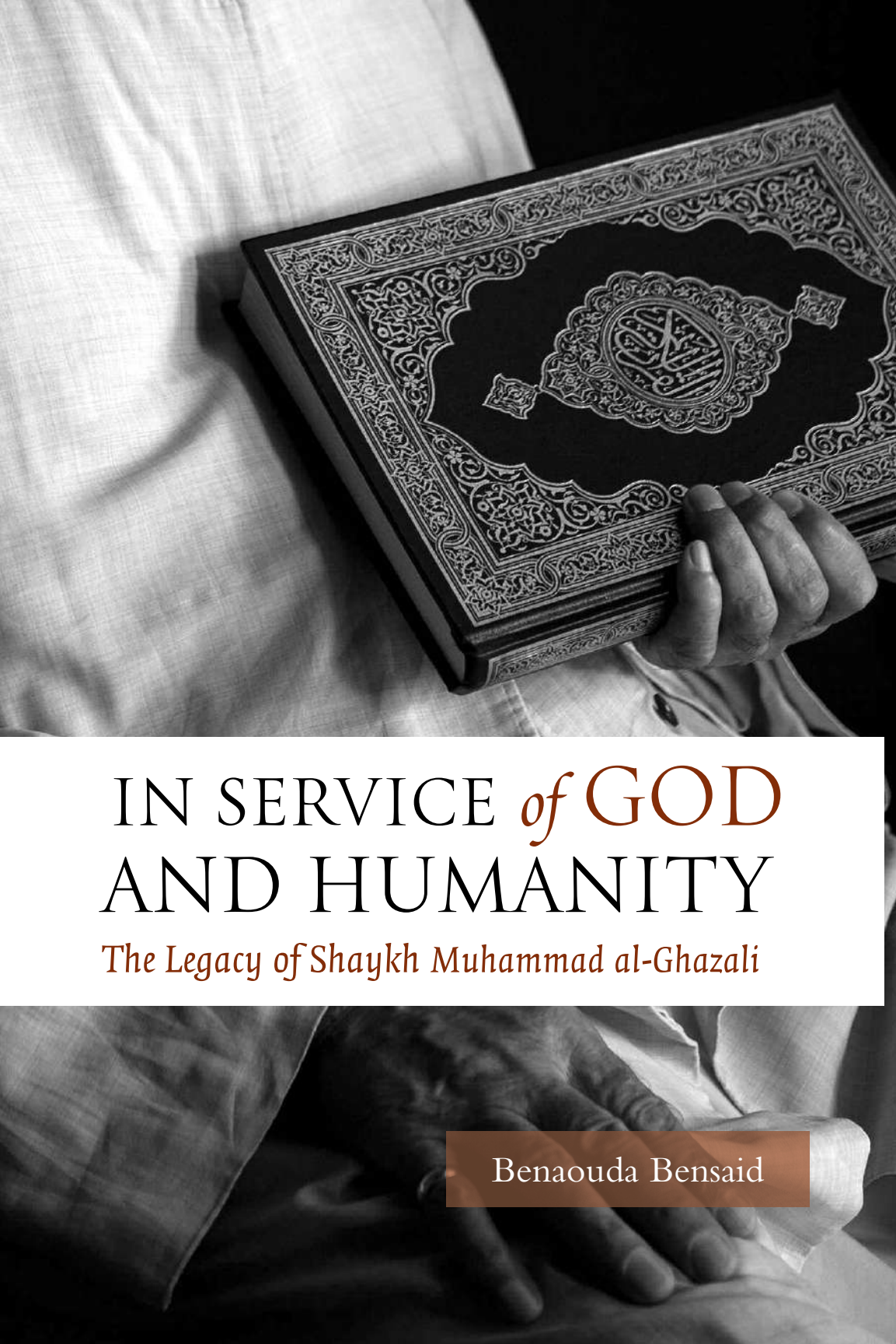

IN SERVICE *of* GOD AND HUMANITY

The Legacy of Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali

Benaouda Bensaid

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THE LEGACY OF SHAYKH MUHAMMAD AL-GHAZALI

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Benaouda Bensaid

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT
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THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT
P.O. BOX 669, HERNDON, VA 20172, USA
www.iiit.org

LONDON OFFICE
P.O. BOX 126, RICHMOND, SURREY TW9 2UD, UK
www.iiituk.com

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CHAPTER 4

Foreword

IN HIS PASSIONATE DEVOTION to the task of inviting others to Islam, Muhammad al-Ghazali (1917-1996) provides Muslims with a powerful critique of themselves, not only in their endemic failure to project Islam in the best, most reasoned light, but also in their betrayal of the Qur'an's spiritual principles and the highest standards set by the Prophet Muhammad (ṢAAS).*

This work analyses in detail both al-Ghazali's critique of *duʿāt* (those inviting to Islam) and the practice of *daʿwah* work itself (the call to Islam). It also examines al-Ghazali's methodology and various proposed solutions as well as the juristic responses to his perspective.

If *daʿwah* is a wall, then for al-Ghazali *duʿāt* would form its bricks, for a sound construction requires sound material. Blind to their moral, educational and organizational imperfections, rightly magnified under al-Ghazali's angry radar, "gung-ho," "have-a-go," and would be *duʿāt*, as well as those "trained" for the role, woefully out of touch with the world around them, and outmoded in their thinking, are severely criticized by al-Ghazali for the damage their ignorance (and blundering moral conduct) is causing. And one can understand why. On one level nothing is more deterring in the province of ideas than the questionable analytical, moral and spiritual status of the deliverer and his/her modus operandi. After all, seeking God is an intellectual as much as it is a spiritual, moral exercise. Not surprisingly therefore al-Ghazali discusses *daʿwah* in terms of a studied discipline and an

*(ṢAAS) – *Ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*: May the peace and blessings of God be upon him. Said whenever the name of the Prophet Muhammed is mentioned.

ability to contextualise in terms of both mastering and combining what has been termed as the two 'readings', by which is meant the reading of Revelation and the reading of the real existential or time-space reality of man's existence. It is a hugely important element with regards to the way we make sense of, or 'read,' the world around us and interact with it. Unfortunately it is also a dimension largely missing in the training of *duʿāt* as well as Muslim scholars and imams who by the very nature and social impact of the work they perform should be among the foremost in awareness and implementation of it.

On a second, more profound level, al-Ghazali takes the long-term view, in that he cares for humanity and where it is heading. For him the consequences of Muslim ineptness, and refusal to recognize their deficiencies, is nothing short of devastating. And modest success here and there is not good enough. The urgency has become extreme. In our own times, the resultant damage has potential repercussions greater than even al-Ghazali would have dared imagine, much of which we are witnessing today. With an Islam held hostage to a global censure that is increasingly seeing expression in acts of violence and brutality, and a media internationally vocal in its castigation of Islamic prescriptions and any tendencies Muslims would seem to express in their favor, it is vital more than ever that the faith is represented in its finest, authentic form, by those true to the example and teachings of the Prophet. They need to be articulate and intelligent, sincerely communicating with concerted effort (conforming to a high moral code without moral smugness), so that people can be guided to God and something of this determined anger at Islam and Muslims mitigated.

In sum, al-Ghazali understood one thing clearly, waivering little in his vision: in matters of faith we are to observe the highest ethical standards, exude the best of reasoned, intelligent, and informed discourse, and widen our scope, using to the best of our ability the materials available to us. For him, wandering like babes in the wood desperately in need of intelligent, authentic

guidance, and a clear exposition of God, humanity, particularly in the age of rational humanism, was instead being seduced into the arms of an increasingly sophisticated secularism, using scientific truth as the basis of all truth for modern man. In response taking a rather lukewarm, narrow approach, Muslims seemed more intent on focusing on their own daily minutiae and internal disagreements, than expending what is in fact required – intellectual responsibility and a great broad based effort, which involves overcoming poor economic and educational standards as well as the overall social and ethical decline of Muslim societies.

Note, those internal disagreements of al-Ghazali's time have evolved also in our time into dangerous volatility as anger is being channelled into avenues of extremism and lawless violent action in response to the many challenges facing Muslim society, both internally and externally. Fuelled, amongst other elements, by persistent political and economic corruption, and virtually naked misuse and abuse of power, a huge and serious backlash is today engulfing the Muslim world. A war-torn world so bedeviled with illiteracy and decline, so removed from the Qur'an, that the language it chooses to interpret its definitions and solutions by is that of violence. And not just violence towards the Other but also, in some societies, in its unjust treatment of women, in complete and outright contradiction to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In this regard worth reading is AbdulHamid AbuSulayman's *Marital Discord: Recapturing Human Dignity Through the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law* which examines the sensitive issue of marital discord and the "chastisement" (*ḍarb*) of wives with a deep respect and appreciation for the position and status of women in society.

In addition, hypocritical radical elements who have clearly abandoned the Qur'an, clothe themselves in the garb of faith to hijack debate and give the false impression that Islam endorses violence, flying in the face of Muslim condemnation worldwide – caring little that this anti-*daʿwah* is a serious threat to Muslim communities living as minorities, sparking not only a shunning of

the faith by non-Muslims, but racial tension and hatred, ending ultimately in violence.

This not only corrupts the essential message of Islam but also bolsters, as intended no doubt, political, sectarian, economic as well as theological divide. Political as well as religious differences, deliberately created, and motivated largely by rivalry and grab for power, are falsely played out in the name of Islam to give them pseudo-legitimacy. Just as one cannot steal or fornicate in the name of God, making a mockery of scripture, one cannot commit acts of savage bloodshed or killing in the name of Islam.

For Muslims all roads lead to the Qur'an. The Muslim dilemma on both a micro- and macro- level, from the inner self to the world at large, is such that it would seem to suggest the Muslim ship has let loose its moorings and sailed far from shore. Allah's words lie easily on our tongues yet fail to migrate to the heart. And al-Ghazali thundered against Muslims because he knew they were well aware of humanity's destiny, but were limiting by hypocrisy, complacency, nepotism, and laziness, their own potential, and central role in this regard.

> The Bedouin say, "We have attained to faith." Say [unto them, O Muhammad]: "You have not [yet] attained to faith; you should [rather] say, 'We have [outwardly] surrendered' - for [true] faith has not yet entered your hearts. But if you [truly] pay heed unto God and His Apostle, He will not let the least of your deeds go to waste: for, behold, God is Much-Forgiving, a dispenser of grace." (Qur'an 49:14)

The goal of Muslims is to read Revelation holistically and live according to its requirements, critically and minutely observing their actions, with the primary purpose of bringing to mankind's attention the fact that it will come face-to-face with its Creator, and be judged. Admittedly al-Ghazali's assessment is harsh but tearing the veils of illusion is not a delicate matter. In this vein of realism, facing facts in the face, al-Ghazali elaborates much on poverty and educational standards. One can hardly be expected

to champion the truth when wandering where the next meal is coming from, or engage in erudite debate when the educational system is utterly deficient, and the illiteracy rates of the poor, and women in particular, staggering. Al-Ghazali rightly looked to reform of the education system as a key element of any meaningful change. There is real education and then there is the illusion of education and it would be foolish to mistake the one for the other. Real education should be free, universal, of the best organizational and intellectual standards, irrespective of class or income bracket, tailored not only to the specific needs of the Muslim people and their socio-cultural realities, but also fundamentally to the service of humanity as a whole. And cardinally not preclude reference to the Divine.

In al-Ghazali's opinion thus the issue of *daʿwah* is one of immense importance, requiring a multifaceted and multiskilled approach, primarily because he connects this to mankind's need for a belief in God in the first instance, and a barometer measuring the general degeneration of Muslim spiritual thinking in the second. Religion to modern man, now simply reduced to the question of whether God exists or not, has become increasingly irrelevant, making of life for many a meaningless counting of days. Muslims strongly share the blame here. And the wonder of it all is that there need be no irresistible progression in this sad state of affairs, for by simply tailoring one's behavior to reflect Qur'anic ethical standards and values much can be achieved. Al-Ghazali's frustration is therefore, understandable. He rightly points to the misuse and abuse of Hadith, the misinterpretation of Qur'anic verses taken out of context to fit preconceived agendas, the setting aside of attitudes of welfare, to favor those of rigid, archaic, even harsh understanding of issues, weaving a web of confusing complexity sadly around what is essentially a clear, focused message.

Al-Ghazali wrote a somewhat unique exegesis on the Qur'an for readers to have a better comprehension of, and closer affinity with the sacred text. In *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur'an*

he focuses on the organic unity of each surah highlighting the logic or inherent reasoning that courses through each surah and unifies its various components and images. He also places the Qur'anic subjects within their proper historic and cultural context. This has the effect of relating the Qur'anic subject matter not only to the life of Prophet Muhammad, but also to aspects of today's world, thereby transforming it into a source of practical guidance and a ready reference for dealing with contemporary issues.

There is little doubt that al-Ghazali touched off much needed debate, significantly increasing understanding of the issues and complexities involved in real dialogue and engagement. And beyond question is the fact that his philosophy and analysis is extremely useful and positive with regards to final outcome. Al-Ghazali provides both a methodologically descriptive as well as methodologically practical solution, attractive for the coherence of its logic and constant focus on reason. Despite drawing criticism from certain contemporary scholars for factors including being at times too harsh in censure of Muslims, and too accommodationist of the faith with regards to western perceptions, nevertheless the core of his thesis was recognized as valuable and his works hence changed attitudes and influenced a large number of youth, indisputably advancing the cause of *daʿwah* practice.

Although the face of *daʿwah* in our times has seen a radical transformation in terms of online discussions and social media, al-Ghazali's basic precepts still strongly apply. Both individual, group, and state sponsored *daʿwah* activities, as well as the organizational elements which govern them, despite in some respects having changed in form, nevertheless still fall under the scope of his analysis and recommendations with regards to reform and improvement. And not only in the Muslim world, but today also outside it with Muslims residing in diverse communities and countries across the world. Al-Ghazali was without doubt one of the foremost Muslim thinkers of his time. Observing within himself the high standards he set for others, he

may perhaps have advanced the cause of *daʿwah* by decades, all in the service of God and humanity.

This book is intended to benefit both general and specialist readers alike, increasing awareness of the question of *daʿwah*. Doubtless readers may agree with some of the issues raised, and disagree with others, but it is hoped that for the most part they will benefit from the perspective offered and the overall issues examined.

Dates cited according to the Islamic calendar (hijrah) are labelled AH. Otherwise they follow the Gregorian calendar and labelled CE where necessary. Arabic words are italicized except for those which have entered common usage. Diacritical marks have been added only to those Arabic names not considered contemporary. English translations taken from Arabic references are those of the author.

The IIIT, established in 1981, has served as a major center to facilitate serious scholarly efforts based on Islamic vision, values and principles. The Institute's programs of research, seminars and conferences during the last forty years have resulted in the publication of more than four hundred and fifty titles in both English, Arabic and other major languages.

We express our thanks and gratitude to the author for his cooperation throughout the various stages of production. We would also like to thank the editorial and production team at the IIIT London Office and all those who were directly or indirectly involved in the completion of this book including, Shiraz Khan and Sara Mirza. May God reward them for all their efforts.

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Abstract

THIS STUDY IS AN INQUIRY into Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali's model of *daʿwah*. It examines Shaykh al-Ghazali's life, education, career, association with the Muslim Brotherhood, intellectual and professional contributions to *daʿwah* and society, as well as personal character traits which would help explain the stylistic elements of a presentation which earned him some criticism. An attempt will be made to show how al-Ghazali, as a traditional scholar with an in-depth understanding of the philosophy, dynamics and implications of Islam, also employed a modern approach with regards to analyzing religion, society, and contemporary *daʿwah,* demonstrating a critical, and intelligent grasp of the issues involved. The study also examines al-Ghazali's conceptual framework of *daʿwah*, including its concepts and characteristics, as well as the Prophet's *daʿwah* as described in the Qur'an, the question of innate human nature (*al-fiṭrah*), the People of the Interval (*Ahl al-Fatrah*), and the universality of *daʿwah*. Also examined are the effects of society and culture on *daʿwah*, and how al-Ghazali understood *daʿwah* in light of the Revelation, as well as the implications and effects of socio-economic and political factors concerning its development.

The most important catalyst for effective *daʿwah* is the *dāʿiyah* (sing. one who undertakes it, literally one who invites, pl. *duʿāt*) and in al-Ghazali's framework of analysis this role is addressed in detail. For him, a *dāʿiyah's* various spiritual, moral and educational competencies are essential for a positive undertaking of *daʿwah*. His exposition also reflects an ambitious quest to bridge the prevailing gap between the ideals of Islam and the reality of

Muslim life. It remains a challenging endeavor. As in his time, so in ours, the problems affecting Muslim societies are entrenched and profuse, particularly in areas of education, society, economics, culture and development. Al-Ghazali's approach throughout the study of *daʿwah*, was vigorous and highly critical. In evaluating the work of *duʿāt* and their contributions he at times adopted a harsh tone and caustic language.

This research also considers al-Ghazali's methodology, *duʿāt* approach to *daʿwah* and, most importantly, al-Ghazali's notion of *fiqh al-daʿwah* (legal methodology related to *daʿwah*) associated with the priorities of contemporary *daʿwah* in light of al-Ghazali's understanding of the best interest of *daʿwah* (*maṣlaḥah al-daʿwah*). Al-Ghazali often draws on the principle of *maṣlaḥah* to justify his criticism of jurists' legal interpretations as related to various questions of *daʿwah*. He does this based on a re-interpretation of religious texts or re-evaluation of legal juristic dictum, without consistently adhering to a systematic methodology assuring a uniform approach to the problems and challenges of modern *daʿwah*. His discussion of *daʿwah's* legal methodology, however, shows a deep preoccupation with western impressions of Islam and Muslim societies and culture.

An evaluation of the many criticisms levelled by certain scholars and *duʿāt* at al-Ghazali's work on *daʿwah* reveals a focus on his general, literary, speculative and even negative thinking as affecting the healthy development of Muslims. Nevertheless, al-Ghazali's contributions were significant and still viewed by many as positive and authoritative. His ideas continue to attract many researchers, nourish modern *daʿwah* thought, and will likely continue to gain increasing academic and intellectual attention, especially on issues concerning modern models of *daʿwah*, and reviews of available legal and theological literature in regards to the future prospects of *daʿwah* or dialogue between civilizations.

Introduction

THE FIELD OF MODERN *daʿwah* studies often highlights existing models of *daʿwah*,[1] with each reflecting respective historical backgrounds, philosophies and methodologies, such as those of the Sufis, the Tablighi Jamaat, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Jamaat-i Islami or the Ahl al-Ḥadīth. Yet, notwithstanding shared fundamentals and despite the various contributions these *daʿwah* models have made, debate continues over which one of these models most effectively advances the cause of Islam and whether they could develop a synthesis between religious norms and the complex challenges of modernity. This question has, and continues to preoccupy, notable Muslim thinkers such as Fathi Yakan,[2] Muhammad H. Fadlallah,[3] Mustafa Mashhur,[4] Abd al-Rahman Habannakah al-Maydani,[5] and many others who recognized the need to review current approaches to *daʿwah*, address pitfalls inherent in contemporary *daʿwah* theory and practice, and develop for *daʿwah* a more sophisticated and dynamic role. This, however, is no easy endeavor. What is required is not only an in-depth understanding of the Islamic theory of *daʿwah* but also a critical analysis of contemporary *daʿwah* practices in light of the socio-cultural contexts of Muslims and the ways according to which *daʿwah* can best respond to the challenges of modernity whilst abiding by the fundamental tenets of Islam.

Contemporary *daʿwah* studies have also given rise to new perspectives on the subject, generally geared to the systematic review of understanding and delivery of *daʿwah* practices, revisiting the legal interpretations associated with it, and drawing on religious tenets to sustain effective *daʿwah* models in

contemporary societies. One of these models, giving an insightful analysis of the subject, was developed by the late scholar and preacher Muhammad al-Ghazali.

Al-Ghazali graduated from Al-Azhar University, Cairo in 1943, gradually acquiring a reputation for being an independent thinker, rigorous jurist and freelance writer. Despite being a man of letters, a thinker, researcher and traditional scholar, he was particularly drawn to the study of *daʿwah*.[6] Writing extensively on the subject he authored some fifty books, most of which approached modern *daʿwah* critically and unconventionally.

Muslim intellectuals as well as ordinary Muslims view al-Ghazali's scholarly contributions as significantly authoritative. This is attested to by the wide circulation of his writings, the many translations of some of his works,[7] awards presented to him,[8] conferences organized and research undertaken in relation to his contributions to the study of Islamic thought,[9] as well as the reaction that his works continue to provoke in the field of hadith studies, Islamic jurisprudence and *daʿwah* in general.[10] Al-Ghazali's vision of modern Islamic reform has been adopted by some of the most educated, apolitical, moderate and modern thinkers, many of whom advocate rational change.[11]

Al-Ghazali's extensive discussion of *daʿwah* reflects his own thinking and varied level of experiences. For example, his social experience of rural Egypt, training in the Muslim Brotherhood (1937-1953), Azharite academic education, government positions held (1971-1981), as well as his active membership of many Islamic and charitable organizations, and even personal stories and travels.[12] According to Abu-Rabi, al-Ghazali's unwavering support for a critical interpretation of Islam in the modern age, has placed him at the forefront of the most advanced movement of modern Islamic criticism pioneered by reformers of the nineteenth century.[13] What is particularly interesting with regards to al-Ghazali's *daʿwah* perspective however, is that it developed over a long period of time and an extended course of life, affected in the course of that life by the variety of the offices

and positions he held, as well as the local and international political circumstances and changes he experienced. Thus, for example, al-Ghazali served as a preacher at Al-Azhar University, an official in the Ministry of Endowment (*wizārah al-Awqāf*), wrote prolifically on *daʿwah*, provided religious guidance in various Egyptian mosques, and was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Historically, he lived in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, and witnessed the European occupation of various Muslim countries. His thought therefore reflects a wide spectrum of socio-historical experiences belonging to different political eras and reflecting regional and global developments of the time. Al-Ghazali's contribution is nonetheless held within a framework of analysis embracing regional and global developments. His literary works provide an analysis of the broad range of modern Islamic thought, as well as Muslim society and culture, in an attempt to lay solid foundations for successful *daʿwah* practice.

Studying al-Ghazali therefore poses a challenge owing to the changing circumstances of society around him, as well as the changing economic and political factors which he witnessed, some going back to 1950s Egypt and reflecting the socio-political conditions of the time, whereas his later affiliations caused him to change or abandon some of his ideas.

Over the course of an active career, al-Ghazali wrote approximately sixty books, including such important works as *Khuluq al-Muslim* (The Moral Character of the Muslim), *Al-Islām wa Awḍāʿunā al-Iqtiṣādiyyah* (Islam and our Economic Affairs), *Al-Islām wa al-Istibdād al-Siyāsī* (Islam and Political Despotism), *Dustūr al-Wiḥdah al-Thaqāfiyyah* (A Constitution for Cultural Unity), *Al-Taʿaṣṣub wa al-Tasāmuḥ bayna al-Naṣrāniyyah wa al-Islām* (Prejudice and Tolerance between Christianity and Islam), and *Ta'ammulāt fī al-Dīn wa al-Ḥayāt* (Reflections on Religion and Life). His works sought to integrate religious education with Islamic reform, and showed interest in problems of modernity as well as the moral improvement and economic

welfare of Muslims as a necessary step for *daʿwah* progress. The bulk of his writings however reflect a genuine preoccupation with the progress of *daʿwah* and socio-cultural developments in Muslim and non-Muslim societies alike, and provide positive insights crucial to many questions related to the development of a *daʿwah* framework, methodology, challenges and prospects.

Combining a "traditional" Azharite learning with a grasp of modern thought and history and an insight into Muslims' problems and challenges, al-Ghazali broke new ground in the study of *daʿwah*. He did this through reviewing *daʿwah* concepts in light of the divine revelation, as well as paying close attention to the position of innate human nature (*al-fiṭrah*), the intellect (*al-ʿaql*) and the concept of a Muslim role model (*al-qudwah*) in both the understanding and undertaking of *daʿwah*. He also employed a critical approach to analyzing *daʿwah* practices, challenges and prospects. Thus, al-Ghazali transcended the usual description of *daʿwah* themes to include a broadly critical perspective taking into consideration the urgent need for *daʿwah* to be reviewed, revisiting legal interpretations on *daʿwah*, whilst taking into account western scientific progress, and the pressing changes required in the economic and socio-cultural conditions of Muslim societies.

This inquiry relies primarily on al-Ghazali's own writings, supplemented by secondary sources which, either favorably or unfavorably, address his contribution to *daʿwah* and to Islamic thought and culture in general, including critical studies focused largely on his recent work *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah bayna Ahl al-Fiqh wa Ahl al-Ḥadīth* (The Sunnah between Muslim Jurists and the Traditionists, 1989). Despite the contributions these studies have made towards a better understanding of al-Ghazali's perspective on hadith, Islamic jurisprudence and thought, nevertheless his *daʿwah* thought has yet to be adequately studied and examined. Some of the studies have failed to address important issues such as al-Ghazali's stand on traditional learning and pedagogy, the effect of the Muslim Brotherhood on his thinking, and

the influence of his own personality on his critical perspective of *daʿwah*. Other studies, colored by emotional attachment, have not addressed his perspective with complete objectivity. For example, Fathi Malkawi[14] who describes al-Ghazali as being a true master of *daʿwah*, one who undertook *daʿwah* with guidance (*baṣīrah*),[15] and al-Qaradawi, who in great admiration of al-Ghazali states: "If water does not become impure when it reaches two jars in volume, then what of when it is an ocean that can never become impure?"[16] Abd al-Rahman Adawi finds himself not only before a great intellectual leader, religious guide and prominent master of *daʿwah* and reform, but also a comprehensive school of unique *daʿwah*, thought and reform, one so distinct in character and methodology, that it awaits further study to explore its characteristics, perspectives and impact.[17]

Gharib in his *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī: Ḥayātuh, ʿAṣruh, wa Abraz man Ta'aththarra bihim* (Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali: His Life, Era, and the Persons who Most Influenced Him) provides a closer look at al-Ghazali's life, personality, writings and the people who influenced him the most. Gharib's second work entitled, *Maḥāwir al-Mashrūʿ al-Fikrī ladā al-Shaykh* (Themes of al-Ghazali's Intellectual Project) discusses major themes in al-Ghazali's intellectual contribution as well as addressing issues of women, political despotism, deceitful religiosity, occupation, secularism, communism, cultural conquest, missionaries and western civilization. Although the discussion is useful in that it helps us to understand al-Ghazali's proposed reforms, it nevertheless fails to discuss al-Ghazali's *daʿwah*.

Fallusi's rather lyrically entitled work, *Al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī: Ghuṣn Bāsiq fī Shajarah al-Khulūd* (Al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali: Lofty Branch in a Tree of Eternity) provides a synopsis of al-Ghazali's life, personality and intellectual contribution, but does not give attention to al-Ghazali's *daʿwah* thought. Similarly, Uways' *Al-Shaykh al-Ghazālī, Tarīkhuh, wa Juhūduh, wa Ārā'uh* (Al-Shaykh al-Ghazali: His Life, Struggles and Perspectives) surveys al-Ghazali's life and history to

examine his views on diverse issues including those of revelation, politics, women, and western civilization. Despite Uways' belief that al-Ghazali is considered one of the greatest *duᶜāt* in modern history, he only provides us with a brief overview of his *daᶜwah* thought and contribution to Islamic studies.[18] Imarah's *Al-Shaykh al-Ghazālī: Al-Mawqiᶜ al-Fikrī* (Al-Shaykh al-Ghazali's Intellectual Position) discusses the intellectual position of al-Ghazali vis-à-vis contemporary Islamic reforms and the Muslim Brotherhood. However, despite stating that he is writing about al-Ghazali as a *dāᶜiyah* and servant of Islam, he pays no attention to al-Ghazali's *daᶜwah* thought.[19]

A conference held in 1996 on *Al-ᶜAṭā' al-Fikrī li al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī* (The Intellectual Contribution of Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali), organized jointly by the International Institute of Islamic Thought and the Royal Assembly of Research on Islamic Civilization in Jordan, provided academic insight into al-Ghazali's life, thought and contributions. With regards to the proceedings of the conference, the sections most relevant to our inquiry are those on al-Ghazali's biography, his personal and moral qualities, and al-Qaradawi's chapter entitled "Al-Ghazālī Rajul Daᶜwah" (Al-Ghazali: A Man of *Daᶜwah*), which is not too different from his work *Al-Shaykh al-Ghazālī Kamā ᶜAraftuh* (Al-Shaykh al-Ghazali as I Knew Him). In 1996, *Majallat Islāmiyyat al-Maᶜarifah* (Journal of Islamization of Knowledge) dedicated a full issue to al-Ghazali, with topics including al-Ghazali's life, political thought and views on contemporary Islamic reform.

Al-Qaradawi's book *Al-Shaykh al-Ghazālī Kamā ᶜAraftuh: Riḥlat Niṣf Qarn* (Al-Shaykh al-Ghazali as I Knew Him: A Journey of Half a Century) explores al-Ghazali's life, history, qualities, *daᶜwah* and reforms. The book addresses al-Ghazali's examination of *duᶜāt*, lectures and sermons, contributions to the media, and intellectual struggles against occupation, communism, secularism, materialism, and non-Muslim proselytization. Al-Qaradawi also briefly discusses the foundations of al-

Ghazali's *daʿwah* thought, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah, global history, culture and every day reality, providing us with a better understanding of al-Ghazali's personality and contribution to modern Islamic thought. Nonetheless, he does not address his *daʿwah* in any comprehensive or systematic manner.

Muhammad Yunus in *Tajdīd al-Fikr al-Islāmī ʿalā Mashārif Qarnin Jadīd* (Revival of Islamic Thought on the Onset of a New Century) examines al-Ghazali's thought versus modern Islamic reform. In chapter five, Yunus discusses al-Ghazali's *daʿwah* experience using the perspective of modern mass communication. Here the author refers to al-Qaradawi's discussion of al-Ghazali's *daʿwah* foundations, and examines discussion on the Friday sermon (*khuṭbah*), introduced by al-Ghazali as a model of successful communication.[20]

In his *Contemporary Arab Thought*, Ibrahim Abu-Rabi however considers al-Ghazali to be a freelance Islamist critic,[21] and points to his critique of several issues and themes including those of theology and clerics, Islam and politics, Arab liberals, inner enemies of Islam, views of the West and nationalism. Abu-Rabi also discusses in brief the mission of *duʿāt*, who according to al-Ghazali,[22] are required to discover methods of analysis and criticism.

In order to avoid some of the shortcomings of secondary studies on al-Ghazali's *daʿwah*, I attempt to examine a series of interrelated questions. The major question of the current study is however: What model of *daʿwah* did al-Ghazali develop for modern Islam? In tackling this question, I address a number of secondary significant issues: What was al-Ghazali's understanding of the position of innate human nature (*al-fiṭrah*) vis-à-vis *daʿwah*? What are the effects of socio-cultural developments on *daʿwah*?And, what is the role of freedom and religious pluralism in enhancing *daʿwah*? Also discussed is the impact of role models in the process of advancing *daʿwah*, as well as other related questions, such as *daʿwah* and peace, and the relationship between Arab nationalism and the universality of *daʿwah*.

In order to answer these questions, I draw upon al-Ghazali's socio-economic and political background so as to provide an understanding of his intellectual history. Examination of his childhood, education, personality, intellectual works and professional career are critical to an understanding of his perspective on *daʿwah*. An interesting question needs to be raised: What was the genesis of al-Ghazali's thought? What were the major factors contributing to his intellectual formation? An examination of influential personalities, political developments in Egypt, events or crises that could have influenced al-Ghazali's thought allows us to reconstruct the genealogy of his *daʿwah* model. In the context of these questions, this study addresses aspects of al-Ghazali's originality, and the degree of convergence or divergence he experienced with the Muslim Brotherhood and University of Al-Azhar. The prevailing conditions of Egypt and the Arab/Muslim world in al-Ghazali's lifetime, including the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (1922), the dominance of occupiers over the Muslim world, the subjugation and exploitation of their human and natural resources, the rampant political despotism of the Arab world, the occupation of Palestine in 1948 etc. these and other critical issues are vital to an understanding of al-Ghazali's *daʿwah* thought.

This research consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter deals with al-Ghazali's childhood and education, early days, social life, religious learning and personal characteristics. It examines al-Banna's religious and spiritual impact on al-Ghazali, the effects of al-Ghazali's association with the Muslim Brotherhood (1937-1952), and finally his school of thought. Chapter two provides a theoretical analysis of *daʿwah* including some of its basic concepts including the role of innate human nature (*fiṭrah*) and the universal nature of *daʿwah*. It also examines the relationship of *daʿwah* to freedom and the effects of society and culture on *daʿwah*. Chapter three discusses responsibilities of *duʿāt* including their acquisition of spiritual, moral and educational credentials alongside their problems and

challenges and a critical evaluation of their *daʿwah* practices. Chapter four discusses al-Ghazali's perspective on the methodology of *daʿwah*, including the approach to *daʿwah*, his legal methodology of *daʿwah* known as *fiqh al-daʿwah* (where the question of the interest of *daʿwah* is elaborated according to al-Ghazali's perspective on religious progress and Islamic reform) and finally the question of women and *daʿwah*.

Chapter 1

The Life, Educational Background and Contributions of Muhammad al-Ghazali: *Islamic Reforms* (1917-1996)

INTRODUCTION

PRIOR TO A DETAILED study of al-Ghazali's life, it would be useful to present a brief portrait of what shaped his ideas and style of thinking. The first thing to note is that al-Ghazali often, and unusually, drew on a multitude of stories, personal accounts and events to convey his message, which though at times appearing irrelevant to readers in terms of the study of *daʿwah*, were important for their influence in developing his thought.[1] For example such influence can be observed in the vivid depictions he would give of his home village (Nikla al-Inab),[2] the *kuttāb* or Egyptian elementary schools of 1927, Al-Azhar University in which he had been involved, Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) his teacher, the distressing days he spent in prison (Tur 1951 and Turrah 1965),[3] the numerous discussions and debates he held on diverse intellectual and social issues, his many travels, and even the songs and news reports he listened to on BBC radio. All these contributed to a vast repository of sources and case studies, drawn upon in his discussions and analyses of issues pertaining to *daʿwah,* Muslim culture and reform.

Al-Ghazali's careful selection of events from memory to substantiate his critical examination of Muslim conditions and *daʿwah* served him well. It was a masterful approach, used skilfully and to good effect in the various intellectual discourses he participated in. Favoring certain interpretations and criticizing others al-Ghazali was also able to draw upon both local and international events to entrench his arguments. A further review of his critiques reveals an ability to select and categorize events according to a certain internal framework of analysis, one that was personal, complex and profound, a filter of sorts, through which incidents, stories and memories were collected, evaluated and interpreted. Indeed al-Ghazali seems to have been engaged in continuous active observation supplying him with a massive databank of information, though it seems that only particular weighty problems and issues were key in his analysis. Examples of the latter are found in personal memory and in his examination of socio-political problems such as poverty, occupation, western scientific progress whilst Muslims were in decline, religious deception, his views on the Muslim Brotherhood, political despotism, the status of women, religious learning and the problems of culture – major themes recurring throughout his work.

Al-Ghazali felt that certain events forced recollection whilst others, though knocking on the door, would be denied entry.[4] The following three examples reflect the former, each with a message in accordance with his internal framework of analysis and regarding genuine concern for reform. The first critiques religious scholars, smugly comfortable with their own approach to religious exposition, preferring to take their views for granted and making not the least effort to update or improve their methodologies of disseminating religious teaching. Al-Ghazali draws on the image of a fruit-seller pushing a small carriage:

> On it – the carriage – sit orderly and well coordinated rows of fruit... The look is truly attractive even if it may not invite purchase. The grocer had done his utmost to present his commodity well. A thought passed promptly

> across my mind, and [I] heard a question whispered from the bottom of my soul asking: "Did you, as a religious scholar, organize your commodity for the public? Did you present it in a way attractive to both the eyes and minds of people?" My response was perplexed; and that reflects its negativity. It appears to me that we Muslim scholars are only satisfied with ostentatious names and superior statuses, without making the least effort to present our product in an appealing fashion.[5]

Al-Ghazali's second story entitled "Had the religion been free of those people..." draws readers' attention to the crucial relationship between the inner dimension of Islamic worship and its outward forms, and the damage caused by religious formalities and rituals, especially when stripped of their inner spirit. The story is a telling commentary on those committed to worship and devotion, yet seeking public attention. Leaving aside the question of personal intentions, al-Ghazali argues that such people commit actions, both in public and private, that contradict the teachings of Islam. Strangely, al-Ghazali even wishes these type of worshippers to abandon their worship, reasoning that not only do they not benefit from their worship, but rather, cause a distorted impression of religious rituals. Al-Ghazali describes such people remarking:

> I noticed one of them praying. I sincerely wished he would refrain from prayer and leave the mosque altogether without any attempts at prostration or connection with God. I said: "For this person, the verse is reversed. Worship is not purifying him; instead it is he who is corrupting worship!"[6]

The third story recounted by al-Ghazali and which also caused him great distress, concerned a foreign resident inspecting his property. What concerned al-Ghazali was not the property, but rather the abject Egyptian servant meekly following his foreign master around wherever he went:

> One of the most humiliating scenes was that of the barefoot servant,

> dressed in dirty clothes, exhausted pursuing his master's donkey as he rode it. An enslaved Muslim running behind a foreign master![7]

Al-Ghazali yearned for laws to prevent the humiliation of Egyptian citizens. He argued that what pained him most was to see an Egyptian doing demeaning jobs for foreigners. Al-Ghazali maintained that such attitudes could only be changed through education.[8] The latter account reflects the privileges enjoyed at the time by foreigners in Egypt. According to Hopwood, they often had higher standards of living and higher positions in Egypt than could have been expected in their own countries. Life was made easier by numerous servants, polo, tennis, and gossip at European clubs. Foreign residents were protected by what were known as the Capitulations – legal agreements giving them the right to be tried in their own Consular Courts.[9]

The aforementioned examples, in essence, revolve around religious presentation, inner and outer religious observance, and the Egyptian attitude towards European residents. The first according to al-Ghazali required a review of religious methods of presentation and a proper assessment of contemporary religious order. The second was a critique of contemporary forms of worship where significant attention is given to outer manifestations and formalities, while insufficient focus is given to the inner dimensions of worship. The last reflects al-Ghazali's concern regarding the dignity and respect of Egyptian citizens and their attitude towards foreign occupiers.

[1] Al-Ghazali's Childhood and Educational Background

a) Al-Ghazali's Childhood

Muhammad al-Ghazali al-Saqqa was born on September 22, 1917 in the village of Nikla al-Inab located in the province of al-Buhayrah (Northern Egypt).[10] His father, Ahmad al-Saqqa, was a religious man who laid great hopes on al-Ghazali's future, to

the extent that whenever he encountered a crisis or fell sick, he would comfort his wife saying: "I have left you Muhammad al-Ghazali, and with him you shall find all help."[11] Before marriage, the father claims to have had a vision in which Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī appears requesting him to adopt for his future son his own name. Thus al-Ghazali was named after the great scholar Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī of Baghdad (450-505 AH/1058-1111 CE). In contrast Alalwani believes that al-Saqqa named his son Muhammad al-Ghazali because of the high esteem and reverence in which he held Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī.[12] It may be noted that neither his namesake nor his father's Sufi inclination seem to have affected al-Ghazali's intellectual formation. He writes regarding this issue:

> The name of al-Ghazali was attached to me, yet it did not affect my thinking. I benefited from the legacy of both Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, the author of *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (Incoherence of the Philosophers) and his opponent Ibn Rushd[13] in his *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence). Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī was a philosopher whereas Ibn Rushd was a jurist. I consider myself therefore a student in the schools of philosophy and jurisprudence.[14]

Al-Ghazali did not see himself as a Sufi rejecting any affiliation with Muslim groups.[15] He did, however, possess a Sufi heart and spirit, enjoyed seclusion and adhered to the rituals of the remembrance of God (*awrād al-dhikr*), practices engaged in by Sufis.[16] In his *Al-Jānib al-ʿĀṭifī min al-Islām* (The Emotional Aspect of Islam), al-Ghazali states that some will describe him as a Sufi while the Sufis accuse him of misguidance.[17] Nonetheless he believed Sufism to be an aspect of Muslim culture that ought to be heeded, for it did not attract adequate attention from Muslim jurists and theologians.[18]

In his search for the historical conditions surrounding his birth, al-Ghazali reflected on his early life in Nikla al-Inab. He believed the century in which he was born to be the most

deplorable of all as far as the Islamic faith was concerned. His reflections have some supportive evidence: he was born during a time in which Islam was historically in decline, specifically during the occupation of Egypt (1882-1952) and other territories.[19] Al-Ghazali even went so far as to equate his time with the eras that bitterly witnessed the fall of Baghdad (655 AH/1258 CE) and Granada (897 AH/1492 CE).[20] That is he did not feel that he was living in the present (for him 20th century) but rather in a time in which the Tatars were conquering Baghdad or the crusaders invading Jerusalem.[21] He describes his feeling towards the state of affairs surrounding his birth as follows:

> Nobody is questioned about the fact that they were born at a certain time or place; for this is a predestined divine decree towards which we hold no control. What draws my attention however is that I was born during a decline in the history of Islam, during the miserable days of the occupation of Egypt...[22]

This unhappy comparison between the circumstances surrounding his birth and a defeated Muslim past was probably drawn in order to discover inherent similarities between modern occupation movements and the crusades on the one hand and medieval and modern Middle Eastern tyrannies, on the other. Al-Ghazali may have also intended to draw attention to underlying historic patterns affecting the general decline of Muslims, and/or to assure Muslims that their current dismal state of affairs was nothing new. Incidentally, al-Ghazali later indicated that he was no longer discomforted with regards to the latter, that is the Muslim predicament of his own time, having realized the similarities that existed between his era and that of Ibn Taymiyyah.[23] He says in this regard:

> When I grew up and I read – about the conditions of Ibn Taymiyah – I did not however, feel awkwardness over the conditions surrounding my birth! I learned that Ibn Taymiyah was born and raised in similar conditions

> during the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate, the increasingly fierce assaults of the Tatars, which forced him to flee from one city to another and follow a road full of victims of aggression, loss and defeat.[24]

Going back to the issue of al-Ghazali and his illustrious namesake, al-Qaradawi suggests that the advent of Muhammad al-Ghazali symbolized the dawn of a second "proof of Islam" (*Ḥujjat al-Islām*), the honorific title that was conferred almost one thousand years earlier on Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. For him, the al-Ghazali of the fourteenth century AH (20th century CE), carried within himself the spirit of the al-Ghazālī of the fifth century AH (12th century CE) with regards to religious reform and the restoration to life of an inert Muslim Ummah. The two al-Ghazalis were, however, unique in their ways. The earlier al-Ghazālī, for example, was particularly concerned with the philosophical, juridical, and mystical foundations of Islam, whereas the later al-Ghazali's interests ranged over a wide array of issues of Islamic thought – though not to the same depth – and were much more concerned with the political and socio-economic reforms of Muslims.[25] Al-Qaradawi's discussion on the similarity between the two al-Ghazalis reveals a rather personal emotional attachment to the contemporary al-Ghazali founded to some extent on the name he shared with his illustrious forebear.

Gharib finds a resemblance between the two al-Ghazalis in terms of their discussions of reason versus doubt and certainty, their seclusion, encyclopaedic reading and writing, and also in their treatment of forged religiosity (*al-tadayyun al-maghlūṭ*) and dishonest Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf al-maghshūsh*).[26] Such a comparison, however, cannot be sustained as far as the nature of their intellectual contributions is concerned. Furthermore, despite al-Ghazali's desire to be associated with notable medieval scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328 CE), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751/1350), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), or Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 CE), he did not produce works of parallel scholarly merit. Thus with regard to

seeming resemblances between the two al-Ghazalis, in actual fact they cannot be found to provide a solid basis on which the impression of similarity may be substantiated, as the defining features are too broad and may be applied to a number of other scholars.

While al-Ghazali's name may have not affected him as largely as some would have us believe, it is quite apparent that the site of his birth did shape him, to a certain extent, into the man he was to become. Al-Ghazali grew up in Nikla al-Inab,[27] a place where religious emotions pervaded everyday behavior, and echoed, to a large extent, the concerns of society at large.[28] Al-Ghazali's narratives point towards the religious conservatism of his local community, its keen interest in the memorization of the Qur'an, its prowess in learning Islamic studies and ability to produce scholars.[29] It can safely be said that al-Ghazali's memories of his home town had a large impact on his upbringing and to an extent the development of his character. One of al-Ghazali's foremost memories of his village concerns an insurrection mounted against the occupiers (1919). He recalled villagers revolting by cutting telephone lines and also, more vividly, occupying soldiers surrounding a mosque and killing a peasant who refused to abide by martial law.[30]

The economic conditions surrounding al-Ghazali's birth can only be described as very difficult.[31] Al-Ghazali grew up in an exploited and rural neighbourhood subjected to oppression and repression by Pashas and princes. Injustice and exploitation at the hands of landlords[32] was rife as was the abuse of peasants, who received very little for their hard toil.[33] Not surprisingly these social injustices gave rise to privileged social classes and in Egyptian society a huge gap between rich and poor, with income inequality such that some people planted grain but ate hay, grew cotton but dressed poorly, built tall buildings yet lived in poverty etc. These conditions caused al-Ghazali to empathize greatly with the suffering, exploitation, and maltreatment of the general populace.[34]

By 1914, small owners represented over 90 per cent of all landowners and yet possessed only a quarter of the land. The large land owners formed a group with common interests and landownership gave them a privileged position at the top of Egyptian society. During the 1920s and 1930s, three agricultural crises arose that culminated in the Great Depression of 1929-32. The position of the underprivileged did not improve during this period. The population increased from 10 million in 1897 to 19 million in 1947. Population density which in 1927 was 420 to every square kilometre rose to 845 by 1966. Annual per capita income estimated at E£12 in 1913 was estimated at E£8 in 1937. This increase in the man-to-land ratio naturally had a depressing effect on the average income, and low incomes prevented Egyptian villagers from expanding. Agricultural land was too expensive to purchase. The peasants at the bottom of the scale continued to suffer debilitating diseases, poverty, and undernourishment.[35]

Such socio-economic conditions had a profound impact on al-Ghazali's thinking, leading him to conclude that religion could not flourish in such wretched circumstances, that is of poverty, disease and ignorance.[36] This harsh way of life also led him to become preoccupied with ideas concerning the relationship between religious progress and the environment, and also between economic improvement and *daʿwah*. One particular account which al-Ghazali mentions illustrative of this aspect was that of a peasant lying on his death bed pleading for verses of the Qur'an to be recited over him that would cure him of his ailment. Al-Ghazali's response to the man's entreaty is illustrative of his approach to *daʿwah*. He wrote: "I shook my head while my heart was bleeding." Al-Ghazali goes on to state that certain wicked people had consumed the wretched man's harvest and that of his grandparents, causing the man's acute illness, and that the use of amulets (*tamā'im*) and spiritual healing in the name of religion, akin to prescribing medication for a peasant's empty stomach, could not ward off such unfavorable conditions.[37]

b) Religious Education

Not only does a review of al-Ghazali's educational background acquaint us with his intellectual preferences, but it also illuminates his perspective on religious learning, while shedding light on his understanding of the relationship of education with *daʿwah* and *duʿāt*. Al-Ghazali's education took place in a variety of settings, from the *kuttāb*, to the Alexandria Religious Institute and the University of Al-Azhar. At the age of five, al-Ghazali was enrolled at the local *kuttāb* to memorize the Qur'an.[38] Landau describes attendance in the *kuttāb* as voluntary, with no precise age limit: pupils enrolled at the age of four and five or above and in general studied for a period of two to five years. All pupils studied in the same room, as there was seldom – if ever – division of students according to age groups. Each pupil progressed at his own rate, and instruction was usually carried out from sunrise to sunset (or earlier) daily.[39] By the age of ten, al-Ghazali had memorized the entire Qur'an,[40] and had learned the basic principles of mathematics and dictation.[41]

Learning in the *kuttāb* resulted ideally in the students' literal incorporation of the Qur'anic text, and accordingly teaching was ordered around the meaning and power of the words. The skills of reading and writing were always secondary to the acquisition of the skills of exactly reproducing the recited words of God through daily exposure to and repetition of sacred verses. A young boy could within the space of a few years gain the ability to repeat the text by himself.[42] Instructors frequently adopted a carrot and stick approach, beating the lazy and unruly.[43] Such disciplinary measures were fully supported by parents and it was often said that the teacher's stick came from paradise.[44] Al-Ghazali vividly remembers the punishment he received in the *kuttāb* when he erred. Frustration sometimes led to uncertainty, but as soon as the stick rose, al-Ghazali paid attention and continued reading in order to escape the impending strike.[45] Al-Ghazali even remembers the verses and chapters of the Qur'an where his teacher commended him, or chastised him.[46]

In 1927, at the age of ten, al-Ghazali began to attend the Alexandria Religious Institute, where he studied for a period of nine consecutive years.[47] At the Institute, students received a monthly stipend of thirty piastres (*qirsh*) for food expenses, which proved helpful, particularly when his father's bankruptcy forced him to return to his home village.[48] Study at the Institute was carried out from morning until late afternoon on a daily basis, and classes included both religious and 'secular' sciences. At the Institute, students would wake up at dawn, review their lessons after the morning prayer and prepare and explore their lessons before class time.[49] The study program was of a high standard, yet not fully religious, since 'secular' sciences were also taught at an academic standard not inferior to that of the public school system. The only difference, however, was the lack of instruction of foreign languages.[50] At the Institute, al-Ghazali favored certain academic subjects and textbooks over others. He had a preference for linguistics and Arabic literature. In reference to his studies, al-Ghazali recalls that he particularly disliked *Nūr al-Īḍāḥ, Matn al-Qaddūrī*,[51] *Majmaᶜ al-Anhur ᶜalā Multaqā al-Abḥur*,[52] and was disconcerted with the books of Nasafī and Abū Saᶜūd.[53] In the meantime, al-Ghazali took advantage of his father's bookstore.[54] His father often encouraged him to read, but discovered, to his regret, that al-Ghazali preferred foreign novels over religious books. For example, he favored *Alf laylah wa laylah* (One Thousand and One Nights)[55] and ignored the religious material his father set aside for him,[56] including *Daqā'iq al-Akhbār fī Dhikr al-Jannah wa al-Nār*,[57] *Al-Rawḍ al-Fā'iq fī al-Waᶜẓ wa al-Raqā'iq*,[58] *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn*,[59] *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā*, *Al-Khamrah al-Ilāhiyyah*, and *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*.[60] One of the reasons he gives for this partiality – though he mentions this in retrospect – is that these works were full of fabricated and unauthenticated hadith, and absurd myths.[61]

In the fields of spirituality and ethics, al-Ghazali was influenced to a great extent by Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn ᶜAṭā'uAllāh al-Iskandarī.[62]

During this period, at least, al-Ghazali was not attracted a great deal to legal studies,[63] and his literary preferences were more disposed towards the fields of psychology, sociology, education, philosophy, literature, beliefs and religious sects. It was in light of this interdisciplinary inclination that he pursued the specialty of *daʿwah*.[64]

In 1937, al-Ghazali enrolled in the Faculty of Theology, Al-Azhar University.[65] After four years of study, he obtained his Licentiate (*ʿĀlamiyyah*) and pursued a two-year Masters Degree in *Daʿwah* and Religious Guidance (*Daʿwah wa al-Irshād*).[66] During his tenure at the Faculty, al-Ghazali worked as an Imam (religious cleric) at the Masjid of al-ʿAtabah al-Khaḍrā'.[67] Throughout this period of learning, al-Ghazali was greatly influenced by scholars such as Abd al-Azim al-Zarqani, author of *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān fī ʿUlūm al-Qur'ān*. It appears, however, that al-Zarqani was not the only instructor who left an impression on al-Ghazali's mind. Two other influential teachers were Ibrahim Gharbawi and Abd al-Aziz Bilal, both of whom deeply impressed him with their spirituality.[68] Of all his teachers, al-Ghazali admired Gharbawi and Bilal the most. Al-Ghazali commended them for their spirituality. Diraz greatly influenced al-Ghazali's thematic commentaries on the Qur'an.

Al-Ghazali spoke of ideal teachers who genuinely cared for their students and understood the hardships and challenges which they faced. He has little or nothing to say of his other teachers. These included Amin Khuli, Abd al-Wahhab Azzam, Muhammad Bahi, Muhammad Musa, Muhammad Awdan,[69] Muhammad Rayyan,[70] Abd Allah Diraz, Muhammad Abu Zahra,[71] Muhammad Ghamrawi, Abd al-Wahhab Khallaf, Muhammad Hussayn, Muhammad Mahdi[72] and Mahmud Shaltut.[73] Not all of these names seem to have left a mark on al-Ghazali's mind. Students tended to dislike their teachers because their relationship with them was often strictly formal.[74] This was in sharp contrast to Taha Husayn,[75] who often invited his students to the Faculty of Literature (*Kulliyah al-Ādāb*) for tea

parties and showed concern for their welfare even after their graduation.[76]

Al-Ghazali often draws on his early education and associated problems to make the point that improvement of the education system was absolutely vital, in fact an inescapable prerequisite, for modern Islamic reform. He also used his educational experience to assess and point to *duʿāt's* education problems, that is the integral relationship that exists between religious learning and *daʿwah* in addition to the link between effective education and religious progress. Al-Ghazali draws examples from his own learning experiences in the *kuttāb* and Al-Azhar University, as well as the instructional methods and practices prevailing in Muslim societies during his time.

In an attempt to critically review his own educational experiences and schooling, al-Ghazali begins with a general appraisal of reading classes. He describes them as insignificant,[77] even stating that he needed to rid himself of their effects because, this traditional Islamic literature was largely beneficial to the period in which it first emerged, catering to the spiritual and economic problems of the time, not to those of his own. Furthermore, Muslims recognize the pressing need to understand Islam in a way that meets their present emotional needs.[78] Al-Ghazali also felt that unbalanced reading only yielded distorted thought, and that extensive study of a discipline in isolation from other related disciplines did not produce a healthy culture.[79] He argued that although religious commentaries and illustrations are abundant, religious scholarship is not made simple or easy to digest. The situation being such that contemporary Islamic literature embraces authentic knowledge, but the poor medium of delivery and style renders that literature ambiguous. Al-Ghazali firmly believed that much of the religious literature used by the public, including that issued by Al-Azhar itself, was both poor in content and style, and had put Muslim culture at a great disadvantage.[80]

Al-Ghazali decries the problem of Islamic education, which had become a refuge for mediocre students unable to succeed in

academic areas requiring excellence.[81] For instance, the field of *daʿwah* only attracted the least qualified students.[82] Furthermore, conditions surrounding students of *daʿwah* were so 'stressful' it made it near impossible to develop any success in the field.[83] In his work *Min Maʿālim al-Ḥaqq* (Signposts of the Truth), al-Ghazali draws on a real-life example which he claims to have repeatedly encountered:

> The son of a wealthy man suffers from an eye infection. Consequently, the father decides to enrol him in Azhar [as] soon as he completes his memorization of the Qur'an. The child starts reciting and memorizing the Qur'an under the guidance of a skilful, blind teacher. Surprisingly, later on the child regains his sight and becomes well. The father panics! Soon the blind teacher loses his job, and the father enrols his child back into a non-religious school.[84]

This, however, is understandable, in view of the fact that from the late nineteenth century onward, privileged families deserted Al-Azhar for state or private schools, and for better career opportunities. A survey of senior students at Al-Azhar and Cairo universities in 1962 shows that Azharis were generally poorer, more provincial, more rural, and from less educated families than their Cairo University counterparts.[85] Unfortunately, al-Ghazali did not elaborate on the conditions of the incompetent students, why they were 'impaired,' or what differences existed between Azharis and students from state or private schools. He did not share his views on excellent students nor on non-religious schools. One can only suspect that his expectations of the mettle of religious students was theoretically high, to say the least, in view of the broad and complex reform which he discussed extensively, alongside the personal, moral, and educational requirements of modern *duʿāt*.

Nevertheless, al-Ghazali gives special attention to the position of the *kuttāb* in religious education, probably due to his growing interest in developing a sound methodology of under-

standing the Qur'an, as shown in his works *Kayfa Natāʿāmalu maʿa al-Qur'ān?* (How to Approach the Qur'an?), *Al-Maḥāwir al-Khamsah li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (The Five Themes of the Glorious Qur'an), or his critique of religious literalism, which preserves the letter but cares little for its meaning and spirit. In his discussion of the *kuttāb*'s contribution to the moral and intellectual development of Muslim children, al-Ghazali questions the usefulness of its teaching methods, yet he does not clearly discuss its disadvantages. On the one hand, al-Ghazali considers the *kuttāb* as a bright episode in Muslim history and civilization.[86] Yet, on the other, he argues that the *kuttāb* were boring because of the large number of students, ranging between the ages of six and sixteen, who were made to sit in a single hall, either reading or writing.[87] For al-Ghazali, the *kuttāb* suppressed the activity of children and restrained their fun, leaving them with emotional problems.[88] In addition, al-Ghazali considered the use of the 'stick' as damaging to the student, because a child's education requires compassion, patience, tolerance, and strictness without cruelty.

Al-Ghazali believed that despite their good intentions, some *kuttāb* were producing little more than "recording tapes" instead of effective role models. By this he meant that when studying in the *kuttāb*, students were mostly preoccupied with the mastery of rules of recitation, than intellectual development,[89] leaving them with a perfect memory of Qur'anic words, yet ignorant of its spirit, meaning and teachings.[90] To support his view, al-Ghazali drew on personal experience where the method of memorizing Qur'anic words had caused him to overlook many of its meanings even up to an older age. Al-Ghazali narrates how he used to rid himself later from this preconception that he had inherited through memorization.[91]

Al-Ghazali also believed that children's television programs mostly excluded a child from using his/her mind, because these only sought to satisfy children's imagination. This belief led al-Ghazali to conclude that modern education also excludes reason

in favor of satisfying imagination only. In this case he asks why should we not then simply be satisfied with memorizing words? Not content with this he further queries: "What is the point of memorizing words and producing parrots for society?"[92] His major concern was for the Qur'an to be implemented in all spheres of life. People in the Maghreb he points out were ironically perfect memorizers of Qur'anic words, the Egyptians its superb reciters, and the Turks its excellent writers; yet the Qur'an was not being implemented at the personal, social, and state levels. So how then could the Qur'an be used to purify minds and souls, disseminate kindness and cooperation, or establish justice and truth in the affairs of the state?[93]

Still, despite criticism al-Ghazali does not propose a method by which students are to memorize parts of the Qur'an whilst simultaneously understanding its meaning. Also, despite his discomfort with the idea of rote learning alone (that is, producing 'recording tapes') al-Ghazali remained an advocate of the traditional Qur'anic transmission method. It is worth noting that despite technological advances, the tradition of memorization has its own significant advantages and is still needed because it a) teaches children the vocabulary and style of the Qur'an, b) enhances their mastery of the Arabic language, c) preserves the oral authenticity of the Qur'an (*al-tawātur bi al-mushāfaha*), and d) helps Muslims recall verses in prayer. Therefore, with no immediate solution to the problem of *kuttāb* learning, al-Ghazali proposes a multidisciplinary approach, exhorting experts in the fields of education and child psychology to discuss and review this problem.[94] And as a result, he leaves us with no solution that would integrate both the memorization and understanding of the Qur'an in the *kuttāb*. However, if the integration of both memorization and understanding could be effected in the *kuttāb*, its learning methodology, which is primarily concerned with oral tradition as the guiding force of learning, would have to drastically change. Having said this, one should be aware that al-Ghazali's focus was largely on the post-*kuttāb* stage, where

Muslim students developed as little more than 'tape recorders' with no attention paid whatsoever to any understanding of Qur'anic verses. Having said this, like many other prominent scholars, al-Ghazali himself was a product of the *kuttāb*, albeit an exception, to say the least.

On a broader scale however, religious learning had fallen to its lowest level during al-Ghazali's time, and he felt that it neither served Islam nor attracted competent students. Al-Ghazali drew attention to the following three problems in religious education: a) a lack of emotional and intellectual intelligence on the part of religious scholars,[95] b) early academic specialization before acquisition of a requisite knowledge base in human and scientific subjects,[96] and c) poor understanding of Islamic fundamentals, and excessive attention to trivial issues.[97]

According to al-Ghazali, Al-Azhar had for about thirty years or so been academically and pedagogically in decline. He states that the" jurisprudence of nomads" (*al-fiqh al-badawī*) and a theologically immature childish interpretation of beliefs and laws had become widespread.[98] Similarly, Crecelius notes that despite continuous reform, the influence of Al-Azhar – its moral leadership, scholarship and position at the center of the nation's life – were continuing to erode at a rapid pace.[99] Thus the case was established. Reform was unavoidable, and had to occur through the incorporation of subjects such as Islamic creeds, ethics, morals, philosophy, the study of other religions, and human and social sciences. Also, in order for Al-Azhar to resist atheism, its teaching methodology had to embrace study of the divinely established universal laws (*sunan Allāh fī al-āfāq*), a critique of modern schools of thought, as well as the study of psychology, philosophy, education, and classical and modern history.[100]

To substantiate his contention regarding ineffective teaching methods present in Islamic studies, al-Ghazali draws on the approach by which, over a very long period of time, he learnt the legal aspects of prayer, of which he memorized seventeen legal

obligations, over fifty desirable acts, and some other requirements and conditions. However, this stage did not equip him to grasp the spirit of prayer or to understand the glory which should have filled his heart as he connected with the Divine.[101] Similarly, despite fifteen years of study at Al-Azhar, al-Ghazali maintains that he had, for example, learnt little about modern Islam in South-east Asia, North or West Africa.[102] He mentions instruction in Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and Sunnah studies as being poor, one may presume, at the Alexandria Institute or Al-Azhar. In addition, the science of hadith was taught as a set of rules and maxims in a sterile, lifeless way without any demonstration of their respective applications.[103]

Again, al-Ghazali is not clear as to whether the problem lay in the curriculum, instructors, resources, or learning atmosphere. On the one hand, we are told that the curriculum itself was not poor (in fact, the Faculty of Theology's curriculum was of a high standard, only requiring competent instructors to produce skilled *duᶜāt*), and on the other al-Ghazali argues that introducing Islam through the same teaching methods as those used in the sixth or seventh century AH was unreasonable, and reflected an acute crisis in talent and will.[104] For example, he states that Al-Azhar was prosperous during his tenure, particularly during the time of Mustafa al-Maraghi[105] and Ahmad al-Zawahiri (1878-1944 CE).[106] This was probably due to the introduction of scientific subjects such as nature, chemistry, biology, algebra, mathematics, and geometry, alongside a broad examination of Islamic, regional, and global history as well as geography.

Al-Ghazali's discussion of the pitiable state of religious education reflects a genuine interest in its modernization through the inculcation of contemporary disciplines. For him, graduates of Islamic studies should not only acquire traditional knowledge, but also understand modern science. This would aid them to utilise a modern perspective in introducing Islam whilst advancing the cause of *daᶜwah* working in parallel with scientific progress. This modernization of education, however, is geared

towards a broad spectrum of reform wherein traditional knowledge would amend the existing dichotomies of religion and science, and this worldly life and the Hereafter, in addition to relationships between body, mind and spirit. From a different angle however, al-Ghazali's approach to learning can be seen to depend on the perspective of the social functionality of *daʿwah*, which endorses effectiveness and excellence in a multitude of academic disciplines and fields. Learning appears to be evaluated in terms of improvement of public life, assisting people to embody the values of Islam in their daily lives, or enhancing a smooth social change needed for reforms. This is well illustrated in al-Ghazali's perspective of what constitutes ideal education, one that would enable Muslim society to proceed gradually and according to a spiritual and practical scheme spreading harmony across cities and villages and amongst the youth and elderly.[107]

c) An Exploration of al-Ghazali's Personality

Did al-Ghazali's personality influence his critical evaluation of *daʿwah*? To what degree was it responsible for his tone or style, and seeming inclination to hold 'pessimistic' or negative views concerning the future of Islam? Examining al-Ghazali's personal traits allows for a better understanding of his feelings towards questions of *daʿwah* such as those related to freedom, justice, openness, transparency, cooperation, compassion, and tolerance. Such exploration also helps to elucidate some of the basic concepts underlying al-Ghazali's perspective of *daʿwah*, i.e. his personal preferences, motives of criticism, and even his juristic preferences or interest-based approach to *daʿwah*. This can be accomplished by examining al-Ghazali's autobiographical notes and descriptions of both his supporters and opponents.

During a 1996 conference on al-Ghazali and his contributions, he was described as a man of courage, pride, humbleness and devotion. The key personality traits that perhaps really define him involve confidence, a commitment to truth, advocacy of justice and equality, and struggle for freedom from exploitation

and humility.[108] Interestingly, through his discussion of the character of the ideal *dāʿiyah*, al-Ghazali describes his own personal characteristics as follows:

> I cannot stand rigidity. I would have ultimately failed had I tried to act rigidly. I rather prefer to behave according to my personal dispositions in the course of either adopting things or leaving them. I care less about formal traditions – in this regard – where it is commonly known that silence is the outstanding character of a religious scholar. I am inclined to fun, and I search for it in everything around me. I like to live happily and be humorous, even when people expect me to show sorrow so that they may remember the next life and see in my appearance a warning of hellfire. I am also inclined to be popular in my actions. Had I been a king, I would have certainly joined the ranks of free brotherhood with people around the world.[109]

Al-Ghazali considered a caring attitude to be particularly critical to human progress, and disliked rudeness, aggressiveness, or cold-heartedness. In his view, were he to encounter rude people in shops or public services, he would never return. However, it must be noted that the worst thing in his eyes was to see ill-mannered people such as these acting as religious leaders, preachers, or *duʿāt*. For al-Ghazali, they represented a serious concern.[110] Although al-Ghazali loved forbearance and patience, he did on some occasions lose control, especially when seeing ignorant people addressing public matters, issuing damaging statements, or engaged in futile controversies.[111] He was straightforward, a trait evident in his critical comments. In his approach to the various problems associated with *daʿwah*, al-Ghazali downplayed both customary and cultural conventions. He insisted that he interacted positively with true emotions, but ignored them as soon as they exceeded the boundaries of the intellect.[112] For example, he recalled an occasion during his early life, when despite financial constraints, he had strongly desired to perform pilgrimage (hajj). His actual motivation then being the hope that

his supplications would be answered. Only later did he realize that He who listens to prayers in Makkah also listens to them in Egypt.[113]

Al-Qaradawi describes al-Ghazali as both a lover and advocate of freedom, in addition to being a foe of tyranny in any form, especially when this took the guise of religion.[114] Al-Ghazali rejected as inhumane any act that ever denied even an atom of freedom to the intellect or consciousness.[115] It was this belief in freedom that led him to frankly criticize religious formalities as well as many manifestations of religious and socio-cultural life. In relation to this, al-Ghazali describes his feelings concerning the etiquette of a young Muslim scholar expected to observe the strictest code of religious authority, stating:

> My appearance when I was young must have been funny! That is why, and for a long time, I continued to dislike the traditional uniform. I became Shaykh Muhammad before the age of puberty! I loved playing, but how could a Shaykh play? Besides, I was a person of laughter, something which caused me a great deal of trouble and blame.[116]

Al-Ghazali's desire for fun, however, did not last. He experienced changes caused by difficult living conditions which he admitted changed him, with the difficult times which had driven him into depths of stress also teaching him lessons, and to watch his step as though he were avoiding traps.[117]

Al-Ghazali also draws our attention to the crucial role played by innate human nature (*fiṭrah*) in the correctness of attitudes and actions. He is especially keen upon this and prefers to act upon its judgment. Consequently, he professes his dislike for artificiality and drama.[118] He also views the intellect as the structural foundation of religion because intellectual proofs according to him possess overwhelming weight, and it is only through the intellect that one may recognize God, identify the truths of revelation, and realize man's accountability in the Hereafter.[119]

Examining al-Ghazali's personality more deeply, it becomes apparent that his intellectual freedom led him to raise numerous critical questions concerning Muslim life and Islamic disciplines such as belief, jurisprudence, and history. Al-Ghazali shares with the reader his own religious quest, including a period of religious doubt and confusion during which time he questioned the very fundamentals of Islamic belief and rituals.[120] Al-Ghazali describes his journey of faith: how he first inherited Islam, and how he later reflected on that inheritance and began searching for the secrets of higher and lower existence.[121] Having learnt the fundamentals of the religion from his parents, a time came when he discharged himself of all beliefs to leave the final judgment to the authority of the intellect.[122] This state of religious doubt led him to set every belief aside leaving his intellect to choose whether to take them up again or to abandon them.[123] Throughout this process, al-Ghazali closely observed the effects of ideas and ideologies, comparing and choosing positions and arguments, welcoming doubts and considering them calmly.[124] He writes:

> I inherited the religion [of Islam] from my parents in the same way I have inherited language, (i.e.,) through reception and teaching devoid of a profound contemplation. When I grew up, however, I experienced a state of doubt that wiped out all my knowledge, and led me to contest those inherited beliefs, virtues, and traditions. I do not recall however, how long that lasted.[125]

As soon as al-Ghazali had safely crossed this stage of doubt to a point of rational affirmation, he realized that his recovery had been made possible through the aid of a mastery of the Arabic language and critical study of the Qur'an, as well as other sources.[126] Following this journey, al-Ghazali concluded that God is One, True, Merciful, does not let His servants go astray, and that He has sent Messengers as teachers and *duʿāt*. Throughout his struggle, however, al-Ghazali relied upon the intellect,

and examined various religions to choose that which glorified God and illustrated His divine names and attributes the most. This explains how he was first a religious follower who, based on research, examination, and comparison, became a convinced Muslim.[127]

Nevertheless, al-Ghazali's account immediately raises the issue of similarity with Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's famous narrative in his *Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (Deliverance from Error).[128] This leads us to question Muhammad al-Ghazali's own account, and whether it was an attempt to endorse his scholarly merits and/or forge a spiritual bond with the great scholar Abū Ḥāmid. We soon discover that Muhammad al-Ghazali's examination of numerous religious issues, theological and juristic, followed similar patterns in his works, eventually causing a great deal of trouble, particularly with *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*.[129] Al-Ghazali's journey of faith, nonetheless, provides a good case for his independent character and open mindedness in dealing with one of the most challenging yet sensitive theological questions. Al-Ghazali asks, "Why can't I be wrong while others are right?"[130] A question hardly ever asked by a "traditional" scholar as far as theological persuasions are concerned. Questions such as these placed al-Ghazali in a position of independence within the Islamic orthodoxy and within the scholarly community.

In addition to these qualities, it is also worthwhile examining al-Ghazali's problematic use of a negative and at times harsh style of language, with a view to understanding what might have led him to do so. First, we note that al-Ghazali grew up in an ordinary rural community, retaining wonderful memories of his family. Al-Ghazali states that his childhood was ordinary, there being nothing exceptionally unusual, and that he loved reading in all conditions.[131] The community, despite its difficult economic situation, does not seem to have caused him any major problem. His intellectual journey, whether in the *kuttāb* or at Al-Azhar, also provides no justification for his harsh or negative

reactions towards traditional religious pedagogy. What appears to have most drastically affected him in the analysis of *daʿwah* is the occurrence of major events such as the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate, the foreign exploitation of the Muslim world, the occupation of Palestine, and the stagnant conditions affecting the Muslim world.

Al-Ghazali, nonetheless, believed there was a clear difference between harshness and emotional reaction.[132] Al-Ghazali acknowledged himself to be emotional because he disliked the cold treatment of ideas and people, and also because he felt that abstract belief could only be dynamic when steered by emotions.[133] Nevertheless he does apologize to his readers for the bitterness and anger found in the lessons he draws from history, and for the harshness detected throughout his discussion of Muslim failures[134] explaining that had his works been edited, his words would have been softer.[135] His apologies, however, fail to justify the generally harsh or demeaning language found in many of his works, not only in his writings, but also his lectures.

Sometimes al-Ghazali's statements appear to be pessimistic, leaving no room for hope. His description of the century into which he was born as being the worst as far as Islam is concerned stands out as one example.[136] It was his belief that were events to continue and evolve at the same pace, darkness would encompass everything and only religious groups blamed for the loss of faith.[137] Further, the conditions of Muslims could deteriorate even worse in the future, with new catastrophes befalling them. Al-Ghazali states: "I wonder if there is any need to prove the ominous future awaiting Islam, and that every passing day hastens its decline and that there is no hope in any struggle versus this decreed destiny!" Al-Ghazali personally felt that he was experiencing defeats surrounding Islam both in the past and present,[138] and regretted that Islam was an orphaned religion having no spiritual or cultural guardianship.[139]

This emotional cynicism resulted from a comparison of the Muslim world's prevailing conditions with those of other

nations,[140] and a discomfort with regards to conditions of sorrow and humiliation.[141] Al-Ghazali dreamed of seeing Islamic ideals implemented, but when he contrasted these dreams with the poor conditions of the Muslims around him, he constantly experienced sadness, sorrow, and anger.[142] His outspoken anger in some of his speeches was also the result of seeing ineffective *duᶜāt* failing to present the Islamic faith properly and seeing incompetent individuals joining *daᶜwah* and religious learning, artisans, uneducated people who despite their professional incompetence put it upon themselves to address religious and juristic problems.[143] The following statement illustrates the point further:

> What makes me speak with some anger is when unsuccessful *duᶜāt* fail to properly introduce the religion of Islam. I acknowledge that I sometimes lose my temper especially when uneducated people address public matters or give ineffective instructions leading others to drag the religion into losing battles, or giving others the opportunity to attack the religion.[144]

What might have caused al-Ghazali's negative reaction was an increased degree of anger at the deteriorating socio-cultural reality of Muslims. For example, al-Ghazali was upset and even angry at Islam being interpreted as a vague belief in the unseen or having it regarded as an adherence to ambivalent emotions, or when belief was perceived as some sort of stagnant submission to the unknown as opposed to depictions of atheism as being in contrast dynamic, and devoted to the search for the secrets of the universe.[145] What might also have caused his anger was the pretext of scholarship used as a cover for imperfect work, which developed into a sophisticated tool of deception.[146] Another reason for his passion was his dislike of cold attitudes and his view that religious belief is inert unless supported with emotion as mentioned earlier.[147] Al-Ghazali believed that when falsehood drowned out most voices, it was vital to defend issues of faith emotionally and angrily.[148] This made him wonder how a

Muslim could smile especially when diverse threats targeted the heart of Muslim society. Al-Ghazali argued: "Had the scale of power and resources been equal, we would have spoken with a smile. How much do our hearts long for fun and smiles! We should not be blamed for anger when the impostors' claims are many."[149]

Al-Ghazali's supporters acknowledged that he easily lost his temper in his writing, and that his anger resembled the ocean or a volcano; a fact attested to by al-Ghazali himself, and witnessed by those who lived with him. Al-Qaradawi justifies the problem of style in terms of al-Ghazali's abhorrence of injustice and humiliation. For him, al-Ghazali did not set out to offend others nor did he take offence, and would not humiliate others nor accept being humiliated. Al-Ghazali could not stand wrongdoing, especially in the areas of piety or religion, yet he was not ill-mannered in his debate nor did he wish ill for others. He quickly acknowledged the truth and admitted his mistakes in public.[150] His opponents on the other hand suggest that al-Ghazali's tough personality and angry style led him into a critical minefield of his own making, and disqualified him from dealing with current issues in any constructive manner.[151] Even in the absence of external influences, conversations with him were often characterized as hot and harsh, mostly due to his temper and anger.[152] They argue that al-Ghazali was proud, and would cast off his opponents accusing them of legal incompetence (*quṣūr fiqhī*). He would often describe some *duʿāt* as so incompetent that they should remain silent so as not to affect the religion with speech they themselves did not understand or that they had grasped in a fashion contradictory to the apparent meaning of the Qur'an (*ẓāhir al-Qur'ān*).[153] Al-Ghazali's problem of style is illustrated in the graphic language he uses in the following statement:

> The men who now lead the defence of Islam are, without exception, bringing shame to themselves and their cause… The service of God and

> Mammon cannot be combined... It requires a really deranged mind to bring these opposites together in any system of human life. Such must be the minds of those Azharites who grow fat while Islam grows thin, and repose in comfort while [Muslims] suffer in anguish. These deceivers have devised devilish means for escaping the genuine duties of Islam. They are more crafty and sly than hashish smugglers who escape justice and the police. On the one hand, we have a group of men satisfied merely with the performance of personal worship. When they are asked to take care of the public, or observe the social duties of Islam, they answer despondently, 'politics is not our business.'...On the other hand, we have a group that fights sectarianism and worship of the dead, yet its members profess to belong to Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab... We have seen many leaders of Azhar who did not leave their office chairs until their pockets bulged with riches, though they claimed to be the "spiritual continuation" of the legacy of Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani.[154]

The problem of al-Ghazali's style to a degree reflects the de facto reality of Muslim culture and society. It demonstrates the high expectations he has of scholars and *duʿāt* while calling upon Muslims to reflect and concentrate on the real and fundamental problems that lead to progress. It also endorses al-Ghazali's independence from religious formalities, that is, the little attention he pays to the bitter reactions of the scholarly community or Islamic movements. Besides, al-Ghazali was no exception to the trend of criticism that has grown in modern Muslim societies. Ibrahim Abu-Rabi argues that this criticism very often flourishes in reaction to a severe status quo, and that there had been a sustained effort on the part of a small portion of the Muslim intelligentsia to glorify the Muslim critical spirit, including Sayyid Qutb, Abd al-Qadir Awdah, Muhammad Baqir Sadr, and Muhammad H. Fadlallah.[155]

[II] Al-Ghazali and the Muslim Brotherhood

a) Association and Conflict

Al-Ghazali's association with the organization known as the Muslim Brotherhood is essential to our inquiry because it highlights its founder, Hasan al-Banna's influence upon him, the concepts and methods of *daʿwah* that he learned from the Brotherhood, al-Ghazali's possible intellectual transformation during and after his membership to the organization and its effects on his ideas of *daʿwah*. Al-Ghazali knew Hasan al-Banna[156] when he was a student at the Alexandria Religious Institute,[157] and later, at the age of twenty, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood, being an active member for a period of seventeen years.[158] Three years after joining, al-Banna appointed him as under-secretary of the *Majallat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* (Journal of the Muslim Brotherhood).[159] In 1945, al-Banna wrote him a note of appreciation:

> Peace be upon you. I have read your recent article "Muslim Brotherhood and Political Parties" in the Journal of the Muslim Brotherhood. I was attracted to its succinct expressions, well-defined meanings, and excellent literary style. This is how Muslim brothers should write! Continue to write, the Holy Spirit shall support you, and God be with you. Peace be upon you.[160]

Al-Banna was not alone in valuing al-Ghazali's excellence as a writer. Al-Ghazali's writing talents in fact qualified him for the honorific title of *Adīb al-daʿwah* (the writer of *daʿwah*) among the Muslim Brotherhood, and his literary skills and intellectual competence were manifest in their publications.[161] Al-Qaradawi describes al-Ghazali's contributions to the "Free Ideas" column as inspirational, eloquent, and ridiculing; these qualified him to be a Muslim *dāʿiyah* and an extraordinary man of letters.[162] It was in the Masjid of al-ʿAtabah al-Khaḍrā' in 1941, however, that al-Ghazali's contribution to the Muslim Brotherhood increased. During this period, he was both an active member of the organization and also an official scholar in the Ministry of Endowments.[163]

It was during his period as a student at Al-Azhar however that al-Ghazali accompanied al-Banna,[164] collaborated with him,[165] and learned and benefited from his guidance.[166] Often in his writings al-Ghazali refers to al-Banna as his first teacher and mentor,[167] acknowledges his finest qualities, and portrays him as an ideal model of *daʿwah*.[168] He regarded al-Banna as an inspiring modern reformer, who laid out the course for future *duʿāt*.[169] Throughout his academic career, al-Ghazali believed that God had granted al-Banna the skills of al-Afghani,[170] Abduh,[171] and Rida.[172] His memories of al-Banna were always positive, probably the most wonderful he had of any person, and it is clear that he dearly loved al-Banna. Al-Ghazali supported al-Banna's *daʿwah*, acknowledging his debt to him for the lead he took in contemporary Islamic reforms.[173] Al-Ghazali also praises al-Banna in print and speaks of him with reverence, describing him as a scholar of high calibre, a man who had influenced him the most, and a speaker who addressed fundamental and real issues.[174]

Yet, despite this high regard for al-Banna as an ideal *dāʿiyah*, and his profound attachment to the example he set, al-Ghazali nevertheless rejected the assumption that al-Banna had been the first to call for resistance in modern times. His reasoning being that many earlier reformers in the Middle East, the Maghreb, India, and Indonesia, had already preceded him in the struggle, calling for reform in politics and education, as well as contributing much to the service of Islam and the Ummah.[175] According to al-Ghazali, al-Banna's Twenty Principles (understanding Islam within the bounds of twenty concise principles to form the basis and starting point of the Islamic revival) represented neither the first nor the final formulation of the reform plan set for the service of the Ummah. They were not the final word in carrying out cultural reforms, and only represented proposals resulting from al-Banna's experience in uniting Muslims and correcting their failures. Those who had better alternatives, al-Ghazali remarked, should bring them forward.[176]

Soon after al-Banna's assassination in 1948, problems within the organization surfaced. Al-Ghazali's disagreement with the newly appointed leader, Husayn Hudaybi (1891-1973 CE),[177] resulted in his dismissal[178] and led to an exchange of accusations.[179] Al-Ghazali's conflict with Hudaybi was harsh. He described Hudaybi as very soft in dealing with the parties responsible for al-Banna's assassination, and for al-Ghazali this softness then turned to persecution and increasing propaganda and accusations against innocent people. Al-Ghazali wrote:

> Should we let obscure forces play with the future of the mother Islamic movement (i.e., the Muslim Brotherhood) and jeopardize its activities in the various spheres of life and struggle as it happened three years ago? Should the religion of Islam bear the burdens of weak and shaken leadership that disguise its weakness by way of dictatorship and ill-treatment? Who is benefiting from all of these?[180]

Although the reasons for his dismissal were, in al-Ghazali's opinion, motivated by personal conflict, yet others saw them as ordinary.[181] What led to al-Ghazali's dismissal was disagreement over the Brotherhood's decision to boycott the government of Jamal Abd al-Nasir.[182] In December 1953, al-Ghazali was dismissed from his position in the Brotherhood's founding body (*al-hay'ah al-ta'sīsiyyah*), reportedly after attempting, with two other prominent members, to unseat Hudaybi as leader of the organization.[183]

The sequence of events according to al-Qaradawi occurred as follows: Nasir seized power on July 23rd 1952. Al-Ghazali supported the Revolution and was not alone in this. The Muslim Brotherhood as a whole also greatly supported it. Then the Brotherhood, and particularly Hudaybi, soon discovered that Jamal Abd al-Nasir had only planned the Revolution for his own personal gain, and was planning to strike against the Brotherhood. Al-Ghazali never suspected Nasir's intentions. Along with some elder members of the Brotherhood, al-Ghazali took a

stance against the movement's opposition to the government, as this would only lead to bloodshed and instability. Al-Ghazali believed flexibility towards the Revolution would be a wiser position, given that Abd al-Nasir until then had not shown any hostility towards the Brotherhood. During this time of confusion, misunderstandings surfaced between members leading to al-Ghazali's and other members' dismissal. Al-Ghazali only realized of Abd al-Nasir's mischief later.[184]

In reality, however, al-Ghazali's conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood had started much earlier, precisely during his imprisonment in Tur (1951). Al-Ghazali's criticism at the time had not been welcomed. What disturbed al-Ghazali the most whilst imprisoned was that the Brotherhood in general had rejected any criticism of their strategies. Al-Ghazali pointed out that soon after their defeat at the Battle of Uhud (3 AH/625 CE), even some of the Companions of the Prophet had been blamed, and bearing this in mind Brotherhood members should have re-evaluated their personal and public conduct. A few years later al-Ghazali described these moments as follows:

> I thought the Brothers, especially after the assassination of Banna and the ban on the Organization under extremely dismal political conditions, would learn from their experience and focus instead on assuring human dignity and civil liberties. But, did that ever happen? Regrettably not. The course had taken a different path instead.[185]

Despite these differences with the Brotherhood, al-Ghazali nevertheless forgave his adversaries and decided to ask God for forgiveness and to a start a new page.[186] Indeed, seeing Hudaybi steadfastly upholding the faith, during his 1954 trial, raised him in al-Ghazali's eyes, for the catastrophes that befell Hudaybi and his family neither affected his judgment nor diverted him from the methodology of the Brotherhood.[187] Al-Ghazali also commended the steadfastness of the movement's members and was sympathetic, helpful, and supportive.[188]

Following his dismissal, al-Ghazali discovered his own talents and decided to commit the rest of his life to the field of *daʿwah* and writing. His concern with *daʿwah* of course predated his expulsion. After his release from prison in 1949, al-Ghazali became the foremost spokesperson of *daʿwah* and the principal defender of Islam.[189] During this period, al-Ghazali's writings contributed to awakening minds, stirring emotions, and paving the way for a revolution against injustice. Regarding this particular transition, al-Ghazali states:

> I decided to work in the field of *daʿwah*, in the way I personally choose, and in the best approach possible. There are two broad areas before me: writing, where God grants me success, and mosques, where I could lecture, deliver sermons, and lead thousands of Imams to the best methods and results.[190]

Had al-Ghazali maintained a political affiliation with the Brotherhood, his contribution might have taken a different course. As it happened his formal dissociation from a structured Islamic movement provided him with the freedom necessary to address the subject of *daʿwah* independently, critically, and broadly.

Al-Ghazali's *daʿwah* career knew no boundaries and was impartially communicated to all segments of society, including Islamic movements, governments, scholars, Sunnis as well as Shiʿites,[191] the elite and the masses. Al-Ghazali benefited from the general ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood and largely shared their historical and emotional background, yet learned from others and developed his own intellectual identity and initiative.

b) Al-Ghazali's School of Thought

Was al-Ghazali the Muhammad Abduh of the contemporary era?[192] A genius who developed his own program of Islamic reform? Or a prolific writer who skilfully blended contributions of the Muslim Brotherhood with the ideas of modern Muslim

reformers? In order to identify al-Ghazali's intellectual position, his notes on al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood and some prominent modern Muslim reformists need to be examined, together with a summation of the main themes that preoccupied him most as well as the possible changes he advocated throughout a long career in education and *daʿwah*.

In the context of Islamic scholarship, there may be a tendency to categorize thinkers according to static and rigid taxonomy. In the case of al-Ghazali, however, we should acknowledge that such attempts at taxonomy are in no way final determinants of his intellectual position. For example, his thinking changed and developed over the course of his career, therefore any attempt to place him within the framework of modern Islamic thought must consider these changes and developments; arguably, developing convergences with or divergences from preceding Islamic reforms to diversify the search for knowledge – a process which transcends intellectual positions and involves tremendous efforts of assimilation, adaptation, creativity and transformation. The quest for scholarly taxonomy sometimes appears to be an exciting intellectual game because it tends to provide us with an ultimate rational satisfaction and intellectual ease, when all doors of inquiry are supposedly closed. Yet at its core, the problem still challenges our inner curiosity. Of course, because of our inadequate analyses, we only tend to trace intellectual responses that resonate with external processes of assimilation, assess their nature, and place the entire diversified contribution into a general class of thought. Beyond this, guessing hidden internal thoughts and emotions then becomes a 'subjective' exercise as it only yields conjecture. Yet our supposedly 'objective' classification of scholarly contributions is not objective either because it involves much confusion, vagueness, and guesswork.

What makes a scholar puritanical, conservative, progressive, fundamentalist, liberal, traditionist or a modernist? Are these categories sophisticated enough to perfectly match their recipients or are they approximate descriptions embracing overall

intellectual contributions and characteristics of their recipients? Whatever the answer might be, this exercise requires a fresh taxonomy that is unbiased and flexible, and free from the political connotations of those categories and labels.

Al-Ghazali's case is an ideal example of the inherent deficiency of taxonomy as a tool of analysis. Because, according to our general framework, al-Ghazali easily fits the mould of a traditional Azharite scholar, rational modernist, an Ashʿarite yet Salafi, a Sufi, and an *ikhwānī*! Thus it is difficult to simply classify his total diversified contributions unless those labels are stripped of their negative or political connotations, and unless we continue to examine his thinking within a broader perspective without necessarily resorting to a 'final' judgment on his contribution. Let us nonetheless look at some of the manifestations of his intellectual stance. Al-Ghazali's positive attachment to al-Banna did not result in any literal adherence to or interpretation of his methodology.[193] Al-Ghazali in fact disagreed with al-Banna and criticized him,[194] and despite their close relationship, there is no indication whatsoever of al-Ghazali's continuing loyalty to the Muslim Brotherhood. He writes: "Let me off the Brothers. I have washed my hands of those titles. I only speak for the religion of Islam, its current status, and the broken Muslim nation."[195]

> I am one of the Azharite scholars who worked among the Muslim Brotherhood for nearly twenty years. I find no pride in associations to this or that. My association with genuine Islam is worth more than that with an institute from which I graduated, or a group I was associated with. I have observed however, that the conditions prevailing in both groups are warped, and that the criteria of Islam are not allowed to operate freely as far as the guidance and judgement of people and matters are concerned.[196]

Al-Ghazali's work, *Dustūr al-Wiḥdah al-Thaqāfiyyah* (The Constitution of The Cultural Unity) provides further testimony as to his growing independence vis-à-vis major areas of concern for the Muslim Brotherhood as epitomized in al-Banna's Twenty

Principles.[197] In *Dustūr*, not only did al-Ghazali elaborate on al-Banna's principles, but also substantiated them and developed new tenets required for modern Islamic change:

> My work was to explain and substantiate al-Banna's principles in light of the experience I gained during a period of forty years of *daʿwah*. I spent some of those years with al-Banna and his disciples, and some others with sincere believers concerned about the religion, who struggled for its cause and resisted all sorts of aggression.[198]

Al-Ghazali formulated the following ten new principles required for implementing modern reform: 1) That women and men are partners (*shaqā'iq*); 2) The family represents the moral and social foundation (support) of society, and the natural center for educating generations; 3) The moral and economic rights of people should be assured and safeguarded; 4) Rulers, whether kings or presidents, are simply agents acting on behalf of their respective nations; 5) Mutual consultation (*shūrā*) is the basis of government; every nation must choose the method that best realizes its interests; 6) Conditions and rights of private property should be protected. The nation is one single body which does not tolerate neglect or subjugation; 7) Muslim countries are responsible for *daʿwah*;[199] 8) Religious differences should not cause enmity or fighting; 9) The relationship of Muslims with the international community should be guided by agreements of human brotherhood. Muslims should carry out *daʿwah* through debate/persuasion far from any harm; and 10) Muslims need to contribute to the moral and material well-being of humanity.[200]

These principles, whether of al-Banna or al-Ghazali, are aimed at religious reform in Muslim societies. Al-Banna's principles are largely geared toward purity of belief, religion, piety, and Muslim etiquette regarding legal differences. They seek to purify the actions and minds of Muslims from practises found contradictory to the teachings of Islam. Al-Ghazali however, seems to be preoccupied with rather different issues such as

women, family, education, human rights, a consultative political system, protection of private property and law, the discharge of *daʿwah* as a collective duty and state responsibility, stressing religious tolerance, Muslims' relationship with the international community, peaceful *daʿwah*, and the contribution of Muslims to the well-being of humanity. Al-Ghazali's ten principles show new areas of interest in modern Muslim reform, and deal mostly with issues considered major as compared to al-Banna's. Taking al-Ghazali's statements at face value, we venture to say that al-Ghazali's new principles represent a further profound 'extension' for social and political change following the implementation of al-Banna's reform in areas of belief, law, and piety.[201]

According to Taha J. Alalwani, al-Ghazali's lectures at Al-Azhar, in various Egyptian mosques, as well as those delivered at the University of Umm al-Qurā and El-Emir Abdel-Kadir, represented a merger or a synopsis of al-Banna's lectures and the lectures of modern Muslim reformers, synthesized with al-Ghazali's own thought and knowledge.[202] Pioneering reformers like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Rashid Rida (1865-1935) are all noticeably present in his intellectual work.[203]

Mohammed Imarah, on the other hand, views al-Ghazali's intellectual position differently. He argues that the school of Al-Manār (*The Beacon*, pioneered by Afghani, Abduh and Rashid Rida) is the only cradle of modern Islamic awakening, and that Afghani, Abduh, and Rida are pioneers in modern Islamic thought.[204] Imarah finds it difficult to define al-Ghazali's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood. For him, al-Ghazali's position is rather to be found in a third category that combines characteristics of both the Muslim Brotherhood and Rashid Rida.[205] Based on al-Ghazali's own account that he was a member of al-Banna's school,[206] and keeping in mind that al-Banna was a disciple of Rida who learned under Abduh, Imarah concludes that al-Ghazali was a leading figure in the school of al-Jāmiʿah al-Islāmiyyah.[207] This school benefited from many

intellectual movements and schools in Muslim history, and also from the findings of psychology, sociology, political sciences, economics, and history; al-Ghazali combines all of the above, yet with a deeper understanding of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.[208]

Muhammad Yunus views al-Ghazali's life as a real interface of two converging schools of Islamic reform. Al-Ghazali's intellectual life began with the school of al-Afghani, Abduh, and Rida, and continued with the institution of Al-Azhar led by Mustafa al-Maraghi (1881-1945). It was the same idea that al-Banna attempted to translate into reality, struggling to raise its profile, realize its mission, and ensure it's pre-eminence through the publication of the periodical *Al-Manār* after Rida.[209]

On the other hand, Uways views al-Ghazali's school of thought differently. For him, it stands in the midst of all Islamic movements, abides by the Qur'an and the Sunnah, rejects partisanship, advocates cooperation among Muslim workers, sets brotherhood above legal differences, looks for a comprehensive civilization, and encourages understanding amongst the elite and the public.[210] Al-Ghazali was not affiliated with any group, nor was he resolute about any Muslim school of jurisprudence, but instead regarded Qur'an exegetes, hadith experts, legal theorists, philosophers, theologians, and Sufis with due respect.[211] He appreciated the benefits of the *kalām*, mysticism, and ethics,[212] adhered to scholarly consensus and to the larger Muslim community,[213] and showed great respect for religious authorities.[214]

Some of al-Ghazali's main concerns include interrelated problems such as the fragmentary presentation of Islam, the current state of Muslim culture, a negative attitude towards life, fatalism in the Muslim world, misunderstanding the principle of causality, traditions of showing off in Muslim societies, status of women in periods of weakness and decline, poor level of Arabic literature, wealth mismanagement, and political corruption.[215] Al-Ghazali's writings show that he drew his understanding from primary sources, and paid little or no attention when scholarly

opinions conflicted with his understanding of Islam or when he sensed that they impeded *daʿwah's* progress. He was willing to sacrifice culture and customs when they hampered or distorted Islam's image. Al-Ghazali's concern was that the divine should stay above human concepts. Thus he did not fit into any Muslim movement, for his constant criticism could only be accommodated in an atmosphere of freedom and independence.[216]

The effects of contemporary Muslim reformers are however discernible throughout al-Ghazali's writings; his distinct contribution to modern thought and *daʿwah*, however, is manifest through a review of modern religious and socio-political problems, as are his critique of *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* and the implications of their understanding for contemporary *daʿwah*, and his discussion of *daʿwah* through a broad perspective of modern Islamic reform. Al-Ghazali maintained a traditional viewpoint when examining problems of culture and society in light of the original sources in the Shariʿah, while remaining aware of the major areas of reform. Al-Ghazali did not, however, duplicate the works of Afghani, Abduh, or Rida, nor did he attempt to continue the work of the Muslim Brotherhood. His concern was to review and decontaminate understanding of the sources of Muslims' interpretation in order for Muslims to regain their position of leadership amongst humanity.

[III] Al-Ghazali's Contribution to Islamic Knowledge

a) Al-Ghazali's Scholarly Works[217]

Al-Ghazali's works are essentially geared to personal and cultural purification, fighting deceitful religiosity, the struggle for freedom and social justice, Muslim unity, women's role in society, scientific progress, Islamic awakening, the struggle against political despotism, and fighting backwardness. They also seek to preserve the purity of the religion and protect Islam against the forgeries of religious extremists, the myths of its foes, to refute the interpretations of religious extremists and the doubts raised

by adversaries. With the exception of his book *Maʿa Allāh: Dirāsah fī al-Daʿwah wa al-Duʿāt* (In the Company of God: A Study of *Daʿwah* and *Duʿāt*),[218] al-Ghazali's works are less interested in systematic or methodological analysis of modern issues. In fact al-Ghazali clearly points out that his works are not purely historical or academic, for they are only intended to rescue people and steer life; his endeavor was only to integrate religious and historical facts in a literary style geared to people's guidance.[219] Al-Ghazali's works, however, draw attention to a wide-ranging number of problems, challenges, internal failures, misconceptions and practices impeding the progress of *daʿwah* in modern societies. Al-Ghazali's keen interest in a broad-based *daʿwah* forced him to deal with diverse issues of belief, ethics, reform, politics, culture, history, and jurisprudence, and led him to approach various socio-cultural, religious, and political issues through the concerns of *daʿwah*.[220]

Al-Ghazali believed his works to reflect inspiring realities. They were meant to stimulate the consciousness residing in the hearts of believers, and to provide keys to various meanings invaluable to Muslims.[221] His writings concurrently respond to the intellectual and emotional needs of the individual and society.[222] His writings also provide both clear and ambiguous exposition of thoughts and emotions, affected mostly by passionate feelings and enthusiastic presentation.[223] They reflect both calmness and aggressiveness, tending to be vocative while avoiding technical academic terminology, uttering harsh words so damning as to cause anger and hurt. This probably fits with al-Ghazali's writing strategy, sometimes he wrote on *daʿwah* and Islamic culture and at other times on the struggle of *daʿwah* and strategies of social reform.[224] Al-Ghazali describes this strategy as follows: "In the process of writing, I split my thought and feelings into two; the first carefully detects Muslims' conditions whether manifest or hidden, while the second searches religious guidance to heal diseases and strengthen existence."[225]

b) Al-Ghazali's Professional and Intellectual Life

Soon after his graduation from Al-Azhar in 1943, al-Ghazali was appointed as a cleric (*imām*), a teacher (*mudarris*), and a preacher (*khaṭīb*) at the ᶜAzabān Mosque located in al-ᶜAtabah al-Khaḍrā', a relatively small but strategic area in the heart of Cairo.[226] In his "Interesting Discovery" al-Ghazali describes those moments as follows:

> It was just one month after my appointment as Imam that I realized I was ignorant. My knowledge was all used up in a period of just a few weeks. I realized that if I did not renew myself and draw on the sources of knowledge, I would ultimately face embarrassment. I was deceived by the number of talks I mastered earlier and delivered during my travels across the country. Now I was responsible for one pulpit visited by people from all walks of life, and I had to deliver daily lectures and weekly sermons.[227]

Al-Ghazali gradually rose in the administrative hierarchy of the Department of Islamic Propagation within the Ministry of Endowment in Egypt. He was appointed as a supervisor of mosques, as a preacher in Al-Azhar, as a Director of mosques and training, and finally a director of *daᶜwah* and *irshād*.[228] In July 18th 1971, Abd al-Aziz Kamil, the then minister of endowments and affairs at Al-Azhar, appointed him as an undersecretary at the ministry. In March 1981, Anwar al-Sadat, the Egyptian President (1970-1981), appointed him as an undersecretary of *daᶜwah* in the Ministry of Endowments.[229] Through writing, speeches, sermons, lectures, radio and television broadcasts, al-Ghazali is said to have left a manifest influence upon the minds of Muslims in Egypt and elsewhere.[230] During his tenure in the ministry of Endowments, al-Ghazali travelled extensively to various cities in Egypt to meet *daᶜwah* workers and to share with them the best ways to discharge their religious duties.[231] He worked closely with Sayyid Sabiq to improve the teaching and guidance of Imams and public attendance in mosques. They established non-profit societies for mosques that would help

Imams improve their performance,[232] supplied mosques with Islamic libraries, and recommended teaching literature for the Imams' weekly programs.[233] Despite resistance, al-Ghazali assured women's attendance in many mosques in Egypt.[234]

Al-Ghazali's typical day was busy. On Thursday afternoon he would leave home to give a lecture in Minya in the evening. He would then deliver the Friday sermon in Manfalut, and give a lecture in Asyut and another one in Suhaj after *ʿIshā'* prayer. The next day, al-Ghazali would arrive at work in Cairo before his work colleagues. Each day would be full of discussions with *duʿāt* and scholars from Al-Azhar and the ministry of Endowments. He was often visited by Tantawi, teachers from the faculty of *Uṣūl al-Dīn* and Arabic Language, ministers of endowments from Islamic and Arab countries, and *daʿwah* workers from all over the world.[235]

Al-Ghazali was assigned to lecture at the Mosque of ʿAmrū ibn al-ʿĀṣ. There, and through Friday sermons (*khuṭbahs*), he provided a series of sessions on a thematic commentary on the Qur'an, beginning with the first chapter of the Qur'an. However, his commentary on Surah *al-Nisā'*(The Women) coincided with a discussion on Islamic family laws taking place in the Egyptian parliament, giving the impression that he had selected those particular verses on purpose, that is, to reveal how the proposed laws violated the Qur'an. Al-Ghazali was consequently banned from giving Friday sermons.[236]

Al-Qaradawi's explanation suggests that al-Ghazali's lectures evolved into a distinct trend of thought, one that was enlightened and moderate. Al-Ghazali's lectures and publications contained sharp criticism of conditions in Egypt, and unveiled conspiracies against Islam and Muslim society, which did not please the Egyptian authorities. Al-Ghazali was warned but nevertheless chose to continue, and this led to a ban on his religious activities, and to his being blacklisted by the Egyptian Government in 1974.[237]

Following his suspension from delivering *khuṭbahs* in the ʿAmrū ibn al-ʿĀṣ Mosque, al-Ghazali obtained a position at King Abd al-Aziz University, Jeddah,[238] and later in Umm al-Qurā University, Makkah, Saudi Arabia.[239] There, he continued his *daʿwah* work through broadcast programs and newspapers, whilst also teaching and supervising graduate students, serving on various academic councils in Muslim universities and participating in *daʿwah* agencies.[240] In Qatar, for example, al-Ghazali most notably contributed to the development of the University of Qatar's Shariʿah Faculty, and to the dissemination of Islamic awareness through media, mosques, and associations.[241] In 1984, al-Ghazali was appointed as chairperson of the Academic Council of El-Emir AbdelKadir University in Constantine, Algeria. His lectures largely focused on a thematic commentary on the Qur'an. Al-Ghazali acted both as a guide and a juristconsult, and continually received visitors both in his office and at home. He participated in a weekly state television program, and delivered dozens of religious lectures and Friday sermons all over the country.[242] He regularly contributed to the conferences organized by the Council of Religious Affairs in Algeria.[243]

In 1989 and after five years in Algeria, al-Ghazali returned to Egypt. According to Alalwani, some of al-Ghazali's supporters and students believed he should return to Egypt either as a Rector (Shaykh) of Al-Azhar University or as a guide (*murshid*) of the Muslim Brotherhood. The rectorship proposal was declined on the pretext that Al-Azhar required someone strictly involved in academia, which was not the case with al-Ghazali.[244] Egyptian authorities believed that al-Ghazali had incited public protest in support of the Islamic Family Laws and had opposed a demonstration led by secularists in Cairo.[245] Besides, his rivals had also not forgotten his criticism of the government's mishandling of the war in 1967. These issues mitigated against the idea of offering him an appointment at Al-Azhar.[246] The proposal that he should lead the Muslim Brotherhood was also declined on the pretext that Abu Hamid Abu Nasr was older, and that al-

Ghazali had been imprisoned for a short period of time because of his attitude towards the opposition of Jamal Abd al-Nasir, and lastly that he had clashed with Hudaybi, leading finally to his dismissal in 1953.[247] With both these proposals declined, there was a third alternative – that of leading the International Institute of Islamic Thought in Cairo as a consultant and chair of its academic council there.[248] The Institute involved prominent thinkers such as Ahmad Kamal Abu al-Majd, Tariq Bishri, Muhammad Imarah, Muhammad Uthman Najati, Muhammad Salim al-Awwa, Jamal al-Din Atiyyah, Sayyid Dasuqi Hasan, Ali Jumᶜah, Abd al-Wahhab al-Masiri, and Zuhayrah Abidin.[249] Al-Ghazali participated in many of the Institute's conferences and research projects.[250]

During his final stay in Egypt, al-Ghazali undertook serious research work on the methodology of study of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, Muslim intellectual heritage, and contemporary Muslim problems. His efforts resulted in the publication of *Kayfa Natāᶜāmalu maᶜa al-Qur'ān?* (How to Approach the Qur'an?), *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah bayna Ahl al-Fiqh wa Ahl al-Ḥadīth* (The Sunnah of the Prophet between Jurists and *Muḥaddiths*), *Turāthunā al-Fikrī fī Mizān al-Sharᶜ wa al-ᶜAql* (Our Intellectual Legacy in the Perspective of the Shariᶜah and Reason), and *Naḥwa Tafsīr Mawḍūᶜī li Suwar al-Qur'ān* (A Thematic Commentary on the Qur'an). What characterised this period of time is that prior to publication al-Ghazali's ideas were discussed in both group sessions, seminars, and forums at the Institute.[251] They appear to have directly served the Institute's vision of Islamization concerning the need for a thorough examination of the methodology used to approach revelation as a source of knowledge, and for a review and analysis of Muslim traditions. Particularly in his *Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* (The Sunnah of the Prophet) al-Ghazali was remarkably deliberate about issues of juristic preferences and interpretation of traditions.

Throughout his academic career, however, al-Ghazali consistently maintained a keen interest in *daᶜwah*. He participated in

many international conferences and seminars, and supervised several graduate theses.[252] Al-Ghazali's *daʿwah* efforts were diverse. He wrote in the Muslim Brotherhood's weekly journal, *Majallat al-Mabāḥith*, of the Muslim Brotherhood after their release from prison in 1949, and contributed to the *Daʿwah Journal* founded by Salih al-Ashmawi, *Liwā' al-Islām* in Egypt, and *Majallat al-Ummah* in Qatar. He was also a regular writer for *Al-Shaʿb* newspaper in Egypt, and for *Al-Muslimūn* magazine in Saudi Arabia.[253] Al-Ghazali's televised and public lectures around the world exposed him to a wide Muslim audience. His attachment to Muslim universities particularly affected the Muslim elites. He mediated in international crises, including the release of Egyptian soldiers from Iran, and visited Muslims in Bosnia,[254] traveling also to Europe, North America, Africa, and Asia. Here, and elsewhere, he was regularly invited to attend conferences organized by Muslim youth.[255]

Any understanding of al-Ghazali's real contribution however cannot be complete without understanding the history of traditional and modern reform movements since the mid-19th century. Al-Ghazali's intellectual life can be analyzed with reference to two great conflicts in modern Islamic thought: one against literalism, superficiality and intellectual decline, and the other against traditionalism in defence of religious principles and faith against attempts at the westernization or even destruction of belief.[256] Within the context of these battles, al-Ghazali's *daʿwah* provides a religious perspective which addresses many aspects of Muslim intellectual, cultural, and socio-political life, and looks into the underlying causes of religious and social problems. For Abu-Rabi, al-Ghazali's contribution lies in the fact that throughout his intellectual career as a writer and a theorist, he used the tools of critical Islamic thinking to approach the issues of the time. Whether considering the Qur'an and the Sunnah, discussing the economic and social conditions of modern Muslims, critiquing inner stagnation and the weakness enveloping modern Muslim societies, proposing a sophisticated

philosophy of Muslim self-criticism, critiquing imperialism, or presenting his views on matters ranging from Islamic knowledge to the responsibilities of Muslim intellectuals in the contemporary age, al-Ghazali brought a rigorously intellectual style of analysis to the task. Al-Ghazali began his life as an ideologue of the Islamic movement in Egypt, and ended it a freelance Islamicist critic.[257]

Al-Ghazali's contribution, whether through the Muslim Brotherhood, Muslim universities, or in the Ministry of Endowment, was made on behalf of traditional Islam. His traditional approach, however, advocated new perspectives, supported modern changes, de-emphasized religious formalities, and criticized modern religious order. He critiqued Muslim life with all its ills and problems, and was attentive to the various proposals of how to develop new perspectives for change. And this explains al-Ghazali's popularity in *daʿwah*, that is his contribution was not purely traditional. Besides al-Ghazali was never disconnected from the social and political events occurring in the Muslim world, but rather, existed at the heart of the Islamic movement through continuous interaction with members and representatives of various religious societies in the field of *daʿwah*.

Al-Ghazali's contributions did not go unnoticed. Many Muslim governments, including those of Egypt, Mauritania, Qatar, Algeria, Pakistan, and Malaysia, honored him. The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia awarded him the King Faisal International Award for Distinguished Service of Islam in 1989. Al-Ghazali died in 1996, and was buried in the Muslim holy city of Madinah, Saudi Arabia.[258]

c) Conclusion

Al-Ghazali's life and works show him to have been a distinct scholar with an open yet critical mind, one who integrated traditional knowledge with modernity, and who developed a keen interest in *daʿwah*. His background and experience played an important role in preparing him to address the problems of

daʿwah and of *duʿāt* with reference to the revelatory sources of Islam, yet without losing sight of both the socio-economic and political implications of *daʿwah*. His extensive intellectual background and diverse experience also translated into the development of *daʿwah* concepts, studying cultural impediments to *daʿwah*, reviewing *daʿwah* legal implications, and critiquing contemporary *daʿwah* attempts by untrained, unprepared, mentally ill-equipped and narrow-minded *duʿāt*. More importantly, however, was the serious attention he gave to the question of *daʿwah*-based interest (*maṣlaḥat al-daʿwah*). He exercised a great deal of independent reasoning on this question, and received the most intense criticism from scholars and *duʿāt*.

Al-Ghazali translated his criticism of the *kuṭṭāb* into a condemnation of literal memorization, and of religious formalities and acts devoid of rational content or positive impact on the lives of the individual or society. Al-Ghazali's critique of religious literalism, and the serious attention he gave to the essence of acts instead of their forms and letters, deeply informed his analysis of *daʿwah* and his criticism largely shaped his approach to the goals, approach and methods of *daʿwah*. It also appears that he extended his critique of scholars, religious institutions, society and culture into his analysis of *daʿwah*. Al-Ghazali's multifaceted knowledge and education, background, and experience produced a fresh perspective on *daʿwah* in modern societies. His preoccupation with various aspects of reform, and his busy attention to a multitude of issues both at the local and international levels, affected his discussion of *daʿwah* in such a way that it appears broad, in many ways coming close to reform.

We must acknowledge however, that his critique of education and the various socio-economic and political problems of Muslim society all served to affect his examination of *daʿwah* and *duʿāt*. Al-Ghazali's discussion of *daʿwah* as illustrated in many of his works, instead of being narrowly focused, enriches our understanding of the many dimensions and perspectives of the subject.

The importance of al-Ghazali's understanding of society and culture, religion and *daʿwah* cannot be understated. His works depict the problems of society and culture, attempt to diagnose inherent weaknesses and failures, and highlight the responsibilities and challenges faced by *daʿwah*. His works also establish a logical relationship between the sacred and secular, religion and modernity, and religious and mundane life. His thought translated key ideas of contemporary Islamic reform, including the views of his teacher Hasan al-Banna, with regards to the comprehensive nature of Islam and the false dichotomy posited between the religious and mundane world. Yet, instead of speaking in broad religious terms, al-Ghazali chose to shift attention to a new fundamental relationship between *daʿwah* and life, hence putting the challenges of modernity at the center of his thesis on *daʿwah*.

IN HIS PASSIONATE devotion to the task of inviting others to Islam, Muhammad al-Ghazali (1917-1996) presented Muslims with a powerful critique of themselves, not only in their endemic failure to project Islam in the best, most reasoned light, but also in their betrayal of the Qur'an's spiritual principles and the highest standards set by the Prophet Muhammad.

This work analyzes al-Ghazali's critique of *duᶜāt* (those inviting to Islam) and the practice of *daᶜwah* work itself (the call to Islam). It also examines his methodology, various proposed solutions, and the juristic responses to his perspective. The evolution of al-Ghazali's thought and the people and factors influencing him are key elements of the study. It is hard to conceive where the state of discourse on *daᶜwah* and Islamic reform would be without al-Ghazali's outstanding contributions. The powerful stand he took on the importance of education, the significant weight he gave to a free society, his promotion of a decent standard of living for the poor, the qualities of moral and personal excellence he appealed for, and his compassionate, impassioned role as an educator, all these preserve al-Ghazali's reputation, both in his own lifetime and for many generations to come, as one of the twentieth century's most important Muslim intellectual thinkers and reformers. His legacy is founded on a lifetime of service.

BENAOUDA BENSAID *holds a Bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies (University of El-Emir AbdelKadir, Constantine, Algeria), a Master's degree in Islamic Revealed Knowledge (International Islamic University, Malaysia), and a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies (McGill University, Canada). He is currently associated with the College of Art and Science, Effat University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.*

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