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THE GRATITUDE OF MAN AND THE GRATITUDE OF GOD
 NOTES ON ŠUKR IN TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC THOUGHT

SUMMARY: The present essay is intended as a contribution to the study of gratitude or *šukr* within the Islamic tradition, beginning with the Koranic use of the root *škr* (and more particularly its derivative *šakūr*), examining its explicit implications for early lexicography (Ibn Manzūr), noting the presence of these implications in traditional thought (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā and al-Ḥarā'itī) and proposing some comparisons with theological speculation (Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī and Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya). In the light of the sources consulted, gratitude emerges as a crucial ingredient of faith, a cornerstone of a conscientious Islamic ethic, and not least an important linking element between the divine practice and the duties of man, both in terms of the harmony between man's thankfulness to God and God's satisfaction with the believer, and in terms of the close connection between the gratitude owed to God and that owed to a brother benefactor. Finally, man is seen as a creature endowed with an awareness whose highest vocation is, precisely, gratitude.

Premise

In accordance with numerous Koranic dicta repeatedly confirmed by the Traditional literature, the absolute otherness of divine status with respect to the position of man is a fundamental assumption of Islamic doctrine: if God is the one Creator, every man is one of His creatures among many; if God is King (*malik*) or Master (*mālik*), man is ineluctably His servant and His property. It is none the less maintained, within the canonical literature, that an aspect of the divine being or activity entails involvement with certain attitudes or capacities of man, and this is something that strikes one immediately when perusing the “Beautiful Names”. Some are obviously prerogatives of God, but others, and they are numerous, are open to an anthropological application, and indicate equivalent virtues of the faithful believer, established practices

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or qualities by means of which he can act righteously. Sometimes indeed they specify a condition necessary to the Muslim as in the case of the Name *mu'min* (cfr. *īmān*, “faith”), or his obligations under the law, as with *šahīd* (cfr. *šahāda*, “Witness to faith”). These are the “shared” (*muštaraka*) or “equivocal” (*mutašābiha*) Names that are the object of the meditations of al–Ġazālī (d. 555/1111) in his *Al–maqṣad al–asnā*, a work dedicated precisely to the significance of the Names: for all of their immersion in difference (*iḥtilāf*), the divine Names lend themselves to analogical reasoning (*qiyās*)¹. They suggest therefore an area of intersection between the divine and the human spheres, encapsulating a common tension, and providing finally the basis of a religious ethic.

1. Šakūr, *Name of God, name of the virtuous man*

Among the Most Beautiful Names of God we find *šakūr*, an intensive form, thus meaning “The Exceedingly Grateful” or “The Most Thankful”, which is included in all the principal lists² and traces back to the Book itself where it makes its appearance from the late Meccan period onwards. The name is cited in the Creator’s sura (35,34) and in the Consultation (42,23) and Mutual Disillusion (64,17) suras; in the first two cases God’s “gratitude” (*šukr*) is comparable to His indulgence, *mağfira* or *ğafır* (in the expression *šakūr ġafūr*)³, in the third to His leniency or gentleness, *ḥilm* (cfr. *šakūr ḥalīm*). At the same time, *šakūr* is an attribute of Noah in the Journey by Night sura (cfr. ‘*abd šakūr*, 17,3) and is used generally to describe the pious believer in the Abraham (14,5), Luqmān (31,31), and Sheba (34,19) suras and, again, in the Consultation sura (42,33). In all four of these last cases, a proper attention to *šukr* goes hand in hand with the constancy or resolution of the Muslim, that is *ṣabr* (cfr. *ṣabbār šakūr*).

Some writers include among the Names *šākir*⁴, “The Grateful” or “The Thankful”, this too present in the Koran, and over the whole chronological arc of the Revelation. This epithet is also applied to the believer in the suras of The Honey Bees (16,121) and The Human (76,3)⁵; as applied to God, it appears in The Cow (2,158) and The Women (4,147) suras, where it is accompanied by the Name ‘*alīm*, thus approximating Gratitude and Wisdom. Its recurrence in The Women sura is particularly significant, in that here the gratitude of God is correlated with the gratitude of man:

¹ Cfr. Abū Ḥāmid al–Ġhazālī, *Al–Maqṣad al–Asnā fī Sharḥi Asmā’ Allāh al–Ḥusnā*, Arabic Text, edited with Introduction by Fadlou A. Shehadi, Dār el–Mashreq, Beirut 1971, particularly pp. 47–59.

² In the al–Tirmidī list, on the authority of Abū Hurayra it appears in 36th place (cfr. *Maqṣad*, p. 63); in Ibn Māğā at 42nd; in al–Ḥākim al–Nisābūrī, after Abū Hurayra from Ibn Sīrīn, at 31st.

³ On the subject of the possible coincidence of a Name with a virtue of the believer’s, *ḥilm* is applied in the Koran, as well as to God, also to Abraham and Šu‘ayb (cfr. 11,75 & 87) and again to that son of Abraham’s whom he was so ready to offer in sacrifice (37,101); with regard to the Muslim *ṣabr*, it applies in its most sublime form to God, *al–ṣabūr* being in fact His penultimate Name.

⁴ Like al–Ḥākim al–Nisābūrī who puts it in 87th place.

⁵ To which should be added the instances of the plural form *šākirīn*, as referring to mankind, in 3,144 & 145; 6,53 & 63; 7,17,144 & 189; 10,22; 39,66.

“Why would God persecute you if you are grateful to Him (*šakartum*) and believe in Him? God is grateful and wise (*šākir ‘alīm*)⁶”.

The entry which the mediaeval scholar Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1312–3) dedicates to the root *škr* in his dictionary entitled *Lisān al-‘arab (The Language of the Arabs)*⁷, is a useful basis for discussion both for the clarity of its explication and because he lists, as throughout the work, the most important occurrences in the canonical Islamic literature. It will be worthwhile therefore to review the main lines of his exposition.

In his opening lines the author defines *šukr* – with its synonym *šukūr* – broadly as “recognition (*‘irfān*) and open appreciation (*našr*) of the benefit received”. It is gratitude therefore but with a declarative and divulgative overlay, with a sense also of the physical and tangible, given that, as Ibn Manẓūr observes, “it must necessarily come from the hand (*lā yakūnu illā ‘an al-yad*)”, as against praise or *ḥamd* that “comes from the hand or otherwise”⁸ in the obvious sense that it must be first of all verbal⁹.

The primary application is the gratitude of man towards God. Ibn Manẓūr writes that the *šakūr* man is one in whom *šukr* abounds, and immediately cites the Koranic example of Noah, the “very grateful” (cfr. 17,3) servant saved from the Flood as a reward (cfr. *ağr* in 26,109)¹⁰ for his vain remonstrations to his people. The *Lisān* continues with a reference to the Sunna. Seeing that the Prophet was assiduous in his devotions (*‘ibāda*), they asked him: “You do this even though God has already

⁶ On the question of divine and human *šukr*, cfr. A. Giese, “*Shukr*, 1. As a religious and mystical concept”, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., IX, pp. 515–517, expressly constructed around the doctrines of al-Ġazālī, from, in his turn, well-known Sufi *compendia* (al-Qušayrī e al-Makkī); A.K. Reinhart, “*Shukr*, 2. As a factor in public life and in the principles of law”, *ibid.*, p. 517, dedicated also to *šukr al-mun‘im* or “gratitude toward the benefactor”, as a principle of Islamic law; L. Sanneh, “Gratitude and Ingratitude”, in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur‘ān*, this also dedicated in part to al-Ġazālī, Brill, Leiden–Boston II (2002), pp. 370–373; more general is M. Ayoub, “Thanksgiving and Praise in the Qur‘ān and in Muslim Piety”, in *ISCH* 15 (1989) 1–10. A particular perspective can be found in R. Tottoli, “The Thanksgiving Prostration (*sujūd al-šukr*) in Muslim Traditions”, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61,2 (1998) 309–313. For a recent Islamic spiritual approach see the entry on gratitude in M. Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism, 1. Emerald Hills of the Heart*, Somerset (New Jersey) 2006 (1998, or. Turkish edn 1994), pp. 94–97.

⁷ Consulted in the Dār al-ma‘ārif edition, Beirut 2010 (6 vols.); cfr. IV, pp. 2305–2308.

⁸ Identical al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790), *Tāğ al-‘arūs*, Dār al-hidāya, Riad n.d. (40 vols.), XII, p. 224.

⁹ *Lisān*, p. 2305. A view that Ibn Manẓūr derives from the older Ṭa‘lab (m. 291/904) author of *Kitāb al-faṣṭḥ*, against other grammarians persuaded of the absolute synonymy of the two terms. The greater reach of *ḥamd* is demonstrated in the prophetic saying: “Praise stands above gratitude (*al-ḥamd ra’s al-šukr*), a servant who does not praise God is not grateful to him (*mā šakara Allāh ‘abd lā yahmadu-hu*)” because – as Ibn Manẓūr explains – contained in praise are the manifested admission (*iḥār*) and the celebration (*išāda*) of the grace received. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 987, s.v. *ḥamd*. He none the less concedes that *ḥamd* and *šukr* are closely associated (*mutaqāribāni*) and notes that *ḥamīd* too is a divine Name. Cfr. *Tāğ*: “*Šukr* concerns the members of the body, *ḥamd* concerns the tongue”, p. 226.

¹⁰ On the concrete and even pecuniary aspect of reward as *ağr*, cfr. *Lisān*, I, p. 31 (“*Al-ağr al-ğazā’ alā al-‘amal*”) and, similarly, al-Fayrūz‘ābādī (m. 817/1415), *Al-qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, Mu’assasat al-risāla, 6th ed. Cairo 1419/1998, p. 342.

pardoned your past and future sins?” “Well, then,” he replied – peace and blessings be upon him – how should I not be His most grateful (*šakūr*) servant?!”. It is a very well-known saying, transmitted in a wide variety of forms (largely on the authority of al–Muğīra ibn Šu‘ba), which generally emphasise the physical mortification to which Mohammed subjected himself during his prayers and affirm the efficacy of a physical element in the demonstration of human gratitude to the Lord¹¹.

Ibn Manzūr goes on to illustrate the head–word *šakūr* as referring to God¹², when it is, that is to say, his *šifa* or “description”: he refers to the Creator sura where it recites that “God will pay them what is owed to them (*uğūra–hum*) and will multiply His grace (*ni‘ma*) upon them [...] (35,30)” when explaining that every small action of the servant grows and prospers with the Creator, who repays it in increased measure, and more specifically that God’s *šukr* for man is manifested in the remission of sins (*mağfira*), an ample remission because *šakūr* is the intensive form, while man’s *šukr* operates “through his devotional acts (*tā‘āt*), through the fulfilment of his duties of service (*‘ibādāt*)”. Appositely he cites the Koranic example of the Family of David, whom God exhorted to act on His behalf as a concrete demonstration of gratitude (cfr. *a‘malū [...] šukran*), and who rather than responding fully, responded only in a limited degree to that exhortation (cfr. *qalīl min ‘ibādī al–šakūr*, 34,13). At this point the author of the *Lisān* turns his attention back to the difference between *šukr*, “gratitude”, and *ḥamd*, “praise”, observing that *ḥamd* is more ample and inclusive than *šukr*, because one says that someone is worthy of *ḥamd* both for his good qualities (*šifāt ḡamīla*) and his good deeds (*ma‘rūf*), whereas one calls someone worthy of *šukr* for his good deeds alone. Furthermore – he elucidates – *šukr* signifies the returning of the benefit received (*muqābalat al–ni‘ma*) with words, actions and intentions – the component elements of *‘ibādāt* – as well as singing the praises (*tanā‘*) of the originator of the good deed (*mun‘im*) and doing one’s utmost to act in obedience to him (*tā‘a*). And thus, once again, he places *šukr* in the area of praxis¹³.

2. Šukr, practice of God, duty of man

What Ibn Manzūr has been explicating thus far is that the *šukr* of man towards God is a material expression of gratitude – “acting for God”, *‘amal li–llāh*, “gratifies”

¹¹ Cfr. al–Bukhārī, *Šaḥīḥ, kitāb tafsīr al–Qur‘ān, tafsīr sūrat al–Fath*, No. 4486; similarly from ‘Ā‘iša, *ibid.*, No. 4487; concerning the physical character of human *šukr*, *kitāb al–ḡum‘a*, No. 1069, again from al–Muğīra: “The Prophet stood praying until his feet or legs swelled up. They pointed this out to him and asked him [...]”; *kitāb al–rifāq*, No. 6019, from the same witness: “The Prophet prayed until his feet puffed and swelled up; they asked him [...]”. Cfr. Muslim, *Šaḥīḥ, kitāb šifāt al–qiyāma*, No. 5051 and 5052; Ibn Māḡa, *Sunan, kitāb iqāmat al–šalāt*, No. 1409.

¹² The author is silent however on the Name *šākir*.

¹³ *Lisān, ibid.*, *Tāḡ* differs, cfr. again p. 226; it distinguishes *šukr* of the heart, of the tongue and of members of the body: the first is to submit and subject oneself, (*ḥudū‘ wa istikāna*), the second to praise and acknowledge openly (*tanā‘ wa i‘tirāf*), the third to perform acts of obedience and subordination (*tā‘a wa inqiyād*).

more than mere gratitude – following the receipt of a benefit. But he has also indirectly indicated the pragmatic potency of the *šukr* originating from God, in so far as he has cited Noah who received from God a concrete reward (*ağr*). The material aspect of gratitude, either God's or man's, is something to which the author of the *Lisān* will return in a succeeding passage¹⁴, where he writes that *šukr* derives from the expression *šakarāt al-ibil*, applied to “camels that fatten at pasture”, and that a *šakira* or *miškār* is a dairy animal that, given good pasturage, produces milk in abundance, more copiously than before, while *šakūr* – the divine Name, the epithet of the pious believer – is precisely the term applied to the quadruped that makes do with little pasturage, and indeed fattens on that little, as if it were giving thanks even though the benefit it receives is small; its gratitude manifests itself in its growth (cfr. *zuhūr al-namā'*), in its profitable assimilation of even the poor pasture¹⁵.

An example of lively physicality, given that gratitude is made explicit in actual feeding. At the same time it deals with scarcity repaid with abundance, thereby affirming that a necessary ingredient of *šukr* is addition, that is the increase (*ziyāda*) or multiplication (*muḍā'afa*) of the given amount. Ibn Manzūr knows well that this is – with all due respect to the religious culture in question – the characteristic *par excellence* of God's gratitude, who “increases” (*yazīdu*, cfr. 17,4) and “redoubles” (*yudā'ifu*), in this world and the next, “he redoubles His grace to whom He wills” as The Cow sura has it (2,261), “if there is any good done, He doubles it, and gives from His own grace a great reward” as in the sura of The Women (4,40)¹⁶. Thus, the definition of *šukr* is completed: it is a concrete expression of gratitude, a gift offered in response to a gift received; and it is an augmentary response, an increased return¹⁷.

It is precisely this increase – limitless in the case of God, limited in that of man – that is the basis of the comments of al-Ġazālī on the Name *šakūr* in the work mentioned above: it means that God “recompenses by many degrees the small acts of obedience (*tā'āt*) and rewards the works (*'amal*) of all man's days with an infinite beatitude in the life to come”. “One says that a man has shown gratitude for a good deed where he answers it with a doubly meritorious deed – al-Ġazālī writes – [...] and if we reflect on the increase (*ziyāda*) in the amount in question, then the only Absolutely Grateful One (*šakūr muṭlaq*) is God; in fact, that which he adds is without limit or restriction, because there is nothing beyond the beatitude of paradise”¹⁸.

¹⁴ *Lisān*, pp. 2305–2306.

¹⁵ One says *aškara šukran* of those quadrupeds that fatten and whose udders fill with milk; or that grass is *maškara* when it is good pasture for dairy animals; or that *zamān al-šakira* is when the dairy animal celebrates the spring; or that the sky *istaškara* when it rains plentifully and the effect on nature is abundance... Cfr. *Lisān*, p. 2036. *Tāğ* is less expansive on this question, cfr. p. 227.

¹⁶ Cfr. also 2,245; 30,39; 57,11.

¹⁷ Inescapable the consideration that if all the benefits, succeeding one another, must necessarily be followed by greater benefits, the concept of *šukr* is an extremely happy one, in so far as it leads to a continual expansion of good things.

¹⁸ *Maqṣad*, p. 114.

Given that *šukr*, as we have seen, has also a declarative component and can signify “praise” (*tanā*’), the Name *šakūr* must also imply God’s praise of the meritorious. And on this point al-Ġazālī’s commentary makes clear the intersection between the divine and the human inherent in some of the Most Beautiful Names, not to say a certain circularity of meaning. The great theologian notes that God’s praise, although directed at the actions of His servants, is none the less returned on Himself, because the human actions are created by Him, while the praise of men for a benefit received can only be directed outwards. And in effect man’s *šukr* towards God also derives from Himself, for he is the Only One to sanction it; it is an ulterior grace (*ni‘ma uḥrā*) in addition to the original grace for which man is expressing gratitude. Man’s praise of God is inadequate – the author continues – because it eludes the capacity of His creatures; and it is inferior to works of obedience (*tā‘āt*). Al-Ġazālī concludes that the highest expression of gratitude to the Lord is to act in obedience to Him¹⁹.

Similar in import are the reflections of the Ḥanbalite scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya (d. 751/1350) in his work *The Equipment of the Patient, the Provisions of the Grateful* (*‘Uddat al-šābirīn wa daḥīrat al-šākirīn*)²⁰. This writer too, though dwelling, as the title of his book suggests, on the means and substance of human *šukr*²¹ does not neglect to place this alongside the *šukr* of God²² and he too points to the conjunctions or interconnections underlying the two forms. Referring to the already cited The Women sura – “[...] if you are grateful to him (*šakartum*) [...] God is grateful (*šākir*) [...] (4,147) – and to the Night Journey sura – “those who [...] strive zealously [...], God appreciates their efforts (*maškur*)” (17,19), – Ibn Qayyim uses a similar vocabulary to direct the reader’s attention to God’s pairing the two kinds of *šukr*, and he teaches that God too is grateful to the obedient servant, as the servant is to Him, for all that His gratitude is of a different order. Like al-Ġazālī, Ibn Qayyim notes that God more than any other deserves to be called “The Grateful”: He is “in all truth The Grateful One (*al-šakūr ‘alā al-ḥaqīqa*)” because “He returns what is offered Him in gratitude (*mā yuškaru lahu*) [...] and repays a good deed with a deed ten times greater”. Consequently, “the creature that He loves (*yuhibbu*) most is the one marked out by its gratitude”: “God is Beautiful and loves beauty²³, and Wise and loves the wise, and Merciful and loves the merciful, and Grateful and loves those who are grateful [...]”²⁴.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²⁰ Dār al-turāt, Medina, 3rd ed., 1409/1989 (note that the so-called ‘abbreviated translation’ by Nasiruddin al-Khattab, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Patience and Gratitude*, “Towards Islamic Psychology”, part 1, Ta-Ha Publishers, London 1997, retains little of the original in the section on gratitude). For a contextualisation of this work, and on the Hanbalite scholar generally, I suggest the voluminous collection of essays edited by C. Bori and L. Holzman, *A Scholar in the Shadow. Essays in the Legal and Theological Thought of Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah*, monograph number of *Oriente Moderno*, 90/1 (2010).

²¹ Cfr. for example the entirety of ch. XX, devoted to the contested pre-eminence of gratitude or patience, the one over the other, pp. 111–147.

²² *Ibid.*, 280–283 (within ch. XXVI).

²³ Thus far the well-known saying of the Prophet.

²⁴ *‘Uddat al-šābirīn*, pp. 282–283.

3. Lā yaškuru Allāh man lā yaškuru al-nās

In the course of his meditations on the Name *šakūr*, al-Ġazālī²⁵ referred to a prophetic saying handed down by several Companions, included in the *Adab al-mufrad* of al-Buḥārī²⁶ and frequently repeated in the subsequent literature: *lā yaškuru Allāh man lā yaškuru al-nās*. And since this saying is open to a certain ambiguity of interpretation, it will be useful to go back to Ibn Manẓūr who discusses its syntax and on that basis its meaning. The ambiguity – the author of the *Lisān* explains – lies in the different endings of Allāh in the citation: if the Name is in the nominative (*Allāhu*), as subject of the phrase, it means that God does not welcome (*lā yaqbalu*) the gratitude offered Him by man for benefits emanating from Himself, if the man is not also grateful for the benefits he receives from others and refuses (*yakfuru*) to acknowledge them; “and this by virtue of the interconnection (*ittiṣāl*) between the two things”²⁷. If, on the other hand, the Name should be read in the accusative (*Allāha*), the saying is to be explained differently: “Whoever has such nature and habits (*ṭab‘, ‘āda*) as to deny (*kufrān*) a benefit received from others and to fail in his gratitude to them, such a man will also have the habit of denying a benefit received from God (*kufr ni‘mat Allāh*) and fail in his gratitude to Him²⁸; “it is as if to say: he who does not love (*yuḥibbu*) me, does not love you, love (*maḥabba*) for you is connected (*maqrūna*) to love for me”²⁹.

The difference between the two readings is not trivial. In the one case – where God is not grateful to the man who is ungrateful to his brother – the divine *šukr* is questionably subordinated to that between creatures, with an anthropocentricity that should be especially anomalous in the Islamic context; while in the other case, where the man who is not grateful to his brother will no more be grateful to God – the *šukr* is entirely earthbound and the gratitude of the Creator is left out of the equation. However that may be, the important lesson here is that, in between the creases of the language and the grammatical subtleties of the prophetic saying in question, the operation of gratitude is understood to be an important linking element between the procedures of the Creator and the works owed by His creatures to Him and for Him: *šukr* is a connective, quite possibly continuous, process, a highpoint of contiguity and, we might add, of reciprocal love (cfr. the repeated occurrence of the root *ḥbb*).

²⁵ Cfr. *Maqṣad*, p. 115.

²⁶ *Dār al-bašā’ir al-islāmiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Fu’ād al-Bāqī, 3rd ed., Beirut 1409/1989, p. 85 (*bāb man lā yaškuru al-nās*). Cfr. also Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan, kitāb al-adab, bāb šukr al-ma’rūf*, No. 4180, from Abū Hurayra.

²⁷ A similar interconnection is evident in another celebrated saying: *man lā yarḥamu lā yurḥamu* (“he who has no compassion will find no compassion”), also handed down in the slightly more extended version *lā yarḥamu Allāh man lā yarḥamu al-nās*, cfr. *Maqṣad*, pp. 47–48, after Abū Sa’īd. Both versions would present the same ambiguity, were it not for the absurdity of the result (human compassion for God).

²⁸ The saying, normally understood in this sense, constitutes a “moral incentive” to the thanking of others. On its contemporary relevance, cfr. M. Piamenta, *The Muslim Conception of God and Human Welfare. As Reflected in Everyday Arabic Speech*, Brill, Leiden 1983, p. 20.

²⁹ *Lisān*, p. 2305.

Remaining for the moment with Ibn Manzūr, the religious dignity of the *šukr* together with the felicity of its content is finally and more than ever reflected in the *a contrario* definition that the author also offers, which follows on logically from the preceding argument. He writes that “gratitude is the opposite of ingratitude” or “of negation / impiety” (*al-šukrān ḥilāf al-kufrān*)³⁰; from which he derives the lesson that *šukr* is synonymous with Islam³¹. This gloss has become a commonplace. It mirrors the similar contrasting of *šukr* e *kufr* (or *kufrān*) that occurs several times in the Koran³² and recalls an amplified version of the prophetic saying we have just analysed – *lā yaškuru Allāh man lā yaškuru al-nās* – which states: “To speak of benefits received means to be grateful (*šukr*), and to pass over them in silence signifies impiety (*kufr*), he who is not grateful for little is not grateful for much, and he who is not grateful to others is not grateful to God, the whole is benediction (*al-ḡamā‘a raḥma*) while the fraction is punishment (*al-firqa ‘aḍāb*)”. This extended maxim is reported many times over in Ibn Ḥanbal’s (d. 241/855) *Musnad* and repeated by many others, in whole or in part. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 281/894) of Baghdad, for example, an author both precocious and copious in the field of moral conduct³³, cites it in its entirety in a pamphlet entitled *Gratitude towards God (Al-šukr li-llāh)*³⁴. And it is again rehearsed some decades later by Abū Bakr al-Ḥarā’iṭī (d. 326/939–40) in a somewhat similar work to the last, *The Excellence of Gratitude to God for His Favours (Faḍīlat al-šukr li-llāh ‘alā ni‘ami-hi)*³⁵. These two works are the best known classic Islamic texts on this subject together with al-Ġazālī’s *Book of Patience and Gratitude (Kitāb al-ṣabr wa l-šukr)*³⁶ and the previously cited *The Equipment of the Patient, the Provisions of the Grateful* by Ibn Qayyim.

³⁰ *Lisān, ibid.*

³¹ In the sense, that is, of returning to God his due (cfr. the etymological relationship between *dīn*, “religion” and *dayn* “debt”). Impiety is its opposite, “the denial of what is rightfully owed to God”, cfr. Sanneh, *Gratitude and Ingratitude*, p. 370.

³² For example in the Ant sura where it is said: “He who is grateful (*man šakara*) gains advantage by it, and he who is ungrateful (or “unbelieving”, *man kafara*) can cause no damage to the Lord [...]”, 27,40).

³³ As L.T. Librande points out in “Ibn Abī al-Dunyā. Certainty and Morality”, in *Studia Islamica* 100/101 (2005) 5–42 (this work deals with *Kitāb al-yaqīn*).

³⁴ Ed. Muḥammad Basyūnī Zaġlūl, *Mu‘assasat al-kutub al-ṭaqāfiyya*, 1st ed., Beirut 1413/1994, p. 31 (No. 63), after Nu‘mān ibn Bašīr. This text is briefly considered by A.K. Reinhart in a study entitled *Before Revelation. The Boundaries of Muslim Moral Thought*, State University of New York Press 1995 (see p. 119) which however, on the subject of *šukr*, focuses particularly on the discussion of *šukr al-mun‘im* between the dialectical theologians (al-Ġuwaynī, al-Ġazālī and al-Shahrastānī, cfr. pp. 106–120).

³⁵ Full title: *Faḍīlat al-šukr li-llāh ‘alā ni‘ami-hi wa mā yaġibu min al-šukr li-al-mun‘im ‘alay-hi wa mā fī ḍālika min al-tawāb*, ed. Muḥammad Muṭī‘ al-Ḥāfiẓ, Dār al-fīkr, Damascus 1402/1982. Cfr. Reinhart again, once more in *Before Revelation*, pp. 118–119.

³⁶ This is ch. XXXII of *Iḥyā’*; we refer to the recent translation with introduction and full critical apparatus: H.T. Littlejohn, *Al-Ġhazālī on Patience and Thankfulness. Kitāb al-ṣabr wa l-shukr – Book XXXII – of The Revival of the Religious Sciences. Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, The Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge (UK) 2010. The chapter is divided into two parts, and the second part, which is that dealing with gratitude, is itself divided into three sections: 1. on the essence of *šukr* (pp. 63–118), 2. on its application (pp. 119–

There are however some obvious differences. The works of al-Ġazālī and Ibn Qayyim are both dedicated to gratitude and patience, following various passages of the Koran and the prophetic saying “Patience is half of faith (*īmān*), gratitude is half of faith, certainty (*yaqīn*) is faith in its wholeness”³⁷, and their content is discursive if based on the canon. In contrast Ibn Abī al-Dunyā’s *Gratitude towards God* and al-Ḥarā’iṭī’s *The Excellence of Gratitude to God for His Favours* focus substantially on *ṣukr* alone, and their content is entirely traditional. In both cases, human gratitude toward God is exemplified through prophetic sayings backed up on occasion by Koranic citations, anecdotes or poetic verses whose protagonists are pre-Islamic messengers, scholars and holy men from the earliest Islamic period and others whose example has ensured their remembrance. As the whole of their material is simply juxtaposed and lacking any commentary³⁸ both these brief works are essentially authorial selections, anthologies compiled without claim to rigorous criteria. They are none the less useful in that they represent the oldest traditional writings on the theme of gratitude.

4. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā and gratitude towards God

In reading Ibn Abī al-Dunyā’s work – as indeed that of al-Ḥarā’iṭī – one notes straight away that the superimposition of the human over the divine *ṣukr* is avoided and the unilaterality of gratitude is a given³⁹; when speaking of God the term *ṣukr* or gratitude is never in fact used but rather *ni‘ma*, “grace” or “gift”, and *ni‘am*, “favours”. On the other hand the author has no intention of entering into theological debate concerning the Names – with regard to their relationship to the essence of God or any possible resemblance to human virtues – which was by no means alien to his Baghdad contemporaries. His scope is simply to instruct on the modalities and substance of good conduct, here as elsewhere: in the context of our lived life, what is *ṣukr*? What are its instances and timings? How can we be sure of requiting God with what is due to Him?

What *ṣukr* means in practice is easily said. It is to praise God, declaring “al-

188), 3. the relationship between patience and gratitude (pp. 189–224). On the threefold division of *ṣukr* into recognition or *ilm*, “[optimum] state” or *ḥāl*, and action or *amal* proposed elsewhere by al-Ġazālī cfr. also Giese, “Shukr”, p. 516.

³⁷ Also recorded by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Al-ṣukr*, 30 (No. 57) from al-Muġīra. Cfr. for example al-Ṭabarī, *Ġāmi‘ al-bayān*, 30 vols., Beirut 1412/1992 (facsimile repr. of 1st ed. 1323h), vol. XXII, p. 53 (comm. on Kor. 31,31).

³⁸ For Ibn Abī al-Dunyā this is normal practice; cfr. J.A. Bellamy, “The Makārim al-Akhlāq by Ibn Abī ‘l-Dunyā (A Preliminary Study)”, in *The Muslim World* 53 (1963) 106–119, where the author points to *Makārim al-aḥlāq* (devoted to the virtues, among the first Arab works on the subject, ed. Maġdī Faṭḥ al-Sayyid Ibrāhīm, Maktabat al-Sā‘ī, Būlāq n.d.) as an exception to the rule.

³⁹ With the exception, perhaps, of one ambiguous case. God advises Moses: “Remember me constantly so that you will be worthy of gratitude (*ḥattā tastawġiba al-ṣukr*) and make complete the increase [of grace] (*wa tastakmila al-mazīd*)”, *Al-ṣukr*, p. 64 (No. 161).

*ḥamdu li-llāh*⁴⁰ continually⁴¹, above all for the coming of the Prophet and of Islam, since, as the Umayyad scholar ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (d. 86/705) affirms, no speech of gratitude is sweeter or more eloquent than “praise be to God for having favoured us and guided us on the way of Religion”⁴². To the question “for what should we be grateful”, the reply is broad, absolute even, because everything is a grace, food and drink⁴³, new clothes⁴⁴, the body that has been given to man, the eyes⁴⁵, the tongue⁴⁶, the face⁴⁷, his very breath⁴⁸. Gratitude is due also for the capacity for being grateful. As the gnomic poet Maḥmūd al-Warrāq (d. ca. 225/840) sings, “if my gratitude for God’s grace is a grace (*ni‘ma*) in its turn, for such a grace I must be again grateful. / In the succession of days, over the length of life, gratitude is reached only by His favour (*illā bi-fadli-hi*)”⁴⁹. When Moses asks God what is the best gratitude, God answers: “To be grateful on every occasion (*‘alā kull ḥāl*)”⁵⁰, and indeed one should express one’s gratitude to God for the whole of one’s life, for every gift, for every moment, happy or unhappy. To understand this, “look at those who are worse off (*man huwa taḥta-hu*), not those who are better off (*man huwa fawqa-hu*)”, as the Prophet advises⁵¹. In fact, wise is the man who does not know (*lā yadrī*) if grace lies in what goes well for him or in what does not go ill⁵².

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42 (No. 102–104).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24 (No. 39) from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Salām: Moses asks the Lord what form of gratitude is most pleasing to Him. He answers: “That your tongue never cease from remembering Me”. Cfr. p. 21 (No. 33).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 13 (No. 10, cfr. No. 9), from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī: The Prophet – may God pray for him and give him peace – heard a man saying: “Praise be to God for Islam”. “You are grateful for an immense favour” (*ni‘ma ‘aẓīma*), – he observed. Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 23 (No. 38, from Abū Ṭalḥa): The Prophet met a man who greeted him. “How are you?” – the Prophet asked him. He replied: “To you I praise God and to God I praise you”. And the Prophet prayed for him [...]; cfr. also p. 63 (No. 158).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 15 (No. 15) from Abū Hurayra; cfr. pp. 33–34 (No. 69–72), 66–67 (No. 166–167) e 78 (No. 203, referring to Noah and his epithet *‘abd ṣakūr* in *Kor.* 17.3).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26 (No. 48), 34–35 (No. 74–75), 97–98 (No. 40–41).

⁴⁵ Cfr. *Kor.* 16.78: “God had you come forth helpless and ignorant from the belly of your mother and gave you hearing and gave you sight and a heart so that one day you would be able to thank Him”.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42 (No. 100–101).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60 (No. 146) from Anas ibn Mālik: “When the Prophet looked at himself in the mirror he said: Praise be to God that he made me regular and well-proportioned (*sawā-nī*, *‘addala-nī*), that he made my face noble and handsome [...]”; similarly p. 69 (No. 173).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51 (No. 117) from Abū Ayyūb al-Quraṣī: “David asked: Lord what is the smallest gift that you have given me? And He said: Breathe! He breathed, and He said: That is the smallest gift I have given you”.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36 (No. 82), cfr. p. 49 (No. 110).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60 (No. 147).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39 (No. 90) from Abū Hurayra; cfr. p. 77 (No. 200). Cfr. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, *kitāb musnad al-anṣār*, No. 20908, from Abū Ḍarr al-Ġifārī.

⁵² Tending in the same direction is the observation of one of the very earliest believers, Ṣāliḥ ibn Mismār (d. ante 50h), *ibid.*, pp. 76–77 (No. 199); cfr. p. 73 (No. 190).

In Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's book there also appear occasional references to patience or *ṣabr*. This is obvious and inevitable because, quite simply, the duet of patience and gratitude is required of all the faithful, whatever their creed, by the vicissitudes of life. As far as Islam is concerned, a prophetic saying recorded in *Gratitude towards God* summarises in a nutshell the ethics of virtue in this religion: "He who is afflicted must show patience, he who receives a gift must show gratitude, he who suffers a wrong must forgive and he who commits a wrong must ask forgiveness"⁵³. If patience is necessary, gratitude is no less so for he who would avoid ruin: "God gives His grace to whom He will, and he who is ungrateful He condemns to chastisement", as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728)⁵⁴ put it. Grace therefore should be chained or shackled (cfr. *qayyada*) with the instrument of gratitude, as another Umayyad caliph, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 101/720), posited⁵⁵. The suppleness of *ṣukr* is not in question, nor its apotropaic efficacy.

Turning now to the distinction between the behaviour of God and that of man in Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's material, we find it is most clearly in the many stories illustrating the immeasurability of divine grace; the following exclamation of the prophet David, an important Koranic example of thankfulness (cfr. 7,144), is a relevant instance: "My God, if every hair of my head had two tongues, and each tongue night and day were to sing your praises, I could not repay a single one of Your favours (*ni'am*)"⁵⁶. But the lesson, to be read between the lines of this sylloge, is that the believer should not be discouraged by the impossibility of returning the abundant favours of God. A saying of Sulaymān al-Taymī (d. 143/760) is explicit: "God has favoured (*an'ama*) His servants according to His own measure and asks for their gratitude according to their capacities"⁵⁷. These reassurances are frequent and God's habit of rewarding hugely the least action of His servant is repeatedly illustrated⁵⁸. 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) pronounced: "Grace is tied to gratitude, gratitude has to do with increase (*mazīd*) and the two things proceed together (*maqrūnāni fī qarnin*)"⁵⁹. And no less eloquent is this conversation on limitless grace between Abū 'Aqīl (m. 12 h) and one Bakr ibn 'Abd Allāh, where human gratitude is encapsulated in the prophetic formula. The first says:

⁵³ *Man ibtalā fa-ṣabara wa u'ṭiya fa-ṣakara wa zulima fa-ḡafara wa zalama fa-istaḡfara*, *ibid.*, pp. 65–66 (No. 164) from Saḥbara (cfr. p. 31, No. 64, and 66, No. 164). Cfr. ad for example al-Ṭabarī, *Ġāmi'*, vol. XIII, p. 123 (comm. on *Kor.* 14,5): "How good is the servant who bears his affliction with patience (*idā ibtalā ṣabara*) and is grateful when he receives (*idā u'ṭiya ṣakara*)".

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16 (No. 17); cfr. p. 30 (No. 60) & 36 (No. 80–81). In other words there is no refuge from God but in God, as the Koran itself states (9,118); see also Ibn Qayyim on the expression "I find refuge in You from You" (*a'ūdu bi-ka min-ka*), *'Uddat al-ṣābirīn*, 279, in the context of his reflections on the Names *ṣabūr* e *ṣakūr* (ch. XXVI).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19 (No. 27); cfr. p. 32 (No. 66).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18 (No. 25) from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12 (No. 8). The translation does not exactly follow the edition, which has instead *qadyuri-him*.

⁵⁸ For example, *Kor.* 14,7 ("If you are grateful to Me, I will increase my grace upon you [...]") appears twice, cfr. *ibid.*, p. 11 (No. 3) e 29 (No. 56).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16 (No.18).

“Every time the servant says *al-ḥamdu li-llāh* he earns a favour”; and the other asks: “And how does he repay that favour?” “By saying again *al-ḥamdu li-llāh*,” comes the reply, “after which he will receive another favour. The gifts of God are without end”⁶⁰.

A similar chain of human praise and divine gifts is to be found in the dense prayer, relevant particularly in its final part, that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī always formulated before embarking on an exegesis: “Praise be to God, our Lord. O God, praise be to You, who created us, blessed us and guided us on the way, who has taught us and saved us from adversity, praise be to You for Islam and the Koran, praise be to You for our family and our wealth and our renewed wellbeing, to You who have given us – truly! – every thing that we have asked of You [...]. Praise be to You for each of Your gifts old and new, hidden and known, particular and general, in life and in death, in our presence and absence, praise be to You so that you may be satisfied (*ḥattā tarḍā*), praise be to You when You are satisfied (*ida raḍayta*)”⁶¹.

But the points of greatest didactic interest in Ibn Abī al-Dunyā’s work remain those concerning the prophets. One example is the dialogue between God and Moses, an exemplary figure in the Koran in the context of gratitude (cfr. 34,13): “Lord, – asks Moses – what could Adam do to repay in gratitude (*an yu’addiya ṣukran*) what You had done for him? You created him with Your hand, You breathed Your spirit into him, You gave him shelter in the Garden, and You made the angels bow down before him”: “Moses, – God replied – he knew well (*‘alima*) that all these things came from Me, and for this he praised me, and that was enough to repay me (*kāna [...] ṣukran*) for what I had done for him”⁶². This saying rehearses a now familiar concept, the toing–and froing of gifts God and man exchange with one another, the reciprocal and in some way compensatory offering that forms the substance of gratitude: if God fills man with grace and favours (*ni‘ma, ni‘am*), then man can offer by way of grateful exchange his own very existence, his own physical presence in the world, a source of satisfaction to the Lord, as long as it is sustained by a human acknowledgement (*‘ilm*) of the paucity of himself and his own offerings against the abundance of gifts received. A story again featuring David is clear on the point, a story based at the same time on the reciprocal exchange of gifts and on recognition as a sufficient form of gratitude: “Lord, – asked David – how can I be grateful to You if I am able to be grateful only through Your grace?” God chides him: “But do you not know that all the gifts you have come from Me?” “Of course” – he replies. “And I accept that as the gratitude that comes from you (*innī arḍā ṣukran min-ka*)”, said God⁶³.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12 (No. 7); cfr. p. 41 (No. 98).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13 (No. 11).

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 14 (No. 12) from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12 (No. 5) again from Abū al-Ġald; with a change of protagonists (Moses in place of David) this story is recounted in almost the same terms also in al-Ġazālī’s *Kitāb al-ṣabr wa ’l-ṣukr*; see also Giese, “Shukr”, p. 516. Cfr. p. 12 (No. 6) from Abū al-Ġald: “Lord – said Moses, – how can I be grateful to You if my whole life’s work cannot repay the smallest of Your gifts?” God reassured him: “Moses, even now are you grateful to me (*al-’āna ṣakarta-nī*)”.

David the king and prophet, whom God blessed with metallurgical know-how – what could be more concrete? – the very David that in the Book of Islam incarnates the servant who is forgetful of his Lord but who, endowed with wisdom (*‘ilm*), realises his insufficiency and prostrates himself before God (cfr. particularly 34,10–11 and 38,24)⁶⁴, features in Ibn Abī al-Dunyā’s work as a figure of both warning and reassurance to the stumbling believer. Enlarging on the theme of the birds who prayed with him (cfr. 21,79 and 38,19), *Gratitude towards God* narrates that while he was in the temple a rare bird (*durra*) settled near him; David was studying it, meditating on and marvelling at its appearance, when the bird spoke to him: “You marvel, David? And yet my gratitude to God for His favours (*fadl*) to me is greater than yours for His favours to you”⁶⁵. According to another story, David was under the illusion (*ẓanna*) that nobody in the world praised God better than he. While he was sitting in the temple, by the pool, and an angel came down and asked him if he understood the croaking of the frog there. David listened attentively to it, and realised that the frog’s praises were better than his own. “Well then, David, – the angel asked him – did you understand what the frog said?” “Yes” – he replied. “And what did he say?” “He said: Glory be to Thee, the highest wisdom (*muntahā al-‘ilm*) is in your praise”⁶⁶.

Thus, while it is the case that there is no direct reference to God’s *ṣukr* toward man in the traditional material selected by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā – a distinct theme in the Koran, which is picked up in subsequent lexicographical works and elaborated by various subtle thinkers – it is none the less true that a divine gratitude in the strict sense of *ṣukr* – that rewards activities that respond to a reward received, increasing that – does filter through here and there, *via* the concept, already present in the Koran⁶⁷, of satisfaction or acceptance on God’s part (*al-riḍā, riḍwān*)⁶⁸, satisfaction particularly for the acknowledgement or *‘ilm* that man is capable of demonstrating towards Him.

⁶⁴ Worth remembering in this context is the relationship linking David to the so-called “prostration in thankfulness” or *sağdat al-ṣukr*, to be performed following Mohammed’s example on every receipt of good news; as recorded by among others al-Nisā’ī, *Sunan, kitāb al-masāğid*, No.118, from Ibn ‘Abbās, commenting on the prostration called for Ṣād sura (*Kor.* 38) the Prophet said: “David did this in token of repentance (*sağada-hā [...] tawba*), we do it in token of gratitude (*naṣğidu-hā ṣukran*)”.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22 (No. 35, from Ṣadaqa ibn Sufyān). The passage echoes, though in a quite different tone, the extensive account of the temptation of David previously cited in Muqātil ibn Sulaymān’s (d. 150/767) *Tafsīr*, cfr. Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya (3 vols.), ed. Aḥmad Farīd, Beirut 1424/2003, III, p. 116 (comm. on *Kor.* 38,24), and variously repeated by, for example, al-Ṭabarī from al-Suddī, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Wahb ibn Munabbih, cfr. *Ġāmi‘*, vol. XXIII, p. 95 (again on 38,24): David promises the Lord to equal the compassion of Abraham and Moses; while he is praying, a many-coloured bird flies near him and as he is trying to capture it he sees a woman at her bath; he desires her and subsequently finds a way of eliminating her husband in order to marry her.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, (No. 36) from Anas ibn Mālik.

⁶⁷ Cfr. for example 39,7: “If instead you show gratitude to Him, He will accept it from you”.

⁶⁸ On the possible extent of God’s satisfaction cfr. another story about David, *ibid.*, pp. 22–23 (No. 37) from Sufyān ibn Sa’īd. He exclaimed: “Let God be praised howsoever pleases His noble Face, my Lord, exalted be Your glory”. God assured him: “David, you have followed the example (*taba‘ta*) of the angels”.

5. *Al-Ḥarā'itī and gratitude as a social duty*

Al-Ḥarā'itī devotes the final part of his work on gratitude towards God to the gratitude that men owe to one another⁶⁹, thus, if only in the last resort, teaching the close correlation between the two⁷⁰. His starting point can be summarised as follows: precisely because it is an attribute of God, *šukr* should be an attribute of the virtuous man, not only towards God, but at the same time also towards his brother. After quoting in his turn “*lā yaškuru Allāh man lā yaškuru al-nās*”, and taken note of its potential ambiguity, this author inclines to an entirely human interpretation of the saying, referring immediately to another saying of the Prophet, that “those who are most grateful to God (*aškaru al-nās li-llāh*) are also those most grateful to men (*aškaru-hum li l-nās*)”⁷¹. And he thus inaugurates a discussion of gratitude as a social duty.

According to the material gathered by al-Ḥarā'itī, the proof of gratitude in man (*‘alāmat šukr al-mar’*) is the open declaration of that gratitude (*i‘lān al-šukr*)⁷². Contrariwise, “the worst expression is that which denies a favour received (*tağdīf*)”⁷³. And to make others aware of a benefit received from another is already a sufficient return for that benefit: “He who receives a favour (*ma‘rūf*) should return it and, if he is not able to do so, he should speak of it to others (*ḍakara-hu*), because – as the Prophet teaches – to express remembrance of a favour means to be grateful for it⁷⁴. According to another, not dissimilar, saying, “when you receive a favour return it to your benefactor, and when you cannot, beseech God on his behalf until you know (*ḥattā ta‘lamū*) that it has been made up to him⁷⁵, in other words, until God has given you reason to believe (*‘ilm*) that He has heard your supplication and has repaid your brother on your behalf. Along the same lines is the following sharp maxim from Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyāḍ (d. 187/803): “Say there are two things. The first I would not sell for anything in the world, and it is that others should say to me: You have done well (*aḥsanta*), because if you give someone a thousand *dīnār* and he says to you: You have done well, may God repay you in good things (*ğazā-ka Allāhu ḥayran*), then he has given back

⁶⁹ *Faḍīlat al-šukr*, pp. 61–69 (*faṣl: mā yağibu ‘alā al-nās min al-šukr li-l-mun‘im ‘alay-hi*) and pp. 70–71 (*faṣl: mā ḍikru-hu min kufr al-šanī‘a*).

⁷⁰ Four centuries later he will be closely followed by the Ḥanbalite jurist Ibn Muflīḥ (d. 763/1361), *Al-ādāb al-šar‘iyya*, ed. Šu‘ayb al-Arna‘uṭ and ‘Umar al-Qayyān, 3 vols., Mu‘assasat al-risāla, 3rd ed., Beirut 1419, cfr. particularly I, pp. 330–335 (*faṣl man lam yaškur al-nās lā yaškuru Allāh*).

⁷¹ *Faḍīlat al-šukr*, p. 61 (No. 79), from Aš‘atī ibn Qays; *Al-ādāb*, p. 331, from the same witness.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 63 (No. 84) in the verses of Muḥriz ibn al-Faḍl.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71 (No. 105), an opinion of one of the Followers, the converted Jew, Ka‘b al-Aḥbār (d. 32h).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63 (No. 83) from ‘Ā’iša; cfr. p. 65 (No. 92) and 80 (No. 103); *Al-ādāb*, pp. 331–332.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63 (No. 85), from Ibn ‘Umar; cfr. “he who receives a favour and has found nothing to give in exchange but invocation and praise, has redeemed it”, *ibid.*, p. 64 (No. 86) from ‘Ā’iša; cfr. also p. 65 (No. 89).

more than he has taken. The second I would not pay the smallest coin for, and it is that others should say to me: You have done ill”⁷⁶.

In these stories, it is as if the gratitude of man and the gratitude of God were compounded in a single gesture, in so far as the man’s thanking his benefactor provokes the beneficent action of God, which is, as we know, incremental by nature. Among the many anecdotes collected by al-Ḥarā’iṭī on this theme we find the following advice to a friend by Ğa’far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765): “Be grateful to those who help you, and help those who are grateful to you; a favour thanked for will never be exhausted, while if you are ungrateful, it will not last; gratitude increases goodness and keeps at bay the vicissitudes of fate (cfr. *amān min al-ġiyar*)”⁷⁷. So we find here again, translated into a rule for human conduct, the circularity of *ṣukr*, that accumulation of gifts which we have already seen as characterising gratitude between man and God⁷⁸.

As we saw above, praising God for His gifts, declaring “*al-ḥamdu li-llāh*” is a high form of human gratitude. And what the believer owes to God, he owes also, *mutatis mutandis*, to his brother benefactor. A couplet composed by al-Ḥarā’iṭī himself runs: “If a noble man (*māġid*) for the magnificence of his possessions or the height of his station were ever go without receiving gratitude (*ṣukr*) / God would not have ordered his servants to be grateful to Him saying: be grateful to Me, both of you, men and *ġinn* (cfr. *ayyuhā al-ṭaqalāni*)”⁷⁹. The same concomitance of *ṣukr* and Islam – and their opposites, ingratitude / impiety (*kufr*, *kufrān*) – already reviewed in their application to man’s *ṣukr* towards God, resurfaces here in al-Ḥarā’iṭī’s summary of the Tradition on the subject of man’s *ṣukr* towards his brother: “Whosoever should receive a favour and can find no way of repaying other than eulogy (*tanā’*) of the giver – explains the Companion Ṭalḥa ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh (d. 36/656) – then let him eulogise, and he will have been grateful; he will have been on the other hand ungrateful (or impious, cfr. *kafara*) if he has kept silent about the favour”⁸⁰. A further example is furnished by the following words of the Prophet: “There are servants to whom, on the day of the resurrection, God will not speak”: “Who are they?” – they asked. And he replied: “Those who deny (*tabarra’a*) their parents [...], those who deny their own sons, and those who receive help from others and repudiate (*kafara*) that help and disown them”⁸¹.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68 (No. 99). Cfr. *Al-ādāb*, p. 331: “The greatest eulogy is to say: May God repay you with good [things] (*ġazā-ka Allāh ḥayran*)”.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67 (No. 94).

⁷⁸ On the continuous and reciprocal exchange of gratitude, cfr. Ğa’far al-Ṣādiq’s saying, unrecorded by al-Ḥarā’iṭī but noted by Ibn Muflīḥ: “For me, nothing is sweeter than a [helping] hand that is followed by another”, *Al-ādāb*, p. 335.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65 (No. 91). For the expression *ayyuhā al-ṭaqalāni*, lit. “you two who have weighed in the balance”, applied to the two species responsible for their actions, cfr. *Kor.* 55,31.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65 (No. 88). Ibn Muflīḥ adds: “As for one who boasts of a favour he has not received, he is like one who dresses in two coverings of lies”, *Al-ādāb*, p. 332.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70 (No. 102), from Anas; cfr. p. 70 (No. 104); cfr. *Al-ādāb*, p. 333.

A final but no less relevant form of human gratitude features in a story recounted by Asmā' bint Yazīd ibn al–Sakan (d. 30 h), the celebrated “preacher of the women” (*ḥaṭībat al–nisā'*) from the very earliest Islamic period: “The Messenger of God passed by us, and there were with me other women [...]; I was married, and they concubines. When they saw him, they huddled close together. He said: Look you well, daughter of Sakan, and you women beware of disowning your benefactor. I asked: For my father and mother’s sake, what does it mean to disown your benefactor (*kufr al–mun'im*)? He replied: Let us suppose that a man comes to you and with his money frees one of you from her state, and that she, thanks to him, finds herself a husband, but then turns her anger on him for this and says: I swear by God I have never received any favour from you! Therefore, beware of disowning your benefactor”⁸².

Conclusions

To summarise and conclude: the Koran insists on the otherness of God but none the less sets up a clear correlation between the gratitude of the believer toward God and that of God toward the believer, applying to both cases the same lexis, that is to say derivatives of the root *škr*, which include the intensive form *šakūr*. An examination of the ancient lexicography allows us to refine the content of the root in question and to distinguish *šukr* or “gratitude” from *ḥamd* or “praise”: in gratitude are included at the same time the material aspect (cfr. “[...] *illā 'an al–yad'*”), a declarative and divulgative component (cfr. *tanā'* and *našr*) and its incremental character (*ziyāda*, *muḍā'afa*), while praise is above all verbal. These contents all appear in traditional thought – here exemplified in the works of Ibn Abī al–Dunyā and al–Ḥarā'iṭī – with some variations.

In the first place, with the obvious aim of distancing divine from human practice, the root *škr* is applied only to man’s gratitude, a necessarily modest response to the superabundance of the gifts of God (*ni'ma*, *ni'am*), while divine gratitude is transformed into the more abstract “contentment”, satisfaction or satisfied acceptance (*al–riḍā*, *riḍwān*). Theological speculation – here represented by al–Ġazālī e Ibn Qayyim – takes a different line, continuing instead to conjoin human to divine behaviour, insisting on gratitude as a linking element between the creator and the virtuous believer, and to this end accepting and developing the Koranic references to a circular toing–and–froing of gratitude. In the second place, the traditional literature, in accordance with its largely behavioural emphasis, has concentrated on the pragmatic aspects of gratitude, having *šukr* coincide with acts of devotion even in their physical expression (*tā'a*, *'ibāda*) and furthermore equating gratitude with praise (*ḥamd*). As regards the *šukr* that men owe to one another, this is represented as an integral part of the religious duty of service, a wholly earthly extension of the gratitude due to God; thus to praise and eulogise one’s brother for every favour he bestows on you is moreover equivalent to thanking the Lord for His numberless gifts. Whether speaking

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 71 (No. 106); cfr. *Al–ādāb*, again p. 333, all founded on ingratitude towards the husband.

of God or a brother benefactor, the Tradition none the less emphasises a cognitive element (cfr. the frequent use of the root *'lm*) and teaches that gratitude rests on a full awareness of the reward obtained. According, therefore, to the teaching of traditional Islamic thought, the virtuous believer is he who, well aware of the debt he owes to God, requites it also, before God, by honouring his debts to human society.

RÉSUMÉ

Le présent essai est une contribution à l'étude de la gratitude dans la tradition islamique, en commençant par l'usage coranique de la racine *škr* (et plus particulièrement du mot *šakūr*), en examinant ses implications explicites dans la lexicographie primitive (Ibn Manẓūr), en notant la présence de ses implications dans la pensée traditionnelle (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā and al-Ḥarā'itī) et en proposant quelques comparaisons avec la spéculation théologique (Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī and Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya). A la lumière des sources consultées, la gratitude émerge comme un ingrédient essentiel de la foi, la pierre angulaire d'une éthique islamique consciente, et surtout un lien important reliant la pratique divine et les devoirs de l'homme, à la fois en termes d'harmonie entre la gratitude de l'homme envers Dieu et la satisfaction de Dieu à l'égard du croyant, et en termes de relation étroite entre la gratitude due à Dieu et celle qui est due à un bienfaiteur humain. Enfin, l'homme est vu comme une créature douée d'une conscience dont la plus haute vocation est précisément la gratitude.

