

REVIEW-ARTICLE: HOW THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES CAN BECOME PART OF MAN DURING HIS SPIRITUAL QUEST

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The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God. Al-Ghazali, translation and notes by David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher, The Islamic Texts Society, 5 Green Street, Cambridge CB2-3JU. U.K, 1992, pp.205, L11.95 pbk, L25.95 HB.

How can man seek knowledge and contemplation of God? In the present work under review, al-Ghazali, one of the most influential thinkers in Islamic history (1058-1111) seeks to answer that crucially important question by a comprehensive explanation of each of the ninety-nine Names or Attributes of God as mentioned in Quran and Hadith. In a sound Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah in Sahih al-Bukhari, the Holy Prophet upon whom be peace, has told Believers to recite and contemplate the ninety-nine enumerated beautiful Names of God. Al-Ghazali not only does this but demonstrates how each of these attributes can become an integral part of the spiritual-seeker.

All creation reflects signs of the Creator - minerals, plants, animals and man. But only man, being central, was made in the image of God, all other creatures being peripheral. Islam teaches that man was not made for himself but for God, He neither owns himself nor is his earthly happiness and well-being an end in itself. Holy Quran says that. "I (God) created man and Djinn only that they may worship Me."

The sacred Divine Names or Attributes as listed and explained by al-Ghazali are as follows:

ALLAH

Al-Rahman, the Merciful

Al-Rahim, the Compassionate

Al-Malik, the King
Al-Quddus, the Holy
Al-Salam, the Perfect
Al-Mumin, the Faithful
Al-Muhaymin, the Gurdian
Al-Aziz, the Eminent
Al-Jabbar, the Compeller
Al-Mutakabbir, the Proud
Al-Khaliq, the Creator
Al-Bari, the Producer
Al-Musawwir, the Fashioner
Al-Ghaffar, the Forgiver
Al-Qahhar, the Almighty
Al-Wahhab, the Bestower
Al-Razzaq, the Provider
Al-Fattah, the Opener
Al-Alim, the All-knowing
Al-Qabid, He Who contracts
Al-Basit, He Who expands
Al-Khafid, the Abaser
Al-Raff, the Exalted

Al-Mu 'izz, the Honoured
Al-Sami, the All-Hearing
Al-Basir, the All-Seeing
Al Hakam, the Judge Al-
Adl. the Just
Al-Latif, the Benevolent
Al-Khabir, the Aware
Al-Halim, the Mild
Al-Aziru, the Tremendous
Al-Ghafur, the All-Forgiving
Al-Shakur, the Greetful
Al-Ali, the Most High
Al-Kabir, the Great
Al-Hafiz, the All-Preserver
Al-Muqit, the Nourisher
Al-Hasib, the Reckoner
Al-Jalil, the Majestic
Al-Karim, the Generous
Al-Raqib, the All-Observer
Al-Mujib, the Answerer (of prayers)
Al-Wasi, the Vast

Al-Hakim the Wise

Al-Wadud, the Most Loving-Kind

Al-Majid, the Glorious

Al-Baith, the Raiser of the Dead

Al-Shahid, the Universal Witness

Al-Haqq, the Truth

Al-Wakil, the Guardian

Al-Qawi, the Strong Al-Matin, the Firm

Al-Walii, the Friend

Al-Hamid, the Praised

Al-Muhsi, the Knower of each separate thing

Al-Mubdi. the First Cause

Al-Mu 'id, the Restorer

Al-Muhyi, the Life-Giver

Al-Mumit. the Slayer

Al-Hayy, the Living

Al-Qayyum, the Self-Existing

Al-Wajid, the Resourceful

Al-Majid, the Magnificent

Al-Wahid, the Unique

Al-Samad, the Eternal Al-Qadir, the All-powerful

Al-Muqtadir, the All-Determiner

Al-Muqaddim, the Promoter

Al-Mu 'akhir, the Postponer

Al-Awwal, the First

Al-Akhir, the Last

Al-Zahir, the Manifest

Al-Batin, the Hidden

Al-Wali, the Ruler

Al-Muta'ali, the Exalted Al-Barr, the Doer of Good

Al-Tawwab, the Ever-Relenting

Al-Muntaqim, the Avenger

Al-Afu, the Effacer of sins

Al-Rauf, the All-Piting

Malik al-Mulk, the King of Absolute Sovereignty

Dh'ul Jalal wa'I Ikram, Lord of Majesty and Generosity

Al-Muqsit, the Equitable

Al-Jami. the Unite'.

Al-Ghani. the Rich

Al-Mughni, the Enricher

Al-Mani, the Protector

Al-Darr, the Punisher

Al-Nafi, He Who benefits

Al-Nur, the Light

Al-Hadi, the Guide

Al-Bach, the Absolute

Al-Baqi, the Everlasting

Al-Warith, the Inheritor

Al-Rashid, the Righteous

Al-Sabur, the Patient

In a most illuminating exposition of the Name, Al Baith, (p, 120) or the Raiser of the Dead, Al-Ghazali asserts, Islam teaches that man was created for Eternity. Contrary to what most- people today believe, death is not oblivion. There is no way for a man to become non-existent. The dead are either happy in Paradise or wretched in Hell. If people were really convinced of that fact, suicide would be unthinkable.

Because Islam means total submission to the Divine Will, in explaining the Name, Al-Basir, the All-Seeing, Al-Ghazali exclaims, “How insolent is the one who commits an act of disobedience when he knows God great and glorious sees him and how profane is the one who thinks that God the most high, does not see him!” (p.85)

Today the notion is widespread among modern Muslims that monarchy is forbidden in Islam. This makes nearly all rulers of Dar-ul-Islam for more than twelve centuries regarded now as usurpers, that, if only the monarchies were transformed into republics, all good for Muslims would automatically follow: Like their counterparts in Christendom, modernist leaders within Dar ul Islam were fully aware that traditional cultural, social, moral and spiritual values would be given a deadly blow by the destruction of the monarchy. All the traditional hierarchies that stratified society around the monarch, including all qualitative distinctions between the classes, would be eliminated by the overthrowing of the Khalifa, Sultan, Amir, Imam or King as the case

may be. This would revolutionize Muslim society into a standardized proletarian mass easily controlled or manipulated by democratic demagogues. Much more crucial would be the destruction of the hierarchal relationship between God and creation for, if kingship in this world is intrinsically wrong, then on what basis to establish relationship between man and God, one of whose most important Divine Names or Attributes is Al-Malik Al Qahhar, The Almighty King!

This is a book which could not possibly have been written by a modern Muslim writer today but only in the “medieval” Age of Faith where religion was taken for granted as the indisputable fact of life and, when the overwhelming majority of believers had probably never in their lives encountered an unbeliever and absolute transcendental values reigned supreme.