather learn one point than spend my night in continual prayer;” and again, “The learned and the learner are partners in righteousness while the rest of men are barbarians in whom there is no good.” He also said, “Be learned, or a learner, or an auditor but never anything else lest thou perish.” ‘Ata’ 53 said “[Attendance at] an assembly of learning atones [the evil of attending] seventy places of entertainment.” ‘Umar 54 said, “The death of a thousand worshippers who spend their days in fasting and their nights in continual prayer is a lesser calamity than the passing away of one learned man who is aware of what is lawful before Allah and

---

53[53] Ibn-abi-Rabah (A.H. 115/A.D. 733). See ibn-Qutaybah, p. 227; ibn-
54[54] “Dhkir” in B.
what is unlawful. “Al-Shafi’i said, “Seeking knowledge is better than supererogatory works.” Ibn-'Abd-al-Hakam⁵⁶ said, “I was [once] at Malik’s⁵⁷ place studying at his feet when the hour of noon arrived. Thereupon I closed my books and put them away in order to pray; but he said, ‘What you have risen to perform is not better than what you were doing provided your intentions are good.’” Abu-al-Darda’ also said, “Whoever should regard that rising early for study is not jihad [reveals himself] deficient in reasoning and intellect.”

ON THE EXCELLENCE OF TEACHING

The excellence of teaching is supported in the Qur'an by the following words of Allah: “... And may warn their people when they come back to them, haply they may take heed to themselves”, (9:123) by which is meant teaching and guidance. Allah also said, “Moreover, when Allah entered into a covenant with those to whom the scriptures had been given, and said, Ye shall surely make it known to mankind and not hide it’...” (3:184), meaning thereby that teaching was incumbent upon them. And again He said, “But truly some of them do conceal the truth, though acquainted with it.” (2:283) The Prophet said, “Allah does not give the learned any knowledge unless He enters with them into the same covenant He has entered into with the prophets - namely, to make it known and not conceal it.” (2:141) Allah also said, “And who speaketh fairer than he who biddeth to Allah and doeth the thing that is right?” (41:33) and again, “Summon thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and kindly warning;” (16:126) and also taught them “The Book and Wisdom.” (2:123)

As to the evidence of the excellence of teaching] in tradition, the Apostle of Allah, on sending Mu'adh to al-Yaman, said to him, “That, through you, Allah may lead one man [unto Himself] is better for you than the world and all that is in it.”59 He also said, “Whoever acquires but one section of knowledge in order to teach men, will be given the reward of seventy of the righteous.” Jesus said, “He who has knowledge and shall do and teach, the same shall be called great [9] in the Kingdom of Heaven.”60 The Prophet said, “When on the day of resurrection Allah says unto the worshippers and the warriors, ‘Enter ye into Paradise’, the learned would say, ‘By virtue of our learning have they attained their piety and fought for Thee’. Then Allah would say unto them, ‘I regard you alike with my angels: intercede and you will have your intercessions accepted.’ They then would present their intercessions and enter into Paradise.” This cannot result except from knowledge which is made active through teaching not from passive knowledge which is inert. The Prophet said, “Allah does not take away knowledge from men after He has given it to them, rather it vanishes with the passing away of the learned. Thus whenever a learned man passes away, whatever [knowledge] he had perishes with him. When finally there are none left but ignorant leaders they will give uninformed opinions whenever consulted, leading men astray and confusing themselves.”61 The Prophet also said, “Whoever has any knowledge but conceals it, will, on the day of resurrection, be bridled with a bit of fire.”62 He also said, “How excellent a gift and how admirable a present is a word of wisdom which you hear and inwardly digest and then carry it and teach it to a brother Muslim: verily it is equivalent to a year of worship.” And again, “Accursed is the world and all that is in it except the name of the exalted Allah and him who shall follow in His way, be it a teacher or one taught.”63 The Prophet also said, “In truth Allah and His angels as well as the heavens and the earth, even the ant in its hill and the whale in the sea, will bless the man who teaches his fellow men.”64 He also said, “A Muslim gives his brother Muslim no better benefit than a ‘fair’ tradition which had reached him and which he consequently imparts. He also said, “A good word which the believer hears and follows and also teaches is better for him than a year’s worship.”

One day the Apostle of Allah passed by two assembled groups: the members of the first were calling upon Allah and offering their supplications, while the others were instructing men. Whereupon he said, ‘These beseech Allah; if He wills He will grant them their request and if He wills He will withhold it; whereas those teach men and verily I was not sent but as a teacher.’65 Then he turned and sat among them. He also said, “The knowledge and

59 Cf. Matt. 18: 10-14; Luke 15: 3-10. [This must be a mistake, this is a hadith not Scripture! Ed.]
guidance which Allah has sent me to declare are like unto heavy rains which fell over a certain locality. One spot absorbed the rain and put forth herbs and much grass; another spot held the waters with which Allah benefited men who drank therefrom, watered the earth therewith, and then planted it; and a third spot was flat, it held no water and put forth no herb.\[66\] The first part of the parable signifies the one who reaps the benefits of his own knowledge, the second signifies the one whose knowledge is of benefit to others, while the third stands for him who enjoys neither.

Muhammad also said, “When a man dies all except three of his works perish, namely, a permanent endowment for charity, useful knowledge, and righteous progeny that bring honour upon his memory.” And again, “He who leads to something good is like him who does it.” He further said, “Envy is unlawful except regarding two categories of persons: those to whom Allah has given wealth and power to spend that wealth rightly, and those to whom Allah has given wisdom with which they regulate their lives and which they teach.” The Prophet also said “Allah’s mercy is upon my successors.” On being asked, “But who are your successors?” he replied, “My successors are those who keep my laws and teach them to Allah’s people.”

[As to the evidence of the excellence of teaching] in the sayings of the Companions, ‘Umar said, “Whoever shall relate a tradition and thus induce someone to do according to its precepts, will, with the [actual] doer be equally rewarded.” Ibn-‘Abbas said, “All things even the whale in the sea will intercede for him who teaches men good.” One of the learned men said, “The learned man occupies the position of an intermediary between Allah and His creatures; let the learned, therefore, be mindful how he occupies this position.”

It has been related that Sufyan al-Thawri\[71\] arrived in ‘Asqalan where he tarried but no man questioned him [or sought his knowledge]. Whereupon he said, “Hire for me a beast of burden in order to depart from this city, for it is a place where knowledge does not prosper.” He had not said this except in solicitude over the excellence of teaching in which lies the preservation of knowledge. ‘Ata’ also said, “I came upon Sa‘id ibn-al Musayyab when he was weeping, at which I said, ‘What causes you to weep?’ He answered, ‘No one seeks from my any information.’ It has also been said that the learned men are the lights of the ages; each is the torch of his own age and through him his contemporaries obtain light.” Al-Hasan said, “Had it not been for the learned, men would have become like animals.” For it is through teaching and instruction that men are brought out of the category of beasts to that of human beings. ‘Ikrimah\[73\] said, “Verily a price is set upon this knowledge.” When asked that it was, he replied, “It is to be given to him who can keep it well and not lose it.” Yahya ibn-Mu‘adh\[74\] said, “The learned have more compassion for the followers of Muhammad than either their fathers or mothers.” “How is that?” he was asked; to which he replied, “Their fathers and mothers shield them from the fires of this world while the learned protect them against the fires of the next.” It has been said that in the process of learning the first [step] is silence, followed by listening, then retention, then doing, and finally imparting. It has also been said, “Teach what you know to him who does not know and learn from him who knows what you do not know. If you would do this you would learn what you have not known and would retain what you have already known.” Mu‘adh ibn-Jabal said, (I have also come across the same saying described as a marfu’ tradition), “Acquire knowledge, for its acquisition is [equivalent to] jihad, teaching it to him who does not know is [equivalent to] almsgiving, and imparting it to those

---

70\[70\] Cf. Matt. 12: 47-9; Mark 3:32-5; Luke 8:19-21. [This is questionable as it is a hadith and not scripture. ed.]
71\[71\] A.H. 161/A.D. 778; see *Tahdhib al-Asma*, pp. 286-8. [He also had a founded school of law named after him that was popular in Greater Syria and Iraq, ‘Asqalan is a city on the coast of Palestine it was destroyed by Salah al-Din due to the danger that it posed at the time of the Crusaders. Imam Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani who hails from there was the foremost Hadith scholar of his time and wrote a grand commentary on al-Bukhari including many works on Hadith sciences and Fiqh. Ed.]
72\[72\] A.H. 94/A.D. 713; see ibn-Qutaybah, pp. 123-4.
73\[73\] Ca. A.H. 105 A.D. 723, See ibn-Qutaybah, pp. 231-2; *Tahdhib al-Asma*, pp. 431-2.
75\[75\] *Marfu* signifies the record of a word or deed of the Prophet reported by the Companion who heard or saw it.
who are worthy is meritorious. Furthermore, it is the bosom friend of the lonesome, the companion in solitude, the guide [to religion, the comforter in both] happiness and misfortune, the aid to the lonely, the relative among strangers, and the beacon on the road to Paradise. Through it Allah exalts a few and makes them leaders in virtues, chiefs and counsellors worthy of emulation, pioneers in righteousness whose footsteps should be followed and whose deeds should be observed. The angels seek their friendship and with their wings they touch them to gain thereby their favour. The living and the dead, yea even the whales and the fish of the sea, the lions and beasts of the field, as well as the heaven and its stars intercede for them, because knowledge is the protection of hearts against blindness, the light of the eyes in darkness, and the fortification of the body against decay. Through it man attains the dignity of sainthood and the loftiest ranks. To reflect upon it is [as meritorious] as fasting and its study, as continual prayer. Through it Allah is obeyed, worshipped and glorified; through it he admonishes and forewarns; through it His unity is declared, and through it also [man] abstains from sin. Through knowledge the ties of relationship are made close by kindly deeds, and the lawful and the unlawful are made known. Knowledge is like an imam whereas works are his followers. Knowledge is bestowed upon the fortunate and from the unfortunate withheld".

\[76\] Words between brackets only in C.
\[77\] Only in C.
\[78\] Only in C.
\[79\] Only in C.
The purpose of this section is to comprehend the excellence and value of knowledge. Nevertheless, unless excellence is in itself understood and its meaning determined it will not be possible to acknowledge it as an attribute to knowledge, or to any other trait besides. Similarly, whoever expects to determine whether or not Zayd is wise without having understood the meaning and essence of wisdom, is sure to go astray.

Excellence is derived from the infinitive to excel, which is excrescence. When, therefore, of two objects which are similar, one has an extra characteristic, that object is described as excelling the other, no matter what its excellence may be. Thus saying that the horse is more excellent than the donkey means that the horse shares with the donkey the capacity for carrying burdens, but excels it in charging, wheeling, swiftness, and beauty. However, should a donkey possess a ganglionic growth it would not be described as more excellent, because the ganglion, though an excrescence on the body, is in reality a defect, an imperfection. In addition the animal is sought for its useful qualities, not for its physical features. If you then understand this, it will be clear to you that knowledge excels when compared with the other attributes, just as the horse is distinguished when compared with the other animals. Furthermore, while swiftness is an excellent feature in the horse, in itself it has no excellence. Knowledge, however, is in itself an absolute excellence, apart from any attribution. It is the description of Allah’s perfection, and through it [11] the angels and prophets were imbued with honour. The fleet horse is better than the slow. Knowledge is, therefore, an excellence in the absolute and apart from any attribution.

A precious and a desired object may be of any of three categories: what is sought as a means to an end, what is sought for its own [intrinsic value], and what is sought for both. What is sought for its own [intrinsic value] is nobler and more excellent than that which is sought as a means to an end. The dirham and the dinar are objects sought as means to an end to secure other objects. In themselves they are only two useless metals; and had not Allah made it possible to transact business through them, they would have been the same as pebbles. Happiness in the hereafter and the ecstasy of viewing the face of Allah are sought for their own [intrinsic value], whilst physical health is sought both for its own [intrinsic value] and as a means to an end. Man’s health, for example, is sought because it is a guarantee against bodily pain, and also because it helps [man] to reach his ends and [secure his] needs. Similarly, if you would consider [the case of] knowledge, you would discover that it is in itself delightful and therefore sought for its own [intrinsic value], and you would also find it a way which leads to the hereafter and its happiness, and the only means whereby we come close to Allah.

The greatest achievement in the opinion of man is eternal happiness and the most excellent thing is the way which leads to it. This happiness will never be attained except through knowledge and works, and works are impossible without the knowledge of how they are done. The basis for happiness in this world and the next is knowledge. Of all works it is, therefore, the most excellent. And why not, since the excellence of anything is revealed by the quality of its fruit? You have already learnt that the fruit of knowledge in the hereafter is drawing near to the Lord of the Universe, attaining the rank of the angels, and joining the company of the heavenly hosts. Its fruits in this world, however, are power, dignity, influence over kings, and reverence from all to an extent that even the ignorant Turks and the rude Arabs are found naturally disposed to honour their teachers because the latter are distinguished by a great deal of knowledge derived from experience. Even the animal does by nature honour man because he senses that he is distinguished by a degree of perfection exceeding its own. These are, then, the excellence of knowledge in the absolute. As shall be seen later, the different branches of knowledge vary, and with their variation their excellences vary.

The excellences of teaching and learning, in view of what we have already said, are therefore manifest. For if knowledge is the most excellent of things, the process of acquiring it would then be a search for the most excellent, and imparting it would be promoting the most excellent. For human interests extend to both the material and the spiritual worlds, and no order exists in the latter without existing in the former because this world is a preparation for the next, and is the instrument which leads to Allah anyone who uses it as such, a home for him who takes it as a dwelling place. The affairs of this world, however, do not become orderly except through human activities. These
activities, crafts, and industries are divided into three categories:

The first involves four fundamental (activities) without which chaos would rule the world: agriculture for raising food-stuffs, weaving for manufacturing clothes, architecture for erecting houses, and politics for establishing human relationship and society and for promoting co-operation in the control of the means of living.

The second involves such activities as are auxiliary to any of the above-mentioned fundamental activities. Thus iron craft is auxiliary to agriculture as well as to several other industries, and supplies them with their respective tools and instruments such as the implements for carding and spinning cotton preparatory to its weaving.

The third involves such activities as are supplementary to the previously mentioned principal industries, e.g., the process of milling and bread-making in relation to agriculture and the process of laundering and tailoring to weaving.

The relation of these principal activities to the order of things in this world is as the relation of the members of the body to the whole, because the members of the body are also divided into three categories. These are fundamental like the heart, the liver, and the brain; auxiliary like the stomach, veins, arteries, and sinews: or supplementary and ornamental like nails, fingers and eyebrows.

The highest of these activities are the fundamental, and of these the highest is politics [as employed] in unifying [people] and in reform. For that reason this discipline demands of those who pursue it a degree of perfection greater than that required by any of the other disciplines; and in consequence it is inevitable that the politician should subordinate to himself, and make use of, the other profession.

Politics, bent on reform and on guiding people to the straight path which [insures] salvation in this world and the next, is [in turn] divided into four classes: the first, which is also the highest, is the [religious] polity of the prophets which involves their jurisdiction over the thoughts and actions of the privileged few and the common folk alike. The second is the [civil] polity of the caliphs, the kings, and the sultans, which involves their jurisdiction over the actions, but not the thoughts, of the privileged few and the common folk. The third is the intellectual polity of the learned man, who know Allah and His will and who are the heirs of the prophets, which involves jurisdiction only over the thoughts of the privileged few since the understanding of the common folk is too low for them to benefit, and their power of discrimination is too weak to observe and emulate their actions, and are, therefore, subject to no compulsion or restraint. The fourth is the [“ecclesiastical’] polity of the preachers which involves jurisdiction only over the thoughts of the common folk.

Next to the [religious] polity of the prophets, the highest is, therefore, the intellectual because of its service in disseminating knowledge, in diverting the souls of men from the destructive and undesirable traits, and in guiding them to those which lead to happiness and are praiseworthy, all of which, in the final analysis, fall within the purpose of teaching. We have only said that the intellectual activities are more excellent than the other professions and activities because the superiority of an activity is known by three things:

1. By examining the native endowments of man through which the activity is realized, as in the case of the superiority of the theoretical sciences over [12] the linguistic. Wisdom is attained through the intellect while language, through the sense of hearing (and intellect is superior to the [mere] sense of hearing).

2. By examining the extent of its usefulness, as in the case of the superiority of agriculture over the goldsmith’s craft.

3. By observing the object. of its operations, as in the case of the superiority of the goldsmith’s craft over tanning; the object of the one is gold while that of the other is the hide of a corpse.

It is further apparent that the religious sciences, which are the knowledge of the path to the hereafter, are comprehended through the maturity of the intellect: and as we shall see later, clear understanding and clear intellect are the highest attributes of man, because through the intellect the responsibility of Allah’s trust is accepted, and through it man can enjoy the closeness to Allah.

Concerning the extent of its usefulness there is not the slightest doubt since it contributes to happiness in the hereafter. And finally, how could the merit of an object of an activity be denied when the objects with which
the teacher deals are the hearts and souls of men. The noblest being on earth is the homo-sapiens and the noblest in his essence is his heart with whose perfecting, cleansing, purifying, and leading to Allah the teacher is occupied. Thus on the one hand the work of the teacher is a (form of) praise to Allah and on the other hand a (form of) stewardship. It is in fact the highest form of stewardship because Allah has bestowed upon the heart of the learned man knowledge, which is His most intimate attribute. Hence the learned man is like the keeper of Allah’s most valuable treasures and has permission to give from them to all who need. What rank is, therefore, higher than that in which the servant is an intermediary between his Lord and his fellowmen, to draw them closer unto Allah and to lead them to Paradise to which the pious repair. May we, through the Grace of Allah, become one of them, and may He bless every chosen servant.
Section II: is on On praiseworthy and objectionable branches of knowledge

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1) 1)  `Asakir, ibn-, Ta’rikh, Damascus 1332
2) 2) Athir, ibn-al-, al-Kamil fi ‘l-Ta’rikh, ed. CT Tornberg, Leyden 1867-1871.
3) 3) Baghawi, al-, Masabih al-Sunnah, Cairo 1318
4) 4) Baghdadi, al- Khatib at-, Ta’rikh Baghdad, Cairo 1349
5) 5) Bukhari, al-, Sahih, Bulaq 1296
6) 6) Darimi, al-, Sunan, Damascus 1349
7) 7) Dhahabi, at-, tadbkirat al- Huffaz, Hyderabad 1333
8) 8) Fida, abu-al-, Mukhtasar Ta’rikh al-Basbar, Constantinople 1286
11) 11) Hanbal, Ahmad ibn-, Musnad, Cairo 1329-1333
12) 12) Hanbali, ibn-al-’Imad al-, Shadbarat al Dhabab fi Akhbar Man Dhabab, Cairo, 1350
     Hisham, ibn-, Sirat Rasul Allah, ed. F. Wustenfeld, Gottingen 1858-1860
14) 14) Isfahani, at-, Hikyat al-Awliya wa-Tabaqat al Asfya, Cairo 1351
16) 16) Jurjani, al-, Ta’rifat, ed. G. Flugel, Leipzig 1845
17) 17) Khallikan, ibn-, Wajyat al Ayan wa Anba’ Abna’ al-Zaman, Cairo 1299
18) 18) Majah, ibn-, Sunan al Mustafa, Cairo 1349
19) 19) Makki, abu-Talib, al, Qut al Qulub, Cairo 1351
20) 20) Muslim, Sabih, Delhi 1319
22) 22) Qazwini,al-, ’Aja’ib-Makhluzat wa Gharaiwal Majjudat, ed. F. Wustenfeld, Gottingen 1849


27) Sha’rani, al-, *al-Tabaqat al-kubra*, Cairo 1345

28) Smith, Margaret, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, London 1935

29) Suyuti, al-, *al-Itqan fi ‘Ulum al-Qur’an*, Cairo 1343

30) Husn al-Muhadarah ft Akhbar Misr w-al-Qahirah, Cairo 1327

31) Tabarani, al-, *al-Mu jam al-Saghir*, Delhi 1311

32) Tabari, al-, *Jami‘ al- Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an* Cairo 1323-1330

33) Tirmidhi, al-Sunan, Cairo 1290

34) Tayalisi, al-Musnad, Hyderabad 1321 Tha’labi, al-, *Qisas al-Anbiya*, Cairo 1297

35) Usaybi’ah, ibn-abi-, *Uyun al-Anba’ fr Tabaqat al-Atibba’,* Cairo 1299


37) Yusuf, abu-, *Kitab al-Kharaj*, Cairo 1346

38) Zamakhshari, al-, *al-Kashshaf* Calcutta 1856

Endnotes:

---

E-mail: webmaster - Sign the Guest Book - Imam Ghazali Home

Page Information:

- This Page was last updated on:
- Proofreading and comments by Muhammad Hozien
- This page was created May 14, 2003.
- About the Islamic Philosophy Online Project.
- Reporting copyright infringement.
- © Copyright 2003 by Islamic Philosophy Online, Inc. All rights reserved. A not-for-profit organization dedicated to academic study of Islamic philosophy. Individual content may have its own individual copyrights. See copyright information.