

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IMĀM GHAZĀLĪ'S
BOOK OF
Counsels

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This publication is dedicated to my good
friend who recommended this work for translation.

May Allah reward him with the best of
this world and the next. Ameen

- Yahya Batha -

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Introduction

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَالصَّلَاةِ وَالسَّلَامِ عَلَى أَشْرَفِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ
سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ

In the name of Allah,
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.
Benedictions and peace upon the most noble of
prophets and messengers, our master Muḥammad,
and upon his family and companions

AL-MAWĀ'IZ FĪ AL-AḤĀDĪTH AL-QUḌSIYYAH

THE TITLE OF THIS treatise by Imam Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (505 AH/1111 CE) is *al-Mawā'iz fī al-Aḥādīth al-Quḍsiyyah*, or *Counsels from Divine Narrations*. It is a collection of thirty-eight hadiths likely intended to fulfil the purpose of a statement attributed to the Prophet ﷺ about the merits of collecting forty hadith: 'Whosoever from my community preserves forty hadith regarding religious matters, Allah will raise him on the Day of Resurrection among those with understanding (*fuqahā'*) and the scholars (*ulamā'*).'¹ Abū Darda's ﷺ variation includes that the Prophet ﷺ also said, 'I will be an intercessor and a witness for him.'

Imam an-Nawawī noted that this hadith is graded weak, however,

1 Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyah*, 4:189; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab* (1596).

he stresses, 'The scholars all concur that it is permissible to act upon weak hadith about beneficial actions,' as opposed to hadith about fundamental beliefs and legal rulings. We should note that even weak hadith are not necessarily false; they simply do not meet the rigorous criteria for *ṣahīḥ*-grade authentication.

The text before us by Imam Ghazālī is a book of *mawā'iz*, counsels to good or against evil, embodying precisely the sort of hadiths the scholars support implementing despite the grade of their narration. The word '*mawā'iz*' can be interpreted in a few different ways. While we have chosen 'counsel,' as Ghazālī seeks to advise us on religious matters through counsel, it can also be understood as 'exhortation,' a much stronger alert to the dangers at hand and a reminder to submit to God. Both indicate the need of the reader to be mindful of God and His expectations of us. Indeed, this word is also related to the Qur'anic refrain heard from the pulpits every Friday: '*Allah enjoins to justice and good and to giving relatives, and He forbids the shameful, the blameworthy, and the oppressive. He exhorts you (yā'izukum), so that you may be mindful (16:90).*

In terms of the contents of this book and the hadith, Ghazālī readily admitted his own deficiencies in the science of hadith, and so this work is not necessarily to be taken as authoritative therein. However, this work seems to be focused on the general concepts and group hadith together into larger sections in a somewhat thematic arrangement, seeking to convey the concepts which Ghazālī found important to gain from reading. The identification of the hadith which have been melded together to create these moral teachings have been thoroughly investigated by expert scholars in hadith. Their own notes from examination of the text follow this introduction. Understanding the relationship of the authenticity of the hadith and the meanings and counsels to which Ghazālī wished to direct us is essential. There is a clear theme of holding righteous fear of Allah in this collection. We can reflect on this considering the portion from its final segment:

*. . . Know that if I love a slave, I remove the World from him
and I employ him for the Hereafter.
I show him the flaws of the World so that he is cautious of it,
he works in pursuit of Paradise, so I enter him into Paradise by My
mercy.*

*Whereas, if I resent a slave, I distract him from Me with the World
and employ him in pursuit of it.
He is from the people of the Hellfire, so I enter him into the Hellfire. . . .*

This passage may serve as a summary of a core theme of the collection of hadith: the filling of one's heart with the love of Allah ﷻ and a corresponding emptying out of the World, and an intense tone reflecting both beauty and majesty.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF IMAM GHAZĀLĪ'S ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER

Having attained fame and the most distinguished professorship of the prestigious Nizāmiyyah madrasah in Baghdad, established by Sultan Nizamuddin in 1099, Imam Ghazālī recalls in his biography, *The Deliverer from Error (al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl)*:

I reflected on my intention in my public teaching, and saw that it was not directed purely to Allah, but rather, was instigated by the quest for fame and widespread prestige. I therefore reflected unceasingly on this for some time, while I still had freedom of choice. One day I would firmly resolve to leave Baghdad. . .and another day I would revoke my resolution.

Befittingly, in his discourse with himself, he records a counsel he ascribes to 'the herald of faith' saying 'Away! Up and Away! Only a little is left of your life, and a long journey lies before you!' After six months of vacillation, in July 1095, 'the matter passed from choice to compulsion. For Allah put a lock upon my tongue so that I was

impeded from public teaching. . . I was completely unable to say anything.' The physicians told him that 'there is no way to treat it unless his heart be eased of the anxiety which visited it.'

Imam al-Ghazālī made a pretext of leaving for Makkah, but resolved to never return to Baghdad again, and instead pursued a path of spiritual purification which culminated in his magnum opus and masterpiece of Islamic literature, *The Revival of the Religion's Sciences* (*Iḥyā' Ulūm ad-Dīn*). In its introduction, Imam al-Ghazālī reverse mirrors the beginning of his journey from years prior, 'My tongue has been set loose, and the responsibility to speak out and to discourse have become incumbent on me due to your persistent blindness to the obvious truth, your obstinacy in backing falsehood, and in embellishing ignorance. . .' his counsel preparing the reader for the text ahead.

SAAD ANSARI

The Young Translators' Program

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, most merciful and compassionate. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, alone without partners; and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. I invoke the blessings of Allah and His peace upon on His final Messenger, Muhammad, his family and companions, along with all those who follow them in goodness till the Day of Rising.

This translation has been produced by a number of translators working together in an effort to create a methodology of translation that might facilitate the growth of the individuals while enabling a quicker production of texts for publication. This has only been possible by way of the Rising Translators Program.

The Young Translators' Program seeks to support upcoming translators and cultivate a culture of team translation and feedback; a methodology that successfully fostered the great Islamic translation movement of the 8th and 9th centuries in the era of the Abbasids. In that time, the goal was to bring more knowledge from outside of the Muslim scholarly tradition into Arabic for Muslim comprehension and expansion of thought. Today, the goal of translation in this project is to expand the reach of the great scholars of the Islamic tradition to the eyes and hearts of those who do not have the ability to access the texts in their original Arabic. Our intent is to give rise to a generation of new translators versed not only in solo translation, but also in teamwork to produce texts of high quality faster, and in turn, create a translation ecosystem in which other students of Arabic and translation take part and learn.

YAHYA BATHA

Important Observations on the Referencing

Definition of Ḥadīth Qudsī

In his work, *al-Aḥādīth al-Qudsiyyah al-Arbaʿīniyyah*, the distinguished hadith scholar, Mullā ʿAlī al-Qarī states in his Introduction:

Ḥadīth Qudsī signifies the report narrated by the master of all narrators and the mentor of all the reliable scholars, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ on the authority of Allah ﷻ. At times, it is through the archangel Jibrīl ﷺ, and at others, through the divine revelation, or an inspired dream. The interpretation of *Ḥadīth Qudsī* was the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ prerogative, elucidating it in whatever expression he saw fit. Moreover, *Ḥadīth Qudsī* is distinct from the Holy Qur'an, which is the most praiseworthy criterion, for the Qur'an was not sent down without the agency of Jibrīl, the trustworthy spirit. The Qur'an was always revealed in exactly the same words that were taken from the sacred, heavenly Tablet. The words of the Qur'an have been preserved in their pristine purity in all time and place.¹

Varying Formats of Ḥadīth Qudsī

1. The hadith commences with the words: 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said that Allah ﷻ says. . .' followed by the text of that *Ḥadīth Qudsī*. This is very common and is deemed by many as the best format.
2. The hadith replaces the words 'Allah ﷻ said' with another expres-

1 ʿAlī al-Qarī, *al-Aḥādīth al-Qudsiyyah al-Arbaʿīniyyah*, pp.29–30.

- sion, e.g. 'My mercy overwhelms My anger.'¹ The use of the first-person pronoun 'My' conclusively establishes that it is Allah's statement and hence it is a *Ḥadīth Qudsī*.
3. The hadith is not *Ḥadīth Qudsī* in its entirety but it contains only a part of Allah's statement. An example of which is: 'Your Lord is pleasantly surprised over the shepherd who, while grazing his herd of goats on the top of a hill, does not miss his prayer. He gives the *adhān* (call to prayer) and offers his prayer. Upon this Allah ﷻ says: "Look at My servant!"² The concluding portion of this constitutes a *Ḥadīth Qudsī*.
 4. The hadith contains an allusion to Allah's ﷻ statement, though it is not specified. One learns only from the context that it is Allah's ﷻ statement. For example: 'Every Monday and Thursday, the gates of Paradise are opened. Everyone who is not a polytheist is forgiven on these days. The only exception is the person who has a quarrel with a fellow Muslim brother. It is said, "Grant them respite until they make peace between them."³ The expression "it is said" in the above Hadith could be taken as Allah's statement, for it is only Allah who grants forgiveness.

In all the above formats, owing to the presence of the divine attribution, these will be reckoned as *Ḥadīth Qudsī*.

ON GHAZĀLĪ'S COUNSELS

When studying Imam Ghazālī's tract in light of the above, one notes that every counsel commences with 'Allah Almighty said,' although he has not provided any citation in support of this claim. On scrutinizing these counsels, one realises that it is difficult to designate all the words included in these counsels as *Ḥadīth Qudsī*, conforming to the above-mentioned definition and formats. Therefore, these counsels have been classified into the following three categories.

1 Bukhārī (7422).
 2 Nasā'ī, *as-Sunan al-Kubrā* (1642).
 3 Muslim (2565).

The first category: There are sentences of these counsels which appear specifically as *Ḥadīth Qudsī* in works of hadith. However, we found few hadiths in this tract citing *Ḥadīth Qudsī* in exactly the same words in which they appear in the hadiths themselves.

Second category: Many words in these counsels are those which are not labelled as *Ḥadīth Qudsī* in the works on Hadith. Rather, these are Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ words which he did not ascribe to Allah ﷻ. These words cannot be, however, taken as *Ḥadīth Qudsī*.

Third category: Many words in these counsels are not considered as part of any hadith (be it *Ḥadīth Qudsī* or otherwise), though their meaning and message are certainly derived from authentic hadiths. Therefore, the relevant hadiths were identified and those bearing resemblance to these words were cited. At places, more than one hadith has been cited. According to the term used by Hadith scholars, this is known as a report having the same meaning.

However, despite meticulous research, the source of very few counsels could not be traced, hence they have been left uncited. We seek help from Allah. Those scholars who are familiar with the job of hadith referencing know that it is a very painstaking, sensitive exercise. We have not spared any effort to take up this hard work. However, man is liable to err. If any scholar comes across any error in our citations, he should kindly inform us. We will be grateful for his correction. Allah knows best.

MUHAMMAD TAYYAB AL-HUSSAINI
 Muhammad Arif Iqbal
 (Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi)

Book of Counsels from Divine Narrations

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Praise belongs to Allah—for a reminder for the worshipers, a bolstering for the righteous from the Muslims in their worship. Benedictions upon the Bearer of the Pure Creed and favour upon his family, his Companions, and their families and upon whomever follows them in beautification as well as the scholars of the Community in every era. In the *Book of Counsels* is a beautiful benefit. May Allah ﷻ benefit us by it.

THE FIRST COUNSEL

Allah ﷻ says:

Son of Adam!

I am astonished by the one who is certain of death, yet he is joyous.

I am astonished by the one who is certain of the Accounting, yet he gathers wealth.

I am astonished by the one who is certain of the grave, yet he laughs.

I am astonished by the one who is certain of the Hereafter, yet he rests.

I am astonished by the one who is certain of the World and its termination, yet he is at ease with it.

I am astonished by the one who is knowledgeable on the tongue, yet he is ignorant in the heart.

I am astonished by the one who purifies himself with water, yet he is not pure of heart.

I am astonished by the one who is preoccupied with the flaws of others, yet he is heedless of his own flaws;

by the one who knows that Allah ﷻ beholds him, yet sins;

by the one who knows that he dies alone,

enters the grave alone,

and is held to account alone,

yet heeds other people.

There is no god except Me, truly, and Muhammad is My slave and emissary.¹

THE SECOND COUNSEL

Allah ﷻ says:

I, Myself, have testified that there is no god except Me, alone, there is no partner for Me. Muhammad is My slave and emissary.

Whoever is not content with My decree, is not patient in My test, is not grateful for My blessings and is not satisfied by My gift, then let him worship another lord.²

Whoever goes so far as sadness over the World, it is as though he is angry with Me.

Whoever complains about a misfortune, has complained about Me.

Whoever enters into the presence of a wealthy person and humbles himself to him for the sake of his wealth, two thirds of his religion have left him.

Whoever slaps his own face in grief over a dead person, it is as though he had taken a spear and sought to kill Me with it.

Whoever breaks his spirit over a grave, it is as though he tore down the door of My Ka'bah with his hand.

¹ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (361); Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyah*; Bazzār, *Musnad*; Ibn Bishrān, *Amālī*; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab*; Bayhaqī, *Zuhd*; Ibn 'Adī, *Kāmil*.

² Suyūṭī, *al-La'ālī al-Maṣnū'ah* (12); Samarqandī, *Tanbīh* (263), *al-Qand fī 'Ulamā' Samarqand* (325); Suyūṭī, *Jam' al-Jawāmi'* (6355); Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr* (807), *Awsaṭ* (8370); Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab* (196).