THE OCCIDENTAL EXILE AND OTHER MYSTICAL RECITALS

BY

SHIHAB AL-DIN YAHYA SUHRAWARDI

TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC AND PERSIAN

BY LALEH BAKHTIAR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume I

Preface

The Recital of the Occidental Exile

The Commentary upon that Recital

Volume II

The Arabic Recitals (cont'd)

.The Recital of the Towers or Words of Mystical Intuition

.The Belief of the Theosophers

The Persian Recitals

.The Chant of Gabriel's Wing

.The Fiery Gold Light

.A Day with a Group of Sufis

.On the State of Childhood

.On the Nature of Love or The Lover's Friend

.The Words of the Ants

.The Song of Simurgh

NOTE: These two volumes represent the completed work to date. An Introduction by Seyyid Hossein Nasr, illustrations, footnotes, the glossary of symbols and nine commentaries (one for each of the recitals, except the first, which is included) are being prepared. These translations presented here have been given to a few friends for comments and do not necessarily represent the final form.

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

PREFACE

After completing the translations of the mystical recitals of Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā Suhrawardī, it became apparent that a commentary was necessary for the English reading audience.[1] The full beauty of the mystical recitals of the Master of Illumination requires a commentary giving the sense of the traditions about which he writes. A mystical treatise without a stem, a transition between roots and flower, cannot grow.

It was from this that the translator set about finding commentaries. When Professor Henry Corbin published the original Arabic of "The Recital of the Occidental Exile"*he

also included the only commentary found to date, an anonymous , early Persian commentary. A translation of this would be helpful, but not enlightening. Professor Corbin has also commented extensively upon these recitals, in particular, "The Recital of the Occidental Exile". This is available to those who read French.

However, the translator felt that the link to Suhrawardi's tradition needed to be further strengthened and clarified. In "The Recital of the Occidental Exile", for example, there are more than thirty four Quranic verses incorporated by Suhrawardi into the text. They are verses which have been often quoted by gnostics.

Could not this link be strengthened with full explanation of these verses?

But which one to choose? Unfortunately, Suhrawardi himself never wrote a commentary upon the Quran for us to refer to. However, commentaries upon the Quran in Arabic and Persian are innumerable. Putting aside the purely exoteric interpretations, one is still left with an overwhelming number of esoteric commentaries.

Perhaps the difference between an exoteric and esoteric commentary upon the Quran should be further explained here. Stated simply, an exoteric interpretation helps to explain the Shariah, the Divine Law, whereas an esoteric interpretation helps to explain the Way (Tariqah), which leads one to the Truth (Haqiqah). The relationship between the Truth, the Way and the Law may be related through structural analogy to the circle. The Law is the circumference, the Way is the radii leading to the center, the center is the Truth.

The central postulate of the Way, Sufism, the point where one pierces the circumference, is the thesis that there is a hidden meaning in all things. It is through this hidden meaning that all things relate. Here is oneness, unity. Outward forms are illusions, multiplicities covering the inner essence of a thing. One needs to rise above the form in order to understand essence.

Suhrawardi, as you will read in Professor Corbin's description below, was martyred because of his esoteric

position. Therefore, in order to seek further meaning in his words, one needs to look at the radii of the circle, the esoteric interpretations which include a spiritual hermenutics for the one who would be guided.

The choice of an esoteric commentary became easier when observing the historical-philosophical tradition between the three great masters, Avicenna, Suhrawardi and Ibn Arabi. These three men form the basis of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's book, *Three Muslim Sages*. One needs only to refer to it to see the great link.

Only in the latter years of his life was Avicenna drawn to the esoteric world. But his philosophy plays a major role in Suhrawardi's theosophy.[2] Suhrawardi stated that there are two legs upon which one must walk: reason and spiritual vision or intuition which has nothing to do with instinct. Intuition results from the light or illumination of the whole mind. It is not apart from reason. One must ,however, train reason through learning grammar, mathematics, geometry and Peripatetic[3] philosophy. This form of philosophy taught by Avicenna, based upon Aristotle, is the highest fruit of rational knowledge according to Suhrawardi. Along with this one must purify oneself so that no true philosophy is worthy of man's endeavors unless it combines physical transformation. Philosophy is to become not to just think.

Suhrawardi, then, begins where Avicenna left off as he himself states in his preface to "The Recital of the Occidental Exile."

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It remains to relate Suhrawardi to the school of Ibn Arabi. We turn to Professor Henry Corbin for the explanation of this relationship.

> " Suhrawardi died a martyr at the age of thirty eight in Aleppo, whither he had rashly journeyed (1191), a victim of the rabid intolerance of the doctors of the Law and of Salahaddin, the fanatic known to the Crusaders as Saladin. Though his life was cut off too soon, he succeeded in carrying out a great design: in reviving in Iran the wisdom of the ancient Persians, their doctrine of Light and Darkness. The result was the philosophy, or rather, to take the Arabic term in its etymological sense, the 'theosophy of light' (*hikmat al-Ishraq*) to which we find parallels in many pages of the work of Ibn Arabi. In accomplishing this great design, Suhrawardi was conscious of establishing the "Oriental wisdom" to which Avicenna too had aspired and knowledge of which reached Roger Bacon in the thirteenth century. But of this work of Avicenna only fragments remain, and Suhrawardi was of the opinion that because Avicenna was without knowledge of the sources of ancient Iranian wisdom, he had been unable to complete his project. The effects of Suhrawardi's theosophy of Light have been felt in Iran down to our own time. One of its essential features is that it makes philosophy and mystical experience

inseparable: a philosophy that does not culminate in a metaphysic of ecstasy is vain speculation; a mystical experience that is not grounded on a sound philosophical education is in danger of degenerating and going astray.

" This element in itself would suffice to place Suhrawardi and Ibn Arabi in the same spiritual family. It situates this theosophy on a spiritual plane higher than the rational plane on which the relations between theology and philosophy, belief and knowledge, are ordinarily discussed. The controversy concerning these relations, so characteristic of postmedieval Western philosophy, has its sources in the situation briefly analyzed above. Actually, Suhrawardi deals not with a problem but with an imperative of the soul: the fusion of philosophy and spirituality.... *Ishraqiyun*, the disciples of Suhrawardi, are designated as "Platonists" *(Ashab Aflatun)*. Ibn Arabi was to be surnamed the Platonist, the "son of Plato" *(Ibn Aflatun)*. This clarifies certain co-ordinates of the spiritual topography which we are here trying to establish.

" ....The event which followed the system of Avicenna was not the destruction of his Neoplatonism by the Aristotelian Averroes but the inauguration by Suhrawardi of the theosophy of Light *(hikmat al-Ishraq)* as "Oriental wisdom." The determining influence on Sufism and spirituality was not Ghazali's pious agnostic critique, but the esoteric doctrine of Ibn Arabi and his school.

> " Furthermore, the spiritual ferment arising from the coalescence of these two schools, that of Suhrawardi's *Ishraq* and that of Ibn Arabi, created a situation which lent crucial importance to the relations between Sufism and Shi'ism. The significance of both these currents in Islam was clarified, the one throwing light on the other.... " [4]

Therefore, because of the closeness of thought between Suhrawardi and the school of Ibn Arabi, the famous *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* by the Shaykh al-Akbar, Muhyi al-Din Ibn Arabi was chosen. Although actually written by his disciple 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani, Kashani's commentary is the continuation of the chain of transmission which he himself was a part of. This commentary will be referred to as TQK. It is a commentary which relates each verse to its meaning for the inner seeking of self. Solomon becomes the heart, Noah's Ark, the Divine Law, the hoopoe, inspiration and cognition. The steps and stages of the journey are constantly recalled for one who has eyes to see.

The reader first encounters the text in full as written by Suhrawardi. The words in italics are the Quranic verses, the words of which he uses to express his recital. No break in the flow occurs by this means and if they were not in italics, the reader would

think the words were Suhrawardi's alone.

The second part contains the commentary. It is done in the traditional manner. A line or two of text is followed by commentaries which take the story into other realms but always back to the text to begin the recital again. The traditional text is usually commented upon in this way rather than through footnotes alone. As a matter of fact, footnotes as we know them do not exist. Rather, one could call such 'asides' marginal notes because this is where they appear. A master, for instance, would read, say, the mystical poem of the 12th century Persian poet, Shabistari,[5] called *Golshan-i-Raz* (Garden of Secrets). Then in the same volume he would find Lahiji's 14th century commentary upon the poem which includes evidence from other poets, prophetic traditions, the Quranic verses, etc. The man reading this would comment in the margin upon the words of Lahiji upon the words of Shabistari. This would remain a great source of knowledge for the disciple.

The commentary upon "The Recital of the Occidental Exile" also varies. If a Quranic verse is referred to by Suhrawardi, the commentary first includes the complete verse of the Quran. (All Quranic verses are translations of A.J. Arberry's, *The Koran Interpreted*, unless otherwise indicated.) Then follows a commentary translated from the Arabic of the TQK. If no Quranic verse is indicated in the text, the commentary

is a translation of the anonymous Persian commentary[6] published by Henry Corbin. Following that, certain very pertinent and enlightening passages of Henry Corbin's work *En Islam Iranien*[7] are translated from the French and included. Footnotes occur wherever it was felt an English reader would need further explanation. The symbol (+) above a word means it can be found in the glossary of Suhrawardi's symbols.

Thus Suhrawardi is translated from the Arabic or Persian depending upon the language in which he wrote. The anonymous Persian commentary is translated from the Persian as it relates to the text. The inclusion of the entire Quranic verse to which Suhrawardi refers in two or three words and the translations from the Arabic of the relevant commentary upon that particular verse from the TQK and the inclusion of some of H. Corbin's comments from English and French, bring into being what one might call 'a new creation'. Although it is important to remember the Quranic commentaries are a major source of the learning process in their own right. However, this work as it is now presented has never appeared in this form before. It is the building upon of traditions in order to allow the thoughts of the Master of Illumination to flourish.

After the translation of the commentaries was finished, the translator realized that she had created a two-dimensional work. That is, in the usual explana-

tions of the text (culmination), the connection (commentary) is done for the reader. That is, the text is explained to the reader. It becomes a matter of reading comprehension. This does not happen here.

At first, the idea was a startling one. Is it possible to express in another way? Will the imagination of the reader follow? Some reflection upon this produced the parallel, the Persian miniature.[8] It is a since disproved notion that the reason why the Persian miniatures lack the third dimension, that is have no perspective is because they did not know how to draw. Much of the same reasoning was applied to Giotto when his paintings showed a marked lack of perspective.

However, when one discerns space in the Persian miniature one reaches an entirely different conclusion. The miniature was meant to be two-dimensional so that the viewer himself depending upon his 'preparedness' would create the third dimension. It would differ as each viewer saw it and the degree to which he would be taken beyond 'this world' into the 'next world' would be a sign to him of the stage he had reached.

Thus through this analogy presented here in words, the reader will perhaps be inspired to relate more personally to the text as the understanding depends on oneself alone. Even if there were a more thorough traditional commentary,perhaps it would remain simply an intellectual exercise. This, however, is not the purpose of this genre. These recitals are not

theological or philosophical texts alone. They are recitals about the flight of the soul, what she encounters upon the way and how she must be transformed before one can reach the Self hidden behind layers of veils.

From Suhrawardi's recital one must often move to the full Quranic story of Solomon, for instance, or Noah and then into the commentary from the school of Ibn Arabi. From Suhrawardi through the Quran to the thoughts and explanations of Ibn Arabi is perhaps a long process but the inner dimension is never pierced easily. 'Preparedness' along with creative imagination is required in order to escape the prison of habit. Let the imagination flower in the transitional world, the *alam-i-mithal*,[9] the world of similitudes, the *barzakh*.[10] Enter the connection of the roots and become the transition, the stem, the reed and then let the culmination flower.

FOOTNOTES TO PREFACE

1. Having come to the field of Islamic philosophy from outside the circle of a twentieth century accepted scholastic education, and having never orally received the traditions, a personal commentary was out of the question. Suhrawardi and, in particular, his Theosophy of Light, became a magnet. Whenever a new area was breached, a new study began. Thus a love based on mystical intuition grew and a very particular knowledge was cultivated, lacking perhaps scholastic preparedness. But with the aid of Seyyid Hossein Nasr, Professor Henry Corbin and Professor Toshihiko Izutsu, a love based on intuitive knowledge was able to blossom.

2. Theosophy refers to self-purification combined with philosophy.

3. The development of peripatetic philosophy,essentially belongs to Avicenna. It literally means 'he who walks' after Aristotle who is said to have given lectures while walking. These philosophers, in the Islamic world, considered themselves to be followers of Aristotle, but not in a pure sense. They actually developed Aristotelian philosophy as seen through neo-platonic eyes in the context of Islamic revelation.

4. H. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recitals*, p. 42-3. See also pages 36-7, 38-42.

5. This great mystical poem, composed in the 13th century, A.D. contains, in summary form, the doctrines of Sufism. It is written in the mathnavi style. Every verse is like a jewel within the total crystalline form.

6. Written anonymously, the Persian translation of "The Recital of the Occidental Exile", as well as the commentary, appears in H. Corbin, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques de Shihabbadin Yahya Sohrawardi*.

7. H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien, II, Sohrawardi et les Platoniciens de Perse*.

8. This is the theme developed by Seyyid Hossein Nasr, in "The 'World of Imagination' and the Concept of Space in the Persian Miniature." The Islamic Quarterly, Vol. XIII, No. 3, p. 129-134.

9. This refers to the 'world of similitudes' which is formal manifestation as a whole including both the psychic and the physical worlds.

10. The isthmus; symbol of an intermediate state or of a mediating principle.

NOTES TO TEXT AND COMMENTARY

TEXT — Numbers in parantheses refers to the Quranic verses. The first number is the chapter and the second number is the verse.

COMMENTARY — The name of the Quran and the numbers that follow refer to the chapter and verse of the Quran.

TQK — *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*, from the school of Shaykh al-Akbar, Muhyi al-Din Ibn Arabi.

AVR — Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recitals.*

PC
OPM — Anonymous Persian Commentator, published by H. Corbin, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques do Shihabbadin Yahya Sohrawardi.*

EII — Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien, II, Sohrawardi et les Platoniciens de Perse.*

THE RECITAL OF THE OCCIDENTAL EXILE

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Preface

Thanks be to God who is the Creator of the world and blessings upon the servants whom He chose, especially upon our Sayyid, Mohammad, the Chosen one, his family and friends, all.

And now, when I was reading the *Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, in spite of the admirable spiritual sentences and the profound suggestions which it contained, I found it void of lights which indicate *the Great Catastrophe (79:34)*, in other words, the great 'stage,' which is stored in the Divine Books; concealed in the symbols of the sages; and also hidden in the *Recital of Salaman and Absal* which was composed by the same author who wrote *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. But it is this Secret on which are based the spiritual stations of the Sufis and of those who possess mystical intuition. And in the *Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan* as well, there are no indications of this except at the end of the book where it says, "Sometimes certain solitaries among men emigrate towards Him," etc. Thus it was for this reason that I decided to mention a small part of that in a story which I called the *Recital of the Occidental Exile*, dedicated to some of my noble friends. For my intention, I trust in God.

The beginning of the story

I traveled with my brother, 'Asim, from Transoxiana to the countries of the Occident so that we could hunt a group of birds along the shore of the Green Sea. We suddenly fell into a *city whose people are evildoers*, the city of Qayrawan *(4:77)*. The inhabitants of the city became aware of our arrival, they realized we were the sons of Shaykh Hadi ibn al-Khayr, the Yemenite. They surrounded us and bound us in chains and shackles of iron and imprisoned us in a well whose depth was fathomless. And there was directly above that well, unoccupied until peopled by our presence, a high castle fortified by a number of towers. Thus they told us, "You are not forbidden to go up to the castle alone at night but when day comes, you must fall again into the bottom of the well. At the bottom of the well, there were *shadows piled one upon another (24:40)* and when we put forth our hands wellnigh we could not see them.

But during the night hours we climbed to the castle, dominating the immensity of space as we looked down through an opening. Frequently doves of the forests of Yemen came and informed us of the state of things in the sacred region. Sometimes we were also visited by lights from Yemen, the radiant flash of the rays of the *right bank (28:30)* of the Orient, informing us of the night-travelers upon the highway. The perfumed breezes of the smell of the trees aroused in us a burst of ecstasy upon a burst of ecstasy. Then we sighed and desired

for our country.

Ascending during the night and redescending during the day, now, it was here, during a night of the full moon, that we saw the hoopee entering from the opening and greeting us. In its beak a message, issuing *from the right bank of the watercourse, in the sacred hollow, coming from the tree (28:30)*. It said to us, "We have brought you from Saba. *I have come (Saba) Sheba to thee with a sure tiding (27:22)*, and that is that which is explained in the message of your father."

Thus we read the message. Here is what it contained: "This is addressed to you by your father, Hadi, and it is this: *In the Name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate (27:31)*, we inspired you but you did not show any desire. We called you but you did not migrate. We indicated to you but you did not understand."

The message continued, "Thou, oh such a one, if thou wishest to deliver thyself and thy brother, do not hold thyself back from your decision to travel. Attach yourself to our rope and that is the Dragon of the Moon of the spiritual world,which dominates the shore of the eclipse. When thou arrivest at the *Valley of the Ants (27:18)*, let go of the bottom of thy robe and say, "Glory to God who has made me living after having made me dead.' *To Him is the Uprising (67:15)*. Kill thy wife. *She shall surely be of those that tarry (15:60 and 29:31)* De-

decreed for him that commandment that the last remnant of those should be cut off in the morning (15:66). Embark upon the ship and say,'*In God's Name shall be its course and its berthing (11:43).*

Part Two

In the message was explained all which would happen in the course of the Way. The hoopee went before us sun was in position just above our heads when we arrived at the edge of the shadows. We took our place in the ship and it carried us, *amid waves like mountains (11:44).* We intended to climb the *Mount of Sinai (23:20)* in order to visit the hermitage of our father.

Then waves came between my son and myself, *and he was among the drowned (11:45).* I knew that for my people, *their promised time is the morning, is the morning not nigh? (11:83).* I knew that *the city that had been doing deeds of corruption (21:74)* would be *turned...uppermost nethermost(11:84)* and it would rain *on it stones of baked clay(11:84).*When we arrived to the place where the waves dashed against each other and where the waters rolled, I took my wet-nurse and I threw her into the sea.

But we voyaged upon a ship, *a well-planked vessel, well-caulked (54:13).* Thus we tore the ship apart from fear of a king who came after us, *for behind them there was a king who was seizing every ship by brutal force (18:78).* And *the laden ship (26:119)* took us to the island of *Gog and Magog (18:93)* at the left side of *Mt. El-Judi (11:46).*

Then there were with me the jinn who traveled in my service, and I had at my disposal the source of melting copper. I said to the jinn, *'Blow (18:75)! Until (18:75)* it becomes like fire. Thus I erected a barrier to separate myself from them.

Then it became apparent that *my Lord's promise is ever true (18:98)*. I saw in the course of the way the bones of *'Ad and Thamond (11:62)*. I traveled through the region *fallen down upon its trellises (18:40)*.

Then I took the two heavy things with the spheres and placed them with the jinn in a bottle which I had fabricated and given a round form and upon which there were lines designed like circles. I cut the currents of the water from the middle of the vault of heaven. When the water ceased to flow to the mill, the mill broke up and the ether escaped towards the ether. I hurled the Sphere of Spheres against the firmaments so that it crushed the sun, the moon and the stars.

Then I escaped from the fourteen coffins and the ten tombs from which emanated the shadow of God so that I would be taken towards the sacred world, being drawn *gently (25:48)* and after that, *appointed the sun to be a guide to it (25:47)*. I found the way of God and then I understood, *and this is My path, straight (6:154)*.

Now I had taken my sister and my family during the night and enveloped them in *the chastisement of God (12: 107)* They stayed plunged in a part of the very

dark night with fever and nightmares until they were in a state of complete prostration.

I saw a lamp in which there was oil, light fell from it, a light which radiated to the different parts of the house. The niche of the lamp illuminated itself and the inhabitants were embraced under the effect of the sun rising upon them.

I placed the lamp in the mouth of a dragon who inhabited the tower of the water Wheel, below which I found a certain Red Sea and above which there were the stars in which no one knew the amount of their irridation except their Creator, *and those firmly rooted in knowledge (3:5)*.

I saw that Leo and Tarus had both disappeared, Sagitaurus and Cancer had both been hidden by the rotation of the Spheres. Libra stayed in equilibrium until the Star of Yemen had risen from behind thin clouds composed of that which was woven by the spiders of the corners of the world of the elements in the world of generation and corruption. There was also with us a ram; we abandoned him in the desert where the tremblings of the earth made him perish when lightening fell upon him. Then, when all the distance had been crossed, the road was finally terminated while *the Oven boiled (11:42 and 23:27)* in the conic form; I saw the celestial bodies; I joined myself to them and perceived their music and their melodies. I learned their recital; the sounds were resounding in my ear like the throbbing of

a chain being pulled across a hard stone. My muscles were on the point of tearing to pieces, my joints on the point of breaking from the pleasure that I reached. And the thing never ceased repeating itself to me until the white clouds were dispersed and the membrane holding the foetus in the mother's womb was torn to pieces.

Part three

I left the caves and the caverns until I passed the chambers directing myself towards the Source of Life. Here I perceived the Great Rock at the peak of a mountain resembling the Sublime Mountain. I questioned the fishes which were assembled at the Source of Life, contented, taking pleasure in the shadows of the sublime lofty rock.

"That high mountain," I asked, "What is it? And what is that Great Rock?"

Then /one of the fishes *took its way into the sea, burrowing (18:61)*. He said to me, "This is what thou desirest so ardently; that mountain is Mt. Sinai and the rock is the hermitage of thy father."

"But these fish," I said, "who are they?"

He said, "They are the similarities to thyself. You are the sons of the same father. The same thing happened to them as happened to thee. So, they are thy brothers."

When I heard and became certain, I embraced them. I rejoyced in seeing them as they rejoyced in seeing me. Then I ascended to the mountain, and there I saw our father in the manner of a great

Shaykh. The skies and the earth were almost bursting under the theophany of his light. I stayed stupified, astonished. I advanced towards him then he greeted me. I prostrated myself before him and I almost became annihilated in his radiant light.

I cried for a time when I complained to him about the prison of Qayrawan. He said to me, "How well thou hast been saved, but it is absolutely necessary that thou returnst to the occidental prison, thou hast not completely cast off the shackles."

When I heard his words, my reason took wing. I sighed while I called out like someone who is on the point of perishing and I begged him. He said to me, "The return is absolutely necessary at this time. But I will give thee two pieces of good news. The first, once thou returnst to the prison it will be possible for thee to return again to us and to mount easily towards our paradise, when thou wishest it. The second, it is that in the end thou wilt be totally delivered to us - abandoning completely and forever the country of the occident."

I became joyful upon hearing his words. He said to me again, "Know that that mountain is Mt. Sinai, and above that mountain there is another mountain, *the Sineen (95:2)* the home of my father and thy ancestors. I am not in relation to him other than like thee in rela-

tion to me.

" And we also have other ancestors, until they reach to a king who is the Supreme Ancestor, who has neither ancestor nor father. We all are his servants; we receive and acquire our light from him. He possesses the most sublime beauty, the highest majesty, the most captivating light. He is above the above. He is the Light of the Light and above the Light, from all eternity and for all eternity. He is the one who manifests his sacred self to all things. *Everything perishes save His Face (28:88).*

Postscript

I was as this state in the recital when my state changed and I fell from the highest space into the abyss of the fire, among the people who were not believers; as a prisoner in the country of the Occident; but pleasures remain with me which I am incapable of describing. I sobbed. I implored. I regreted separation. That transitory joy was one of the dreams which rapidly wears away.

May God save us from the prison of nature and the shackles of matter. *And say: 'Praise belongs to God.'He shall show you His signs and you will recognize them. Thy Lord is not heedless of the things you do (27:95 and 31: 24). Say, 'Praise belongs to God.' Nay, but most of them have no knowledge.*

←—Blessings upon His Prophet, his family, all. Here ends the *Recital of the Occidental Exile.*

Commentary Upon the

RECITAL OF THE OCCIDENTAL EXILE

TEXT

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.+

Thanks be to God who is the Creator of the world and blessings upon the servants whom He chose, especially upon our Sayyid, Mohammad,+ the Chosen one, his family and friends, all.

And now, when I was reading the *Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan*,+ in spite of the admirable spiritual sentences and profound suggestions which it contained, I found it void of lights which indicate the *Great Catastrophe*.

COMMENTARY

Quran 79:34-40

Then, when the Great Catastrophe comes
upon the day when man shall remember what he has striven,
and Hell is advanced for whoever sees,
then as for him who was insolent
and preferred the present life,
surely Hell shall be the refuge.

TQK Vol. 2, p. 765.

Then when the Great Catastrophe comes, that is, when the theophany of the light of the essential Oneness* which engulfs all things and then effaces all things and hides them, comes....

TEXT

in other words, the great 'stage'* which is stored in the Divine Books; concealed in the symbols of the sages; and also hidden in the *Recital of Salaman and Absal*** which was composed by the same author who wrote *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. But it is this Secret* on which are based the spiritual

stations[+] of the Sufis and of those who possess mystical intuition. And in the *Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan* as well, there are no indications of this except at the end of the book where it says, "Sometimes certain solitaries among men emigrate toward Him,"* etc.

COMMENTARY

H. Corbin, A.V.R., p. 36-37.

This prologue to the *Recital of the Occidental Exile*[*] requires no commentary. Suhrawardi, while affirming his admiration, ...

could find his point of departure, could in his turn and for his own part give an account of the journey into the Orient. For anyone who wishes to arrive at a concrete representation of the positive relationship between Avicenna and Suhrawardi, perhaps no better exercise in meditation could be advised than that he read the *Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzan* and the *Recital of (the) Occidental Exile* in succession[*]....

TEXT

Thus it was for this reason that I decided to mention a small part of that in a story which I called the *Recital of the Occidental Exile*,* dedicated to some of my noble friends. For my intention, I trust in God.

COMMENTARY

H. Corbin,* E.I.I., vol.2, p.271.

The first part of the recital... could be entitled 'the fall into captivity and evasion.' It is the beginning of the story of the gnostic in that world. That episode 'between two eternities' begins by the exile in the world of light* which is the *Orient*,* and the captivity in the world of material *physics* which is the *Occident*.*

BEGINNING OF THE STORY

TEXT

I traveled with my brother+, 'Asim+,

COMMENTARY

Persian Commentator,* OPM, p. 276.

(Suhrawardi) gave 'Asim the faculty of contemplation* which is that aspect of the soul which has no physical relationship to the body. Thus, 'I traveled with my brother,' means I was sheltered from the dangerous places and errors of the body.*

TEXT

from Transoxiana +

COMMENTARY

P.C., OPM, p. 276.

in other words, from the Transcendent world.*

TEXT

to the countries of the Occident+

COMMENTARY
P.C., OPM,
p. 276.

in other words, the world of matter. The (world of matter) in relationship to the Transcendent world is obscure darkness.

H. Corbin,
AVR, p. 162.

The Occident...This region situates the 'left' of the cosmos; we now know that it comprises all being and all beings that are connected with any kind of matter. It is perceived under a threefold aspect: (1) the *farthest Occident* of non-being, not of pure nothingness, but of privation of being, of pure (possibility), perceived as the Hot Sea shrouded in Darkness that was the farthest point attained by Alexander's quest.* ..(2) the *terrestrial Occident*, where Forms that have emigrated and been exiled into Matter ruthlessly contend against one another; (3) the *celestial Occident*, which comprises the entire system of the spheres... , and whose matter is entirely different in condition from the matter of the terrestrial Occident: subtle, diaphanous, incorruptible, "glorious" in comparison with ours....

TEXT

so that we could hunt a group of birds+ along the shore of the Green Sea.+

COMMENTARY
P. C., OPM,
p. 276.

By this Sea, the sensible world is meant. In other words, "We were looking for knowledge of the senses (the birds) to discover our own perfection."* From there we wished to ascend to the Angelic Intelligence and from the Angelic Intelligence* to the *intellectus adeptus*.*"

TEXT

We suddenly fell into a *city*+ *whose people are evildoers*, the city of Qayrawan.*+

COMMENTARY
Quran 4:77

say, 'Our Lord, bring us forth from this city whose people are evildoers, and appoint to us a protector from Thee, and appoint to us from Thee a helper'.

P.C., OPM, p. 277.

By a city this world is meant. By evildoers two worlds are meant, in other words, the coincidence of opposites.* The coincidence of opposites cannot be without war and war cannot be without evildoers .

H. Corbin, Journal Asiatique, Juillet-Septembre, 1935.

As to Qayrawan, a city in Morocco, it is probably introduced because of the etymology of its name (caravan). The life of the soul in the material world is nothing but a long pilgrimage.

TEXT

The inhabitants of the city became aware of our arrival, they realized we were the sons of Shaykh+ Hadi+ ibn al-Khayr,+ the Yemenite.+ They surrounded us and bound us in chains and shackles of iron+ and imprisoned us in a well+ whose depth was fathomless.

COMMENTARY
P.C., OPM, p. 277-8.

By Hadi (guide*) he means the first emanation*. Khayr, (goodness*) refers to the Universal Intellect* which is the way one is guided as well as being goodness. By the chains and prison, the body is meant and by the well, this world of darkness.

H. Corbin, EII, vol. 2, p. 272-3.

They are surrounded and enchained by the inhabitants of the village, once the latter understood that the reciter and his brother are the children of the world of Light, children of Shaykh Hadi ibn al-Khayr, the Yemenite. Since they are the "children", it is he, "the father" that the exiles will rejoin at the end of the Recital, at the mystic Sinaf* which is at the summit of the mountain of Qaf.* He indicates all three associated terms for designating the Intelligence, which are: the Angel of humanity, the Transcendent Spirit who is for humans the *Nous patrikos*, and the agent of Intelligence of the Avicennian philosophy, 10th in the angelic hierarchy*...

TEXT

And there was directly above that well, unoccupied until peopled by our presence, a high castle+ fortified by a number of towers.+

COMMENTARY P.C., OPM, p. 278.

In other words, (there were no) souls which are created from material objects and bodies (before we appeared). A high castle refers to the celestial spheres.

TEXT

Thus they told us, "You are not forbidden to go up to the castle alone at night+ but when day+ comes, you must fall again into the bottom of the well."

COMMENTARY P.C., OPM, p. 278-9.

By this is meant, at night, through sleep, one can reach the

Transcendent world and see the forms of intelligibles because the senses are displaced at the time of sleeping. The senses should not prevail. In this way, thou art acceptable. And by day, during the time of wakefulness, because of the predominance of the senses, it is impossible that thou wilt have the patience to witness the intelligibles. In other words, one reaches the world of the intelligibles through death and sleep is a second death. The Quran indicates this: *God takes the souls at the time of their death and that which has not died, in its sleep (39:42).*

H. Corbin, EII, vol. 2, p. 274-5.

The captives are thrown into a deep well which culminates in the heights of a fortified castle with numerous towers; know the castle formed the celestial Spheres and is dominated by the Fixed Stars which carry the constellations of the zodiac (the *abraj*, plural of *borj*, castle, high tower). It is permitted for the captives to climb to that castle, to endeavor the spiritual ascension of the Spheres, but only during the *night*....the *day* could appear as *night* and the *night* could appear as *day*, according to whether one considers the side of the "orient" or the side of the "occident." That ambivalence is found again at the heart of hermeneutic esotericism in Sufism as in Ismailism and Shi'ism. The hidden sense is that of the *night* of esotericism which is at the same time the *day* of the spiritual senses in their reality; the exoteric sense is that of the *day* of the exterior letter of the religious law and at the same time the *darkness* which surrounds the bodies, the spirits and the souls.

TEXT

At the bottom of the well, there were *shadows*+ *piled one upon another* and when we put forth our hands wellnigh we could not see them.

COMMENTARY

Quran 24:40

And as for the unbelievers,
their works are as a mirage in a spacious plain
which the man athirst supposes to be water,
till, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing;
there indeed he finds God,
and He pays him his account in full; (and God is swift
at the reckoning.)
(And as for the unbelievers...)
they are as shadows upon a sea obscure
covered by a (wave)
above which is a (wave)
above which are clouds,
shadows piled one upon another;
when he puts forth his hand, wellnigh he cannot see it.
And to whomsoever God assigns no light,
no light has he.

TQK, vol. 2, p. 142.

(The unbelievers) *are as shadows* * in the depths of the fathomless sea of matter.... (The shadows) immerse (absorb) all things which come to them from the psychic faculties of the soul.* They are *covered by a (wave)* of physical nature *above which is* the wave of the vegetative soul *above which* are the clouds of the animal soul and its dark forms, *shadows* accumulated. *Shadows piled one upon another; when* veiled and imprisoned by

these shadows, unless he puts forth his acquired faculty and contemplates through meditation, *he cannot see it* (the intellect), because of the shadows and the blindness of the spiritual eye of the owner....

P.C., OPM, p. 279.

By these shadows, matter and the impurities of material objects are meant.

TEXT

But during the night hours we climbed to the castle dominating the immensity of space as we looked down through an opening+. Frequently, doves+ of the forests of Yemen came and informed us of the state of things in the sacred region.+ Sometimes we were also visited by lights+ from Yemen, the radiant flash+ of the rays of the *right bank** of the Orient,+ informing us of the night-travelers+ upon the highway. The perfumed breezes of the smell of the trees+ aroused in us a burst of ecstasy upon a burst of ecstasy. Then we sighed+ and desired+ for our country.+

COMMENTARY

P.C., OPM, p. 280.

He has said all of these things in the manner of the Arabs. By these things: ruins, traces of a dwelling, the wind and the aroma of the flowers he remembers the Beloved.* By this is meant, at the time of sleeping, we were able to perceive spiritual things and forms of the intelligibles of the spiritual world because of the putting aside of the senses. 'We sighed,' means we were also of that world.

H. Corbin, AVR, p. 157.

To go to the right is to go upward, toward the Orient, which is the abode of pure beings of light....

TEXT

Ascending during the night and redescending during the day, now, it was here, during a night of the full moon,+ that we saw the hoopoe+ entering from the opening and greeting us. In its beak a message, issuing *from the right bank+ of the watercourse, in the sacred hollow coming from the tree.* *

COMMENTARY

Quran 28:29-30

So when Moses had accomplished the term
and departed with his household, he observed
on the side of the Mount a fire. He said to his
household, 'Tarry you here; I observe a fire.
Perhaps I shall bring you news of it,
or a faggot from the fire, that haply
you shall warm yourselves.'
When he came to it, a voice cried from the right bank
of the watercourse, in the sacred hollow,
coming from the tree: 'Moses, I am God, the
Lord of all Being. '

TQK, vol 2, p. 227.

So when Moses+ had accomplished his term, that is, reached the extreme of perfection, *and departed with his household,* with all his faculties in such a way that none were left behind, he went with them toward the direction of the sacred. The angel of union

appeared to him being skilled in fighting and guarding him through his struggle.

He observed on the side of a Mount, the mountain of the Secret* which is the perfection of the heart at that height, *(the) fire* of the Transcendent Spirit. That is the place* from where it was revealed to whomever received revelation among the Prophets.

From the right bank, that is, the station of the perfection of the heart, which is called 'Secret" from the tree of his own sacred soul.

'Moses, I am God,' is the station of spiritual monologues. It is the station of having been annihilated in the attributes* when both the speaker and the listener is God.

P.C.,OPM, p. 280.

And by this hoopoe he means the faculty of inspiration. "By night we were illuminated means we were free from natural impurities and corrupt mists. By *the right bank* the Transcendent world is meant. Wherever Yemen or Yeman is used, it is the same. Left and left-side refer to the inferior world. Raq'aa* wrote about this.

TEXT

(The hoopoe) said to us, "We have brought you from Saba. *I have come from (Saba)*+, *Shebd*+ *to thee with a sure tiding*

COMMENTARY

Quran 27:21-22.

And (Solomon)+ *reviewed the birds; then he said, 'How is it with me, that I do not see*

the hoopoe? Or is he among the absent?
Assuredly I will chastise him with a
terrible chastisement, or I will slaughter
him, or he bring me a clear authority.'
But (the hoopoe) tarried not long, and said,
'I have comprehended that which thou
hast not comprehended, and I have come from
(Saba) Sheba to thee with a sure tiding....'
(Solomon)

TQK, vol 2, p. 198.

And / reviewed the state of the birds of the spiritual faculties.* He did not *see the hoopoe*, the cogitative faculty*. When the cogitative faculty obeys that of instinct it becomes the estimative faculty* and cognition is absent, rather destroyed. It is only cognition when it is the obeyer of the intellect.* *Assuredly I will chastise him with a terrible chastisement* through strong asceticism* and prohibiting (the hoopoe) from obeying instinct but obeying the intellect instead;* *or I will slaughter him* by destroying him; *or he bring me a clear authority* by becoming the obeyer of the intellect because of the purity of his substance* and the light of his essence.* So (he must) bring a clear reason for his actions.

But (the hoopoe) / tarried not long means his asceticism did not take long because of his sacredness. It did not become necessary to destroy him since he returned due to his purity with a clear excuse. His intellectual faculties* practiced his excuses and chose the best one. Then (the hoopoe) said, *I have comprehended that which thou hast not comprehended'* from the spiritual states

of the city of the body and the perceptions of particulars* and their mixing with universals since the heart by itself perceives only the universals. It does not incorporate the universals to the particulars by means of a syllogism, proof or the deduction of a conclusion . It only incorporates the universals to the particulars through meditation. (The heart), by means of meditation, apprehends the states of the Almighty and gathers together the goodnesses of the two worlds. *And I have come to thee from (Saba) Sheba,* means the city of the body, *with a sure tiding.* This means having beheld face to face through the senses.*

TEXT

and that is that which is explained in the message of your father.+"

Thus we read the message. Here is what it contained: "This is addressed to you by your father, Hadi, and it is this: *'In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,'* we inspired you+ but you did not show any desire. We called you+ but you did not migrate. We indicated to you+ but you did not understand.'

COMMENTARY

Quran 27:27-31

(Solomon+ said), 'Take this letter of mine, and cast it unto them, then turn back from them and see what they shall return.'
She (Sheba) said, 'O Council, see, a letter honourable has been cast unto me.
It is from Solomon, and it is "In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Rise not up against me, but come to me
in surrender.

TQK, vol. 2
p. 201.

Take this letter of mine means practical knowledge* and the Divine Law, *and cast it unto them, then turn back from them and see what they shall return.* Will they accept obedience and submission or will they revolt?* *It is from Solomon,* because it came from the heart by means of meditation upon the soul. *And it is "In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,"* that is, in the Name of Essence through the attribute of the emanation of preparedness.* It means both that which is given to things (to an object) by means of emanation to the Intellect; and, that which is received of perfection from the emanation (by the subject) depending upon the suitability of one's disposition and one's attributes (or one's preparedness). *Rise not up against me,* do not dominate and raise youself up, *but come to me* submissive, surrendering.*

TEXT

The
/message continued, "Thou, oh such a one, if thou wishest to deliver thyself and thy brother, do not hold thyself back from your decision to travel.+ Attach yourself to our rope+ and that is the Dragon+ of the Moon+ of the spiritual world+ which dominates the shore of the eclipse+.

COMMENTARY
P.C.,OPM,
p. 282.

'If thou wishest to deliver thyself and thy brother,' in other words thyself and the contemplative faculty which is Asim. 'Deliver thyself ....to the shore of the eclipse' means deliver thyself and thy brother to the world of asceticism.

H. Corbin, EII, vol. 2, p. 275-6.

" Attach yourself to our rope "the message says. It is exactly the response which Hermes received from his father, when he called those to his aid in the course of the perils of his ecstatic vision...There the rope was the 'ray of light,' the illumination of the hierarctic world. Here then, it designates something like that, but the "cryptogram" is one of difficult reading; it is the "Dragon of the sky of the Moon of the spiritual world, which dominates the shore of the eclipse." The "deciphering" we believe could operate as follows.First of all, that which one calls in astronomy, the head and the tail of the Dragon(...)are the "nodes of the Moon," that is to say, the points where the orbit of the . . cuts the Sun (at the moment of the eclipse). The node showing is that from which that of the Moon begins the course to the north of the eliptic, it is the head of the Dragon(...), the node of the north. The node descending is that part from which that of the Moon begins its course to the south of the eliptic; it is the tail of the Dragon(...), the node of the south. Nevertheless, it does not end here with astronomy. The mention of the Dragon is associated with the idea of the eclipse but all fades away, "to the sky of the Moon of the *spiritual world*." Then the Moon of the spiritual sky is none other than the mystic himself....The return of the occidental exile, is this: the eclipse or occultation to the eyes of the inhabitants of the "city of evildoers" occurs in the same way as when the mystic occults thus to his visible self and is totally invested by the light of the spiritual Sun. All the "imagery" is here coherent; he will again make mention of the

Dragon(...) at the decisive moment of the Return.

TEXT "When thou arrivest at the *Valley of Ants*,+

Quran 27:16-18.

And Solomon was David's heir,
and he said, 'Men we have been
taught the speech of the birds, and we
have been given of everything; surely
this is indeed the manifest bounty.'
And his hosts were mustered to Solomon,
jinn, men and birds; duly disposed;
till, when they came on the Valley of Ants,
an ant said, 'Ants, enter your
dwelling-places, lest Solomon and
his hosts crush you, being unaware!'

TQK, vol. 2, p. 197.

Ants refers to things of greed which are constantly busy gathering wealth,.... *enter your dwelling-places lest Solomon and his hosts crush you, being unaware!* This means hide in your residence and your quarters and return to your principles. Do this so that the heart (Solomon) and the spiritual faculties (his hosts) will not crush you by means of annihilation. This is the journey of wisdom through the acquiring of virtuous habits and the adjusting of one's disposition and morals. Otherwise (that is, if one does not hide in one's residence and quarters and return to one's principles) neither Archetype nor Essence nor effect will remain for the ants, whether they be large or small, from the

annihilation of the theophanies of the Attributes.*

TEXT

let go of the bottom of thy robe and say, 'Glory to God who has made me living after having made me dead.*'
To Him is the Uprising.

COMMENTARY

Quran 67:15

It is He who made the earth submissive to you; therefore walk in its tracts, and eat of His provision; to Him is the Uprising.

TQK, vol. 2, p. 678.

It is He who made the earth of the soul *submissive to you, therefore walk* in the footsteps of your primordial nature*; in its highest attributes, dearest corners and directions. Conquer it. Subjugate it. *And eat of His provision* which is received from His direction. This science (of Divine Nourishment) comes from the senses (as God the Most High indicated: *they would surely have been nourished from above them and from beneath their feet) (5:66, Pickthall translation). Unto Him is the Uprising,* by means of ascending to the station of sainthood* and the ontological station of union.

P.C., OPM, p. 282.

Valley of the Ants means covetness. 'Let go of thy robes' means desires.

TEXT

Kill thy wife.+ *She shall surely be of those that tarry. Depart unto the place you are commanded. And We decreed for him that commandment that the last remnant of those should be cut off in the morning.*+

COMMENTARY

Quran 15:59-60

(Lot)+ said, 'And what is your business, envoys?' They said, 'We have been sent unto a people of sinners, excepting the folk of Lot; them we shall deliver all together, excepting his wife - we have decreed, she shall surely be of those that of those that tarry.'

Quran 29:30-31

And when Our messengers came to Abraham with the good tidings, they said, 'We shall destroy the people of this city, for its people are evildoers.'
He said, 'Lot is in it.' They said, 'We know very well who is in it; assuredly We shall deliver him and his family, except his wife; she has become of those that tarry.'

Quran 15:65-66

'So set forth, thou with thy family, in a watch of the night, and follow after the backs of them, and let not any one of you turn round; and depart unto the place you are commanded.'
And We decreed for him that commandment, that the last remnant of those should be cut off in the morning.

P.C.,OPM
p. 282.

By 'wife' he means physical desires.

H. Corbin, EII,
vol. 2, p. 276-7.

The two sections which terminate the first part of the recital contains the final part of the message received from the "Orient," and give the signs concerning the stages of the voyage. These are the" cryptograms" of the Quranic verses...."Then when thou arrivest at the *Valley of Ants*, seize the bottom of thy robe," that is to say, renounce all vain discussions and recite," *To Him is the Uprising*." The injunctions are made pressing. "Leave thy wife and thy people behind to perish," that is to say, all that carries the desires of the flesh. Here the Quranic verses are those which retell the misfortune which came to the wife of Lot who could never be saved, because she was one of the ones who such that the people of Sodom were destroyed by the storm raised by the sun (15:51-73). It is necessary to take one's place in the ark of Noah, which is here, as in Shi'ite gnosticism, the mystic vessal of salvation....

TEXT

Embark upon the ship and say, *'In God's Name shall be its course and its berthing.'* +

COMMENTARY
Quran 11:39, 41

Make thou the Ark under Our eyes,
and as We reveal; and address Me not
concerning those who have done evil;
they shall be drowned.

So he was making the Ark;....
He said, 'Embark in it! In God's Name
shall be its course and its berthing.

TQK, vol. 1, p. 564-5.

It is possible, that according to an esoteric interpretation, the Ark symbolizes the Law brought by Noah. It was by means of this Ark that he saved himself and those with him who were among his followers. As the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, has said: "The people of my house, my followers, are like those of Noah's Ark; whosoever embarks upon it, is saved and whosoever refuses is drowned."

The storm could be interpreted as the domination of the sea of matter. The sea of matter destroys he who, among the followers of the Prophet, is not separated from it. It destroys he who has not purified his soul. As it has been said by Hermes, peace be upon him, in his words and his spiritual monologues, the meaning of which is ,"Certainly the world is a sea full of water. Thus if thou takest the ark and embark upon it, at the time of the destruction of the body, thou wilt be saved from the sea of matter and taken back to thy origin. Otherwise thou wilt be drowned in that sea and destroyed."

(Noah) said, 'Embark in it! In God's Name shall be its course and its berthing.' This means that the sending of that Law (Ark) is through the Name of God, the Supreme, who is the existence of every perfect gnostic among individuals.Invoke the Divine Name in order to penetrate into the sea of matter, in order to be able to fulfill the Divine Laws and for one's propogation into the phy-

sical world. The evocation causes one to stand firm; it gives stability. It gives proof. And, the fulfillment of Divine Laws, the obeying of its rules, its very establishment and stability comes through the existence of a Prophet, or an Imam among Imams, or a saint among saintly men.

PART II

TEXT

In the message was explained all of that which would follow in the course of the Way. The hoopoe went before us. The sun was in position just above our heads when we arrived at the edge of the shadows.

COMMENTARY

P.C., OPM, p. 283.

"The hoopoe went before us" refers to inspiration. "The sun was in position just above our heads" means our life was reaching a narrow pass. Form changed.* "When we arrived at the edge of the shadows," means the place where matter wanted to be separated from form. The reason for using the sun and the shadow as form and matter is His saying: *Hast thou not regarded thy Lord, how He has stretched out the shadow? Had He willed, He would have made it still. Then We appointed the sun to be a guide to it (25:47).** This means that if the sun did not actively guide this shadow, matter would not have the possibility of existence. That is, it would remain a non-existent thing.

TEXT

We took our place in the ship and it carried us,

amid waves[+]*like mountains.*[+]

COMMENTARY
Quran 11:44

So (the ark) ran with them amid waves like mountains; and Noah[+]*called to his son, who was standing apart, 'Embark with us my son, and be thou not with the unbelievers!*

TQK, vol. 1, p. 564.

So (the ark) ran with them amid waves, the waves being temptations in the sea of physical nature. The waves are the instincts of physical nature which dominate over oneself, ruling through whims. The coming together of these, that is, the whims of the soul, can grow to be like mountains which veil one's sight and prevent one from journeying. Or, the waves may be interpreted as deviations from one's temperment and the domination of destructive humors.

TEXT

We intended to climb the *Mount of Sinai*[+]in order to visit the hermitage[+]of our father.

COMMENTARY
Quran 23:20

And We send down out of heaven water in measure and lodged it in the earth; and We are able to take it away. Then We produced for you therewith gardens of palms and vines wherein are many fruits for you, and of them you eat,

and a tree issuing from the Mount of
Sinai that bears oil and
seasoning for all to eat.

TQK, vol. 2
p. 119.

And We sent down from the heaven of the Spirit, water of the knowledge of certitude,* *lodged it,* made it tranquil in the soul. *And We are able to take it away* through veiling and covering. *Then We produced for you therewith gardens,* from palms of the spiritual states and divine gifts and grapes of good morals and good deeds, *wherein are many fruits for you* from the fruits of joys of the souls, hearts and the spirits, *and of them* you eat, and through them receive shelter. *And a tree* of meditation, *issuing from the Mount* of the intellect or the mountain of the real heart through the intellective faculty which *bears* that which grows from spiritual aims which are ignited by the *oil* of preparedness and clothed by the fire of the light of the Active Intellect* and *seasoned* with an illuminating color.* Or, seasoned with mystical intuition* for those who have spiritual sight,* the learned ones and those who seek spiritual food.*

TEXT

Then waves came between my son+ and myself, *and he was among the drowned.*

COMMENTARY
Quran 11:45

(Noah's son+) said, 'I will take refuge in a mountain, that shall defend me

from the water.' Said (Noah), 'Today there is no defender from God's command but for him on whom He has mercy.' And the waves came between them, and (Noah's son) was among the drowned.

TQK, vol. 1, p. 564.

(Noah's son) said, 'I will take refuge in a mountain, that shall defend me from the water.' This means I will take refuge in the mind which is the place of reason. In other words, I will defend myself from the flood by means of reason and that which is perceived so that it will protect me from the domination by the sea of matter. Thus I will not be drowned in it. *Said (Noah), 'Today there is no defender from God's command but for him on whom He has mercy.'* Except for he upon whom God has compassion through the religion of unity and the Law. *And the waves came between them.* These are the waves of the soul's desires. The domination of the water of the natural sea means the wave veiled him from his father and his religion and His unity. *And he was among the drowned* upon the sea of physical matter.*

TEXT

I knew that for my people†, *their promised time is the morning†, is the morning not nigh?*

COMMENTARY
Quran 11:83

They said, 'Lot we are messengers of thy Lord. They shall not reach thee;

so set forth, thou with thy family,
in a watch of the night, and let not
any one of you turn round, excepting
thy wife; surely she shall be smitten
by that which smites them. Their
promised time is the morning; is the
morning not nigh?'

P.C., OPM, p. 284

"Is the morning not nigh?" means the time of the union of the souls: particular and universal.*

TEXT

I knew that *the city*+*that had been doing deeds of corruption*+

COMMENTARY
Quran 21:74

And Lot+*- to him We gave judgment*
and knowledge; and we delivered him
from the city that had been doing
deeds of corruption; ....

P.C., OPM, p. 284.

"The city" refers to the microcosm.*

TEXT

would be *turned...uppermost nethermost* and it would rain+*on it stones of baked clay*+.

COMMENTARY
Quran 11:84

So when Our command came, We turned it

uppermost nethermost, and rained on it
stones of baked clay, one on another,
marked with thy Lord, and never far
from the evildoers.

P.C., OPM, p. 284.

"Rain" means illnesses and plagues and impurities of the base faculties like pride, stinginess and envy.

TEXT

When we arrived to the place where the waves dashed against each other+ and where the waters rolled+, I took my wet-nurse+ and I threw her into the sea+.

COMMENTARY

P.C., OPM, p. 284.

"When we arrived" means when I reached a place where the temperments were agitated, I drowned the physical spirit (wet-nurse), which means, I passed from this stage.*

TEXT

But we voyaged upon a ship, *a well-planked vessel+, well-caulked.+*

COMMENTARY

Quran 54:13

Then We opened the gates of heaven unto
water torrential,
and made the earth to gush with fountains,
and the waters met for a matter decreed.
And We bore him upon a well-planked vessel
well-caulked.

P.C., OPM, p. 285.

"Well-caulked ship" means we were still with our bodies.

TEXT

Thus we tore the ship apart from fear of a king+ who came after us, *for behind them there was a king who was seizing every ship by brutal force.* And the *laden ship*+

COMMENTARY
P.C., OPM
p. 285.

By the 'king' he means the angel of death.

Quran 26:119

So We delivered him, and those with him
in the laden ship
then afterwards We drowned the rest.

TEXT

took us to the island of *Gog and Magog**+

COMMENTARY
Quran 18:82-93

They will question thee concerning
(Zul Qarnayn)+. Say: 'I will
recite to you a mention of him.'
We established him in the land,
and We gave him a way to everything;
and he followed a way
until, when he reached the setting
of the sun, he found it setting
in a muddy spring, and he found

nearby a people,
We said, 'O (Zul Qarnayn),
either thou shalt chastise them,
or thou shalt take towards them a
way of kindness.'
(Zul Qarnayn) said, 'As for the
evildoer, him we shall chastise,
then he shall be returned to his Lord
and He shall chastise him with a
horrible chastisement.
But as for him who believes, and
does righteousness, he shall receive
as recompense the reward most fair,
and we shall speak to him, of our
command, easiness.'
Then he followed a way
until, when he reached the rising
of the sun, he found it rising
upon a people for whom We had
not appointed any veil to shade
them from it.
So; and We encompassed in knowledge what
was with him.
Then he followed a way
until, when he reached between the
two barriers, he found this side
of them a people scarcely able to

understand speech.
They said, 'O (Zul Qarnayn), behold,
Gog and Magog are doing corruption
in the earth; so shall we assign
to thee a tribute, against thy setting
up a barrier between us and
between them?'

TQK, vol. 1, p. 773-4

The story of Zul Qarnayn is well known. He was a Greek who lived comparatively recently. Zul Qarnayn in this world (that is, the world of the esoteric interpreted through spiritual hermenutics) is the heart which is King of the two horns and these two horns are the East and the West.* *We established him* in the earth of the body through giving him powers. We gave him the possibility of gathering wealth from both universal and particular meanings; that is, perfections, the ability to journey towards whichever region from the East and the West that he wishes. *We gave him a way to everything,* that is, a path. By means of that path he is able to attain to everything. *And he followed a way,* through physical attachment and awareness of the lower world, *until, when he reached the setting of the sun,* in other words, the place of the setting of the sun of the spirit. *He found it setting in a muddy spring.* That it, it was mixed with mud. This mud is physical matter which is mixed with dark, material objects...*And he found nearby a people.* They are the physical, psychic and spiritual faculties of the soul...

We said: 'O (Zul Qarnayn)! Either chastise them' through asceticism, domination and annihilation *'or thou shalt take towards them a way of kindness'* by moderation and fulfilling pleasures.

(Zul Qarnayn) said, 'As for the evildoer' who is so because of excesses and lack of submission and fidelity, like the faculties of lust, anger, fantasy and imagination, *him we shall chastise* through asceticism. *Then he shall be returned to his Lord* at the time of the lesser judgment. *And He shall chastise him* by casting him into the fire of nature *with a terrible chastisement.* That is, iniquitous, stronger than (Zul Qarnayn's) punishment. Or, at the greater judgment, thus He will punish him, a punishment of violence and destruction.

But as for him who believes through knowledge and gnosis* like the two intellective faculties by meditating upon the external senses and doing virtuous deeds, by attempting to acquire virtues, fidelity and obedience, *they shall receive as recompense, the reward most fair,* from the garden of the Attributes and the theophany of its lights and its rivers of things known; *and we shall speak to him, of our command, easiness.* That is, speaking through the attainment of good habits and virtues. *Then he followed* a path. It is the path of ascending* and journeying* towards God through catharsis and sanctification, *until when he reached the rising of the sun,* the place of the rising of the sun of the Spirit. *He found it rising upon a people* who are the two

intellective faculties as well as meditation, fantasy and the sacred faculty, *for whom We had not appointed any veil to shade them from it,* because of the faculties being illuminated by the sun's light and their grasping universal meanings. *So;* that is, the state is as we have described it. *We encompassed...what was with him,* that is sciences, gnosis, perfections and virtues, *in knowledge.* Its meaning is that no one other than We can encompass him because of Zul Qarnayn being the union, the gathering of the two worlds. Thus there is no one in existence who is aware of the order of knowledge from the Divine Throne except God. *Then he followed* the journey in God *until when he reached between the two barriers.* This means, two worlds and that is his ontological state and his original station between the highest place of the two mountains of God, and the journey in the East and the West, a journey descending and ascending. *He found below them a people.* They were the natural, physical faculties and the external senses, *scarcely able to understand speech,* because neither were they able to perceive meanings nor were they able to utter them. *They said* with the tongue of the moment, *'Gog.'* That is, the natural instincts and whims of fantasy, *'and Magog'* the temptations and the inclinations of imagination *are doing corruption* in the land of the body through the encouragement of vices and lusts contradicting the divine order, instigating activities necessitating disruption in the order; the destruction of good laws and wise rules.

They bring disaster, discord, heresys which contradict justice and equity by the implying of corrupt sowing and begetting.

So shall we assign to thee a tribute by helping thee through our perfections and the forms of our perceptions *against thy setting up a barrier between us and between them*, so that Gog and Magog will not transgress an obstruction that they can not surmount. That is the extent of the Law which, through practical wisdom, veils the heart from Gog and Magog.

P.C., OPM, p. 285.

"Gog and Magog" means, in this spiritual state, impure thoughts and affection for this world passed through my imagination.

TEXT

at the left side+of *Mt. El-Judi*+

COMMENTARY

Quran 11:46

And it was said, 'Earth, swallow thy waters; and, heaven, abate!' And the waters subsided, the affair was accomplished, and the Ark settled on El-Judi, and it was said: 'Away with the people of the evildoers!'

TQK, vol. 1, p. 565.

And it was said, 'Earth, swallow thy waters;' that is, there was a cry from the Absolute through the tongue of the Law, to the natural, physical earth. The cry was:

'O, earth (body), lessen the dominance of thy desires and the predominance of the bubbling of matter upon the heart. Follow the command of the Law. Obey its canon laws. Take the way of moderation which is the essence of the Divine Law. It stands upon this. *And heaven, abate!* The heaven of knowledge is clouded by clouds of desire which the soul and nature draw out, extend, preparing matter. That is the cause of the clouds. Clear them by means of meditation. Prevent the clouds from spreading. *Subside* the water of the power of physical nature. Draw out the humidity which veils the light of the Absolute. The humidity impedes real life. *Was accomplished* is the command of God by the saving of the saved and the destruction of the destroyed.

Came to rest on Mt. El-Judi, that is, the Law stands upon the mountain of the existence of Noah. It came to settle there. *Away with,* destroy, *the people of the evildoers,* who treat the signs of God as lies. They worship desires in place of the Absolute. They play the way of nature in place of the Law.

TEXT

Then there were with me the jinn+

COMMENTARY
P.C., OPM,
p. 285-6.

In other words, the faculty of imagination.

TEXT

who traveled in my service+, and I had at my disposal the source of melting copper.+

COMMENTARY

P.C., OPM, p. 286.

"The source of melting copper" means wisdom.

TEXT

I said to the jinn, *'Blow! Until*+it becomes like fire. Thus I erected a barrier to separate myself from them. Then it became apparent that *my Lord's promise is ever true.*

COMMENTARY

(Zul Qarnayn) / said, 'That wherein my Lord has established me is better; so aid me forcefully, and I will set up a rampart between you and between them. Bring me ingots of iron!' Until, when he had made all level between the two cliffs, he said, 'Blow!' Until, when he had made it a fire. He said, 'Bring me, that I may pour molten (copper) on it.' So they were unable either to scale it or pierce it. He said, 'This is a mercy from my Lord. But when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will make it into powder; and my Lord's promise

is ever true.'

TQK, vol. 1, p. 777.

(Zul Qarnayn) said, 'That wherein my Lord established me,' from particular and universal meanings which can be acquired from experience and the journeying in the East and the West, *is better , so aid me forcefully,* with actions and obedience. *And I will set up a rampart between you and between them* and that is practical wisdom and the Law.

Bring me ingots of iron from ritual forms and the hierarchy of actions. *Until when he made all level between the two cliffs* by leveling and measuring. *He said* to the vital faculties, *'Blow!* upon these forms, blow particular meanings and psychic images from moral virtues. *Until, when he had made it a fire,* a knowledge in itself from among all knowledges which contains the explanation of the quality of the actions. *He said, 'Bring me, that I may pour molten (copper) on it'* the decision and intention which mediates between knowledge (theory) and action (practice). Thus, the means whereby the spirit of knowledge is united with the body of action is the same way that the vital spirit mediates between the human spirit and the body. Thus a barrier appeared, which means a law. The foundation is from ingots of actions, blowing of knowledge and morality and the molten copper of invocations and intentions. The soul gains certitude through this. He contemplated and found faith. *So (Gog and Magog) were*

unable either to scale it, to surmount it because of the height of the state and because of its containing knowledges and demonstrations which they could not repel or dominate over; *or pierce it* because of its being strengthened by virtuous habits, actions and invocations.

He said, 'This barrier is the Law which *is a mercy from my Lord* to his servants; it causes their safety and their subsistence. *But when the promise of my Lord comes to pass* at the lesser judgment, *He will make it into powder,* futile and demolished because of the impossibility of working with that barrier at the time of death and the destruction of bodily organs....*and my Lord's promise is ever true.*

TEXT

I saw in the course of the way the bones of the heads of *'Ad and Thamond.*[+*]

COMMENTARY

Quran 11:60

'Surely 'Ad disbelieved in their Lord: so away with Ad, the people of Hood!'

Quran 11:61

And to Thamood their brother Salih

Quran 11:68

'Surely Thamood disbelieved in their Lord, so away with Thamood!'

P.C., OPM, p. 286.

By mentioning the bones of 'Ad and Thamood, he shows contempt for this world.

TEXT

I traveled through the region *fallen down upon its trellises.*

COMMENTARY
Quran 18:40

> *And his fruit was all encompassed, and in the morning he was wringing his hands for that he had expended upon it, and it was fallen down upon its trellises, and he was saying 'Would I had not associated with my Lord anyone!'*

TEXT

Then I took the two heavy things with the spheres and placed them with the jinn+ in a bottle which I had fabricated and given a round form and upon which there were lines+ designed like circles. I cut the currents of the water+ from the middle of the vault of heaven.+

COMMENTARY
P.C., OPM, p. 286.

"Two heavy things" refers to the soul which commands * and the soul which blames,* with their causes and reproaches. Perhaps you could translate these as understanding and imagination. "Which I had fabricated" means the brain which is the source of the energy of the psychic faculties of the soul. That is, it grows from me. "There were lines" means veins and hollows and they are like cricles. "Currents of water" means the power of motion which is in the brain by

means of the veins, hollows, skin and muscles. "Heaven" means the head.

TEXT

When the water ceased to flow to the mill+, the rill broke up and the ether escaped towards the ether.

COMMENTARY
P.C., OPM, p. 287.

By this he means, " I overcame the psychic faculties of the soul as well."

TEXT

I hurled the Sphere of Spheres+against the firmaments+so that+it crushed the sun+, the moon+and the stars.

COMMENTARY
P.C., OPM., p. 287.

This means, " I hurled the soul which commands so that the physical spirit and the psychic faculties of the soul and the other faculties became one color. This faculty remained his special faculty such as knowledge and contemplation.

TEXT

Then I escaped from the fourteen coffins+and the ten tombs+from which emanated the shadow of God

COMMENTARY
P.C., OPM, p. 287-8.

The fourteen faculties could be various ones such as: attraction, retention, digestion, repulsion, feeding, reproduction, retaining, growth, anger and lust in addition

to the four humors. The ten tombs are the ten senses, five of which are external, five internal.

TEXT

so that I would be taken towards the sacred world†, being drawn *gently* and after that, *appointed the sun to be a guide to it.*+

COMMENTARY

Quran 25:47-48.

Hast thou not regarded thy Lord, how
He has stretched out the shadow?
Had He willed, He would
have made it still.
Then We appointed the sun, to be a
guide to it; thereafter We seize
it to Ourselves,
drawing it gently.

TQK, vol. 2, p. 160.

Hast thou not regarded thy Lord, how He has stretched out the shadow through relative existence? Know that the quiddity of things and the reality of essences are the shadow of the Absolute and the attributes of the knowing of the Absolute Being. Thus to stretch them out is to make them appear through His Name, Light. Light is the outward, external existence through which all things are manifested and made to appear. Non-existence overflows into the space of existence, that is, relative existence. *Had He willed, He would have made it still,* that is, permanently in non-existence. That is the treasury* of His Being, the

Mother of Books* and the immutable Guarded Tablet.* The inner and real existence of everything is permanently in them.

We do not mean by non-existence, absolute nothingness. Certainly, non-existence can never be actual existence. However, that which does not exist in the hidden, in the treasury of the knowledge of the Absolute and in the invisible world, can not possibly exist in the manifest world.*

The bringing into existence and the taking into non-existence are nothing other than making what is immutable in the invisible, manifest and concealing that which is permanent in the hidden. *He is ...the (Manifest) and the (Hidden); He has knowledge of everything (57:3).*

Then We appointed the sun of the Intellect to the shadow, *to be a guide* which leads us to knowing that the shadow's essential reality is other than its external existence. Otherwise, there is no difference between them in the external world in which nothing but existence is found. If it were not for the shadow's existence, there would not be any concrete thing in existence. Nothing but the Intellect guides us to it being something other than existence.*

Thereafter We seize (draw the shadow) to Ourselves through annihilation *drawing it gently* because all of the existents which are destroyed are destroyed gently by comparison to that which precedes. All things seized (withdrawn) appear

almost immediately in another manifestation*. The word, to seize or to withdraw is proof of the fact that making disappear is not complete annihilation. Rather, the withdrawing prevents the shadow from spreading. It is withdrawn into His seizure which is the Intellect. The Intellect is the guardian of the shadow's form and its reality , eternally *a poste ante** and *a parte poste*.*

TEXT

I found the way of God and then I understood, *and this is My path, straight.*

COMMENTARY

Quran 6:154

And that this is My path, straight; so do you follow it, and follow not divers paths lest they scatter you from His path.

TQK, vol. 1, p. 412.

And that means the way of virtues, because the source of virtues is unity. Dost thou not see that virtues are the means, the intermediaries between the two extremes of excess? It is not possible in truth to actually tread the path of virtue except for those who persevere in the religion of God. It is open only to those who are aided by God through Divine Grace to traverse the divine Path so that they reach the stage of annihilation of the attributes, that is their essence. Then one is characterized by the state of subsistence after having been annihilated in the divine attributes until one

stands through God.* Then he has persevered in God* and through God. At this time the path is the path of the Absolute and one's journey is the journey of God.*

My path, straight means My way takes only he who stands by me, straightly, full of purpose, not slack towards the right and left. *So do you follow it and follow not diverse paths* from different idealogies and various religions for they are conventions laid down for people who are veiled by customs and desires , laid down for them so that their darkness, resistance and perplexity will not be increased.

TEXT

Now, I had taken my sister+and my family+during the night+and enveloped them in *the chastisement of God*. They stayed plunged in a part of the very dark night with fever+and nightmares+until they were in a state of complete prostration.

COMMENTARY

Quran 12:107

Do they feel secure
that there shall come upon them no
enveloping of the chastisement of
God, or that the Hour shall not come
upon them suddenly when they are
unaware?

TQK, vol. 1, p. 624.

The enveloping of the chastisement of God is the enveloping with a veil which hides one's being prepared to accept

perfection; through a fixed and dark image.

P.C., OPM, p. 288.

This means the matter of material objects of this world which remain in the world of darkness and which are capable of setting free images which Suhrawardi related to fever and nightmare. This is the interval of time when the images are not yet free. In other words, we passed beyond the matter of this world as well.

TEXT

I saw a lamp+ in which there was oil,+ light fell from it, a light which radiated to the different parts of the house+. The niche+ of the lamp illuminated itself and the inhabitants were embraced under the effect of the sun rising upon them+.

COMMENTARY

P.C., OPM, p. 289.

"The lamp" means the Active Intellect which is the master of this world. It is active in the sense that many works are born from it in contrast to the intelligibles of the spheres which give birth to only one act. That oil which is born from it means the supportive faculty* of physical objects which is a place.

TEXT

I placed the lamp in the mouth of a dragon+ who inhabited the tower of the water Wheel,+ below which I found a certain Red Sea+ and above which there were the stars in which no one knew the amount of their irridation except their Creator, *and those firmly rooted in knowledge*.+

COMMENTARY

Quran 3:5

*It is He who sent down upon thee the Book, wherein are verses clear that are the Essence of the Book, and others ambiguous. As for those in whose hearts is swerving, they follow tha ambiguous part, desiring dissension, and desiring its interpretation; and none knows its interpretation, save only God(and)*those firmly rooted in knowledge. Say, 'We believe in it; all is from our Lord'; yet none remembers, but men (gifted with understanding.)*

TQK, vol. 1, p. 167.

Wherein are verses clear, more sublime, so that probability and error do not find their way to them. They that only have one meaning, *they are the Essence of the Book*. That is, the principal of the Book; *and others ambiguous* which have two or more meanings. Truth and falsehood can be confused in them. This is so because the Transcendent Absolute has one Face.* It is the Face of the Absolute which abides after the annihilation of the creature. It does not accept multiplicity and diversity. But He has multiple, relative faces, in accordance with the many mirrors of manifestation. This relative face or aspect is that which appears in every manifestation according to the preparedness (inner, essential capacity) of every theophany. From that single manifestation, truth is mingled with falsehood. Each manifestation is related to the relative face which

suits it. Hence follows trial and testing.

But the veritable gnostics are those who are able to recognize the abiding Face in every form in which it is manifested. They know the Face of the Absolute from the faces which are carried in the ambiguous verses. So they take them back to the clear verses. In this they follow the examples of the poet who says: 'There is no Face but One except that when thou countest the mirrors of manifestation they increase. But the veiled ones, *as for those whose hearts are swerving,* from the Absolute, *they follow the ambigious part,* because of their being veiled from unity by multiplicity. The veritable gnostics instead, follow the clear verses and make the ambiguous ones follow the lead of the clear ones. Thus they choose, among the possible faces, that which corresponds to religion and faith.

Desiring dissension means seeking to go astray and misleading those who are upon the way, *desiring its interpretation* corresponding to their spiritual state and their methods. 'When the sword becomes crooked, the sheath also changes shape.' As they do not know the abiding Face among the faces, it follows that they do not know the true meaning from the meanings. That is why their veils increase and become denser until because of that they become deserving of chastisement.

And none knows its interpretation, save only God and those firmly rooted in knowledge. The knowers who know through the knowledge of God, means, certainly, God knows totally

and in detail. *And they say, 'We believe in it,'* and by this they verify the knowledge of God about it. Thus they know through the light of faith. *All is from our Lord* because to them all has one and the same meaning which does not vary. *Yet none remembers* this single, discriminative knowledge in the manifold ambiguous verses *but* those whose Intellect has been cleansed by the light of guidance and who have been separated from the shell of desires and habits.

P.C., OPM, p. 289-90.

This means the Active Intellect* which is the master of this world, "I left , as well, with the elements of this world." The reason for this is that he has said 'inhabited' and the elements of this world, even though they rotate, they do not look like circles.

By the water tower, the firmaments is meant, in other words, the water wheel is turned and the firmaments turn. And when he says, 'Below which I found a certain Red Sea,' he means that it is through water that the firmaments descend. 'And above it the stars' is in itself apparent; in other words, from this world and from the Active Intellect I also passed and reached the celestial Sphere and its bodies.

TEXT

I saw that Leo+ and Taurus+ had both disappeared, Saggitaurus+ and Cancer+ had both been hidden by the rotation of the Spheres. Libra+ stayed in equilibrium until the Star of Yemen+ had risen from behind thin clouds composed of that which was woven by the

spiders+ of the corners of the world of the elements in the world of generation and corruption+.

COMMENTARY
P.C., OPM,
p. 290.

Even though the name of Leo and Taurus remained separate, means that we reached the world of immaterial bodies. That is, the world of singles because one nature is not a war as between the bull and lion. "Saggitaurus and Cancer had both been hidden..." means no crookedness remained since these two indicate crookedness. By the "Star of Yemen" the Universal Soul is meant. And then he says, "from behind thin clouds," which means outside of form. That is the Intellect and the Soul. Those clouds are the webs which the spiders of the corners of the world of elements weave.

TEXT

There was also with us a ram+; we abandoned him in the desert+ where the tremblings of the earth+ made him perish when lightening+ fell upon him. Then, when all the distance had been crossed, the road was finally terminated while *the Oven boiled*+ in the conic form+;

COMMENTARY
Quran 11:43

Until, when Our command came,
and the Oven boiled *

TQK, vol. 1
p. 562.

boiled in the oven of the body (and thus

cleansed) from the domination of a corrupt temperment and the excess of humidity upon the natural temperature when the watery nature of 'matter' becomes stronger than the fire of the animal spirit. Or, the perishing spiritually when the oven boils by the predominance of water upon the natural desires of the heart and the drowning of (those desires) in the physical sea of 'matter'.

TEXT

I saw the celestial bodies; I joined myself to them and perceived their music and their melodies. I learned their recital; the sounds were resounding in my ear like the throbbing of a chain being pulled across a hard stone. My muscles were on the point of tearing to pieces, my joints on the point of breaking from the pleasure that I reached. And the thing never ceased repeating itself to me until the white clouds were dispersed and the membrane holding the foetus in the mother's womb was torn to pieces.

COMMENTARY
H. Corbin, EII,
vol. 2, p. 278-9

The preceding has been a rapid triumph of the liturgical recital of the Quran, realizing in a few sections, the state of the perfect *hikayat* (story), defined here precisely as a trinity realized in the actual recital, the trinity of the reciter, of the gesture sited and of the heros whose story is recited...It is not the historic and archeological sense of the Quran which is recited by the reciter of the "Occiden-

tial Exile". Suhrawardi puts the work in its proper perspective here. 'Recite the Quran as if it were revealed for thy own case.' Neoplationism,* the *Shaykh of Ishraq** suffices, by himself alone, to show that there has never been an incompatibility between the *spatial* schematization of the Platonic Above* and the *temporal* schematization of the anthropological Quran or Bible of the Above.* It is, in effect, precisely that space which is the work of that field of that story, he permits it to have always an instant to go beyond itself and to repeat itself, brief by not being a chronicler but a *liturgy*, a liturgy realizing the reversibility of time in the space brought into being by time itself. By the liturgical recital of the Quranic verses, the reciter comes to revive the drama of the prophets; in his voyage to the mystic Sinai* he follows from prophet to prophet of his being,* rolled up from sky to sky of his being, until the *astrum in homine*.*

PART III

TEXT

I left the caves+ and the caverns+ until I passed the chambers directing myself towards the Source of Life.+ Here I perceived the Great Rock+ at the peak+ of a mountain resembling the Sublime Mountain.+

COMMENTARY

H. Corbin, EII, vol. 2, p. 282.

The Sinai* at the foot of which the pilgrim now finds himself is a mystic Sinai, that which culminates at the summit of Mt. Qaf,* and at that summit

of that Sinai there is the Great Rock.... which is the oratory of the Angel, which is that key of the vault of the world of the Spheres, the 'celestial door', and at the same time, the passage towards the Above, towards *No-Koja-Abad** (the country of Nowhere, the "8th clime" which is represented as being on the convex surface of the sphere of Spheres; that is not only, understand well, a "means of speech"). It is why the pilgrim makes the ascension. There also is the limit between the visible and the suprasensible world, and it is to that limit....which produces itself in the encounter between the terrestial I and his celestial I, the "Angel" that he goes. One can only succeed to it after having bathed in the Source of Life....*

TEXT

I questioned the fishes,+ which were assembled at the Source of Life, contented, taking pleasure in the shadows of the sublime lofty rock.

"That high mountain+," I asked, "What is it? And what is that Great Rock?"

Then one of the fishes *took its way into the sea, burrowing* +

COMMENTARY

Quran 18:60-91

*And when Moses said to his page**

'I will not give up until I reach
the meeting of the two seas,
though I go on for many years.'

Then, when they reached their meeting,
they forgot their fish, and it took*
its way into the sea, burrowing.
When they had passed over, he said
to his page, 'Bring us our breakfast;
indeed, we have encountered
weariness from this our journey.'
(The page) said, 'What thinkest thou?
When we took refuge in the rock, then
I forgot the fish - and it was Satan
himself that made me forget it
so that I should not remember it -
and so it took its way into the sea
in a manner marvellous.'
Said (Moses), 'This is what we were
seeking!' And so they returned
upon their tracks, retracing them.
Then they found one of Our servants
upon whom We had given mercy
from Us, and We had taught him
knowledge proceeding from Us.
Moses said to (Khizr),'Shall I follow
thee so that thou teachest me, of what
thou hast been taught, right judgment?'
Said he, 'Assuredly thou wilt not
be able to bear with me patiently.

And how shouldst thou bear patiently
that thou hast never encompassed
in thy knowledge?' He said,
'Yet thou shalt find me, if God
will, patient; and I shall not
rebel against thee in anything.'
Said (Khizr), 'Then if thou followest
me, question me not on anything
until I m yself introduce
the mention of it to thee.'
So they departed; until, when
they embarked upon the ship,
he made a hole in it. He said,
'What, hast thou made a hole in it
so as to drown its passengers? Thou
hast indeed done a grievous thing.'
Said he, 'Did I not say that thou
couldst never bear with me patiently?'
(Moses) said, 'Do not take me to task
that I forgot, neither constrain me
to do a thing too difficult.'
So they departed; until, when
they met a lad, he slew him.
(Moses) said, 'What, hast thou slain
a soul innocent, and that not to
retaliate for a soul slain? Thou
hast indeed done a horrible thing.'

Said (Khizr), 'Did I not say that thou
couldst never bear with me patiently?'
He said, 'If I question thee
on anything after this,
then keep me company no more;
thou hast already experienced
excuse sufficient on my part.'
So they departed; until, when
they reached the people of a city,
they asked the people for food,
but they refused to receive them
hospitably. There they found
a wall about to tumble down,
and so he set it up. (Moses) said,
'If thou hadst wished, thou couldst
have taken a wage for that.'
Said (Khizr), 'This is the parting
between me and thee. Now I will tell
thee the interpretation of that
thou couldst not bear patiently.
As for the ship, it belonged
to certain poor men, who toiled
upon the sea; and I desired
to damage it, for behind them
there was a king who was seizing
every ship by brutal force.
As for the lad, his parents were
believers; and we were afraid
he would impose on them insolence
and unbelief; so we desired

that their Lord should give to them
in exchange one better than he in
purity and nearer in tenderness.
As for the wall, it belonged
to two orphan lads in the city,
and under it was a treasure
belonging to them. Their father
was a righteous man; and thy Lord
desired that they should come of age
and then bring forth their treasure
as a mercy from thy Lord. I
did it not of my own bidding.
This is the interpretation of that
thou couldst not bear patiently.'

TQK, vol. 1,
p. 766.

And when Moses said to his page, the outward explanation of this is as the story itself indicates and there is no denying the miracles; but the hermenutic meaning is this: when Moses, the heart, said to the servant, the soul (at the time still part of the body), *I will not give up*, he meant I will not cease from the spirit-

ual journey and traveling. I will go thusly, *until I reach the meeting of the two seas*, which means the place of the meeting of the two worlds: the world of the spirit and the world of the body. One is sweet and one, salty, in the human form. *Though I go on for many years*, in the station of the heart, I will not give up. *Then, when they reached their meeting*, in the state of the Presence and integration, *they forgot their fish. It took its way into the sea*, the sea of the body, alive as it had been at first, and that is the fish that symbolically, not literally, swallowed Jonah, upon whom be peace.* Their nourishment prior to attaining this stage was from the fish. It had been ordered that they procure it at the time of departure. *Burrowing*, digging a large hole as has been stated elsewhere. The sea opened its way to to him. It did not close before him. *When they had passed over* to the place where they had left the fish. Weariness and hunger overcame Moses. He had been wearied in the journey and he had not been hungry before this. But the moment he remembered the fish and the nourishment he had received from it, he

sought food. *(Moses) said to his page, 'Bring us our (food).* This describes his state at noon similar to what happened to him previously in the womb. *Indeed, we have encountered weariness from our journey* and that is the weariness of birth and the throes of birth. *(The Page) said, 'What thinkest thou? When we took refuge in the rock, then I forgot the fish,* because we were not in need of it. *And it was Satan himself that made me forget it so that I should not remember it* and this was because Moses was asleep when the fish took its way into the sea as has been said, whereas the page, the soul was awake. The Satan of fantasy which embellished the tree for Adam made Moses forget to remind the soul of the fish because Moses was in a state of negligence and forgetfulness. The way in which they were wandering refers to the large hole mentioned above.

Said (Moses), This (the fish's taking its way to freedom) *is what we have been seeking,* looking for because it was at the meeting of the two seas where Moses had been promised a meeting with the being who is more knowing than he. The ascent

towards perfection by following the sacred intellect is not other than in this station. *And so they returned upon their tracts,* by ascending towards the station of their first, primordial nature as they were before. *Retracing them,* following the steps of their descent by ascending towards perfection, until they found the sacred Intellect and he (Khizr) is a servant from among God's servants, made special through the gift of divine grace and mercy.

Upon whom We had given mercy from Us,

that is, spiritual perfection through a catharsis from material things and the ability to transcend directions and through pure illumination which are the signs of proximity and nearness. *And We had taught him knowledge* proceeding from Us, sacred knowledges and universal realities proceeding from the Divine Presence without the intermediary of human teaching.

(Moses saying) Shall I follow thee? is the manifestation of the will to follow the Way and ascend towards perfection.

(Khizr) said, 'Assuredly thou wilt not be able to bear with me because thou art

not a 'knower ' of hidden things and spiritual realities because thou hast not purified thyself and thy being veiled by the body and its coverings. Thus thou dost not have the strength of my companionship and this is the meaning of his saying: *And how shouldst thou bear patiently that thou hast never encompassed in thy knowledge?* *(Moses) said: Yet wilt thou find me, if God wills, patient,* because of the strength of my ability and my persistence in seeking. *And I shall not rebel against thee in anything,* because of my orientation towards thee and my acceptance of thy command and the sincerity of my will. My spiritual monologues are all from the 'tongue of the moment.'

Said (Khizr): if thou followest me on the journey of the path of perfection, *question me not on anything,* which means it is incumbent upon thee to imitate me and submit in the journey of actions and asceticisms, virtues and spiritual endeavors in the journey and do not seek realities and meanings, *until* it is time and *I myself say unto thee* and until its due time

comes to thee of that knowledge, a remembrance. I will inform thee of the hidden realities at the time of thy purification from the mould and the heart.

So they departed; until when they embarked upon the ark of the body which had reached the level of asceticism, worthy of 'servantness', embarked towards the sacred world upon the sea of matter for the journey to God. *(Khizr) made a hole in it.* He destroyed it (the ark, body) through asceticism and the lessening of of food and he weakened its foundations and made confusion appear in its structure and made it slack. *(Moses) said, 'What, hast thou made a hole in it so as to drown the passengers?* Hast thou made a hole therein in order to drown the animal (v ital) and vegetative faculties which are in the sea of matter, thus to destroy them? *Thou hast indeed done a grievous thing.* This negation (of Moses to Khizr) is the manifestation of the soul with its attributes and the inclination of the heart towards the soul, irritation due to the prohibition of joys in the act of asceticism and discontentment with one's rights.

Said (Khizr), 'Did I not say that thou couldst never bear with me patiently? This is a spiritual awakening and a sacred encouragement, to with, the decision to journey must be stronger than that.

(Moses) said, 'Do not take me to task that I forgot, neither constrain me to do a thing too difficult. This is an apology in the station of the soul aware of its own imperfections, the accusing soul.

So they departed; until, when they met a lad. (The lad) is the soul which appears with its attributes and thus veils the heart; thus it commands evil things. Khizr slew him by deadening anger and lust and other evil attributes.

What, hast thou slain a soul innocent? This is fault-finding because of the affection of the heart for the soul.

Said (Khizr), 'Did I not say that thou couldst never bear with me patiently? This is a reminder and a spiritual interpretation. *(Moses) said, 'If I question thee on anything after this then keep me company no more; thou hast already experienced excuse sufficient on my part.*

This is an apology and confession and acknowledgement of it and all of these are the colorings of the soul when it is self-accusing, aware of its own imperfections.

So they departed; until, when they reached the people of a city. They are the faculities of the body and the desiring of food by Moses and Khizr from them is the seeking of spiritual food from them. In other words, to seek spiritual food from the is to seek universal meaning from a particular perception. Certainly the bodily refused to receive them as guests even though they had previously given them food, since their food at this time was from above their heads, from the sacred lights and the theophanies of beauty and mercy and divine knowledge and hidden meanings and not from below their feet as was the case before the destruction of the ark (body) and the killing of the lad (soul) through asceticism. The faculties and the senses prevent this gathering of spiritual food instead of helping. Rather, the soul is not prepared until after they are drowsy and quiet as Moses said to his household, *tarry you here*

And the wall which was *about to tumble down* is the quiet soul and certainly the soul is interpreted as the wall because it has come into being after the killing of the commanding soul. The death of the commanding soul was through asceticism. Thus the quiet soul became inanimate, without motion from either itself or its will. And the intensity of its weakness and its being on the verge of destruction, thus explains its state of willingness to break up and his erecting it in a modified form through moral perfections.

The making to stand of that wall (soul) is through adjusting it by perfecting its inner qualities and its sublime virtues by means of the light of the rational faculty until the virtues replace its attributes of vice .

And Moses, upon whom be peace, saying: *If thou hadst wished, thou couldst have taken a wage for that* is a coloring of the heart, but not the soul, that is, the seeking of payment and reward by means of gaining virtues and the practicing of asceticism (is a coloring of the heart, not the soul). Because of this, Khizr answered him by saying, *'This is the parting between me and thee.'* This means this is the separation of my station and thy station because of their distance. The difference resides between my station and thy station.

Thus the rebuilding of the soul by asceticism and the taking on of praiseworthy manners should not be with

the expectation of reward and payment. Otherwise these would not be virtues and perfections.

Now, virtue consists in adopting the Divine Attributes 'as one's own' in a way that the purposed action proceeds from the possessor itself, not from an external motive (i.e. payment and reward). That which is done for an external motive is a veil and vice, not a virtue. The purpose is to throw off the veil, to uncover the veil of the attributes of the soul and to go forth into the world of light in order to encounter the hidden meanings. Virtue is to take on the Divine Attributes 'as one's own' or rather realization through God after one has become annihilated in him not merely rewards as thou mayest suppose.

Now I will tell thee the interpretation of that which thou couldst not bear patiently, that is, when the soul achieves certitude and the faculties become fixed, only then will it be possible for thee to accept the spiritual truth and to encounter the invisible which I forbid thee from the questioning of until I myself mentioned it to thee.Thus will I now mention it to thee and I will inform thee of the hermeneutic interpretation of these things. Lo! Thou hast been prepared to accept the spiritual meanings and truths of gnosis.

As for the ship, it belonged to certain poor men of the sea of matter, the physical faculties of the external senses and the natural vegetative faculties. Certainly He named them the poor people because of the continuity of their inertia and rest; their abiding with the dust of the body; their

weakness in preventing the heart from journeying and dominating over it like other animal (vital) faculties. It has been said they were ten brothers, five of them are on the shore and five of them worked in the sea. This refers to the exterior and interior senses.

And I desired to damage it through asceticism so that the king of the commanding soul would not seize it through force. He was the *king who was behind them* or in front of them, *who was seizing every ship by brutal force* through the predominating upon it and the using it according to its own whims and purposes.

As for the lad, his parents who are the spirit and corporeal nature, *were believers* confirming unity by their fidelity in the course of obeying God and submitting to His command and believing in what God had willed from them.

And we were afraid he would impose on them or veil them by his appearing in egotism at the time of the vision of the spirit,*and unbelief,* neglecting their kindness by his disobedience and bad deeds or *unbelief* by veiling. Thus he would corrupt them and their command and their religion and make useless their servantness towards God. *So we desired that their Lord should give to them in exchange one better than he in purity,* as he changed them to the quiet soul which is better than it in purity, that is, cleanliness and fineness. *And nearer in tenderness* through Mercy and Compassion because of its being more favorably inclined towards the Spirit and the body and more beneficial for them and of more kindness.

It is possible that the intention of 'parents' be grand-

father and father. Thus it is a metaphor for the spirit and the heart, being nearer to compassion, more related to them and having more inclination towards them.

As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan lads in the city means two rational faculties:theoretical and practical, who are separated from their father who is either the Transcendent Spirit - because of their being veiled from Him by means of bodily coverings - or the heart - which died or was killed before attaining perfection through the domination of the soul in the city of the body.

And under it was a treasure belonging to them means the treasure of gnosis which can not be attained except through those two rational faculties in the station of the heart because of the possibility of the gathering of all of the unviersals and particulars in it at the time of perfection. That is the state of reaching adolescence and the bringing out that treasure. Some exoteric interpreters among the commentators have said: "that treasure is the tablets which contain knowledge."

Thus *their father* according to both interpretations *was a righteous man*. It is said: there was a higher father for them (i.e. the Transcendent Spirit which is higher than the heart) and God retained them for him. Thus, in this way, he is none other than the Transcendent Spirit.

TEXT He said to me, "This is what thou desirest so ardent-

ly; that mountain is Mt. Sinai and the rock is the hermitage of thy father."

"But these fish," I said, "who are they?"

He said, "They are the similarities to thyself. You are the sons of the same father. The same thing happened to them as happened to thee. So, they are thy brothers."

When I heard and became certain, I embraced them. I rejoyced in seeing them as they rejoyced in seeing me. Then I ascended to the mountain, and there I saw our father in the manner of a great Shaykh. The skies and the earth were almost bursting under the theophany of his light. I stayed stupified, astonished. I advanced towards him then he greeted me. I prostrated myself before him and I almost became annihilated in his radiant light.

I cried for a time when I complained to him about the prison of Qayrawan. He said to me, "How well thou hast been saved, but it is absolutely necessary that thou returnest to the occidental prison, thou hast not completely cast off the shackles."

When I heard his words, my reason took wing. I sighed while I called out like someone who is on the point of perishing and I begged him. He said to me, "The return is absolutely necessary at this time. But I will give thee two pieces of good news. The first, once thou returnst to the prison

←—it will be possible for thee to return again to us and to mount easily towards our paradise, when thou wishest it. The second, it is that in the end thou wilt be totally delivered to us - abandoning completely and forever the country of the Occident.

I became joyful upon hearing his words. He said to me again, "Know that that mountain is Mt. Sinai and above that mountain there is another mountain, *the Sineen*,† the home of my father and thy ancestors. I am not in relation to him other than like thee in relation to me.

COMMENTARY

Quran 95:2

By the fig and the olive
and (Mount Sineen)
and this land secure!

TQK, vol. 2, p. 825.

and (Mount Sineen) means the brain which is the source of the senses and the imagination which rises from the earth of the body like a mountain.

P.C., OPM, p. 295.

"Sinai" means my world. "Ancestors" means the Universal Intellect and emanation. And this father is not of the type to have a consort as fools say, because they (father and ancestors) do not have the reproductive faculty since they are not capable of composition or solution.* "I am not in relation to him other than like thee in relation to me," means we are both images and the difference is just that, that thou art

a piece and I am a collector of thee.

TEXT

And we also have other ancestors, until they reach to a king who is the Supreme Ancestor,+ who has neither ancestor nor father. We all are his servants; we receive and acquire our light from him. He possesses the most sublime beauty, the highest majesty, the most captivating light. He is above the Above. He is the Light of the Light and above the Light,+ from all eternity and for all eternity. He is the one who manifests his sacred self to all things. *Everything perishes save His Face.*+

COMMENTARY
Quran 55:26

*All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid.**

TQK, vol. 2, p. 574.

All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, all who are upon the traveling vessals are united with the Absolute through annihilation in Him. Or, all things which are in the earth of the body, from the permanent possibilities, like the spirit, the intellect, the heart and the soul and its stages, stations and degrees, perish at the time of uniting with the purpose.

Yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, subsisting after annihilation of the creature, that is, His Essence, with all of the attributes. *Majestic* means great, sublime through the veiling by the light and darkness of the veils and the mani-

festation of the essence through the attributes of kindness and compassion.

P.C., OPM, p. 296.

"Supreme Ancestor" means His greatness and this greatness is greater and it is not a part (of something else).

TEXT
EPILOGUE

I was as this state in the recital when my state changed and I fell from the highest space into the abyss of the fire among the people who were not believers; as a prisoner in the country of the Occident, but pleasures remain with me which I am incapable of describing. I sobbed. I implored. I regreted separation. That transitory joy was one of the dreams which rapidly wears away.

May God save us from the prison of nature and shackles of matter. *And say: 'Praise belongs to God.' He shall show you His signs and you will recognize them. Thy Lord is not heedless of the things you do. Say: 'Praise belongs to God.' Nay, but most of them have no knowledge.* *

Blessings upon His Prophet, his family, all. Here ends "The Recital of the Occidental Exile."