

**GOOD DEEDS IN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM:
COMPARING THE PERSPECTIVES OF AUGUSTINE
AND AL-GHAZĀLĪ**

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ABSTRACT

This research examines and compares the attitudes towards good deeds taken by two great thinkers of Latin Christianity and Sunni Islam, namely, Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) and Imām Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī al-Ṭūsī (1058-1111 CE / 450-505 AH). Both thinkers address the issue in their own unique and profound ways, with a strong focus on the inner dimension of good deeds. However, their spiritual insights into the issue have not really been studied comparatively. This research focuses on their thoughts about the nature, significance, and inner dimension of good deeds, employing descriptive, analytic, and comparative methods. The scope of this research is divided into two main parts. The first part offers a general analysis of the concepts of good deeds in relation to religious faith as addressed and understood in both Christianity and Islam, and it attempts to establish their significance in both religions. The second part scrutinises some relevant issues in depth that are related to the attitudes of Augustine and al-Ghazālī towards good deeds. It covers their responses to particular interpretations and controversies, their understandings of the nature and significance of good deeds, and most importantly, their insights into the inner dimension of such actions. Augustine and al-Ghazālī were each formulating their reflections on the subject within the framework of their religious traditions at a time of great controversy and debate on the subject within each of their traditions. While neither offers the last word on the subject within their religious traditions, they both focus on an inner dimension of good deeds in a way that deserves attention from Muslims and Christians alike. Indeed, both offer a sophisticated way of understanding and performing good deeds. They address their inner meaning and either directly or indirectly *reveal* some inner preconditions that need to be observed in performing good deeds. They believe that an appropriate balance between their outward and inward observance is an essential requirement in transforming good deeds from *dry* understanding and mere outward practices—as exhibited in pure ritualism and legalism—to spiritually fruitful ones. Thus, their insights are not only useful in improving the quality of good deeds, but they also pave a way for a personal spiritual transformation in returning to God, and establishing an intimate relationship with Him.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution, and affirms that to the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Collected Works of Augustine:

<i>NPNF</i>	A Select Library of the Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers). Edited by Philip Schaff. Vols. 1-6, PDF e-book. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Originally printed; New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886 & 1890.
<i>NPNF I.1</i>	<i>The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine, with a Sketch of His Life and Work.</i> <i>NPNF I.</i> Vol. 1. PDF e-book. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf101.html .
<i>NPNF I.2</i>	<i>St Augustine's City of God and Christian Doctrine.</i> <i>NPNF I.</i> Vol. 2. PDF e-book. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.html .
<i>NPNF I.3</i>	<i>On the Holy Trinity; Doctrinal Treatises; Moral Treatise.</i> <i>NPNF I.</i> Vol. 3. PDF e-book. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103.html .
<i>NPNF I.4</i>	<i>Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists.</i> <i>NPNF I.</i> Vol. 4. PDF e-book. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf104.html .
<i>NPNF I.5</i>	<i>Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings.</i> <i>NPNF I.</i> Vol. 5. PDF e-book. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf105.html .
<i>NPNF I.6</i>	<i>St. Augustine: Sermon on the Mount; Harmony of the Gospels; Homilies on the Gospels.</i> <i>NPNF I.</i> Vol. 6. PDF e-book. http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf106.html .
<i>WSA</i>	The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21 st Century.
<i>ACW</i>	Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation. Vols. 1 & 2.
<i>CTHP</i>	Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy.

The *NPNF I* is amongst the largest collections of translations of Augustine's works. It is available in electronic edition at Christian Classic Ethereal Library (CCEL), <http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>, (also available at <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers2/>). Most of Augustine's works consulted in this research come from this collection with the exception of some works, such as the *Confessions* and those that are not available in this collection. Additional references to other translation are bracketed. Only the English translation of Augustine's works is used as main sources.

Individual works of Augustine (see Bibliography for further details):

<i>Against Fortunatus</i>	<i>Acts or Disputation Against Fortunatus the Manichaeus.</i> <i>NPNF I.4.</i>
<i>Against Manichaeus</i>	<i>Against the Epistle of Manichaeus, Called Fundamental.</i> <i>NPNF I.4.</i>

<i>Against Pelagians</i>	<i>A Treatise Against Two Letters of the Pelagians. NPNF I.5.</i>
<i>Answer to Julian</i>	<i>Answer to Julian. In Answer to the Pelagians, II. I/24. WSA, 222-536.</i>
<i>Answer to Petilian</i>	<i>Answer to the Letters of Petilian, the Donatist. NPNF I.4.</i>
<i>Baptism</i>	<i>On Baptism, Against the Donatists. NPNF I.4.</i>
<i>Care for the Dead</i>	<i>On Care to Be Had for the Dead. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Catechising</i>	<i>On the Catechising of the Uninstructed. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Christian Doctrine</i>	<i>On Christian Doctrine. NPNF I.2.</i>
<i>City of God</i>	<i>City of God. NPNF I.2.</i>
<i>Confessions</i>	<i>Confessions. Translated with an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick.</i>
<i>Continence.</i>	<i>On Continence. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Correction of the Donatist</i>	<i>The Correction of the Donatist. NPNF I.4.</i>
<i>Creed</i>	<i>On the Creed: A Sermon to the Catechumens. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Enchiridion</i>	<i>The Enchiridion. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Faith & Creed</i>	<i>A Treatise on Faith and the Creed. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Faith & Work</i>	<i>St. Augustine on Faith and Works. Translated and annotated by Gregory J. Lombardo.</i>
<i>Faith of Things Not Seen</i>	<i>Concerning Faith of Things Not Seen. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Forgiveness & Baptism</i>	<i>A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants. NPNF I.5. [WSA: The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones].</i>
<i>Good of Marriage</i>	<i>On the Good of Marriage. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Good of Widowhood</i>	<i>On the Good of Widowhood. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Grace & Free Will</i>	<i>A Treatise on Grace and Free Will. NPNF I.5. [CTHP: On Grace and Free Choice]</i>
<i>Grace & Original Sin</i>	<i>A Treatise on the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin. NPNF I.5.</i>
<i>Holy Trinity</i>	<i>On the Holy Trinity. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Holy Virginit</i>	<i>Of Holy Virginit. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Man's Perfection</i>	<i>A Treatise Concerning Man's Perfection in Righteousness. NPNF I.5.</i>
<i>Marriage & Concupiscence</i>	<i>On Marriage and Concupiscence. NPNF I.5.</i>
<i>Meaning of Genesis</i>	<i>The Literal Meaning of Genesis. Vols. 1 & 2. ACW.</i>
<i>Morals of the Catholic</i>	<i>On the Morals of the Catholic Church. NPNF I.4.</i>
<i>Morals of the Manichaeans</i>	<i>On the Morals of the Manichaeans. NPNF I.4.</i>
<i>Nature & Grace</i>	<i>A Treatise on Nature and Grace. NPNF I.5. [WSA: Nature and Grace]</i>
<i>Nature of Good</i>	<i>Concerning the Nature of Good Against the Manichaeans.</i>
<i>Patience</i>	<i>On Patience. NPNF I.3.</i>
<i>Perseverance</i>	<i>A Treatise on the Gift of Perseverance: Being the Second Book of the Treatise On the Predestination of the Saints. NPNF I.5. [WSA: The Gift of Perseverance]</i>
<i>Proceedings of Pelagius</i>	<i>A Work on the Proceedings of Pelagius. NPNF I.5.</i>
<i>Profit of Believing</i>	<i>On the Profit of Believing. NPNF I.3.</i>

<i>Rebuke & Grace</i>	<i>A Treatise on Rebuke and Grace. NPNF I.5. [CTHP: On Reprimand and Grace]</i>
<i>Reply to Faustus Spirit & Letter</i>	<i>Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon. NPNF I.4. A Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter. NPNF I.5. [WSA: The Spirit and the Letter].</i>
<i>The Unfinished Work</i>	<i>Answer to the Pelagians, III: Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian. V/25. WSA,</i>
<i>Two Souls Work of Monks</i>	<i>On Two Souls, Against the Manichaeans. NPNF I.4. Of the Work of Monks. NPNF I.3.</i>

Works by Al-Ghazālī (see Bibliography for further details):

There is no general series which contains all the writings of al-Ghazālī. However, most of his writings—both in original Arabic language and translations—are available on a website, <http://www.ghazali.org/>. See bibliography for further details.

<i>Al-Arba ‘m̄</i>	<i>Al-Arba ‘m̄ fī Uṣūl al-Dīn</i> (The Forty Fundamentals of Religion), ed. ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥamīd ‘Arwānī & Muḥammad Bashīr al-Shaqfah.
<i>Alchemy</i>	<i>Kīmīyā’-i-Sa‘ādāt</i> (Alchemy of Eternal Bliss). Full English translation of the Persian original texts. Translated by Muhammad Asim Bilal. Revised by Munir Ahmad Mughal.
<i>Al-Iqtisād</i>	<i>Al-Iqtisād fī al-‘Itiqād</i> (Median or Moderation in Belief). Edited by Inṣāf Ramaḍān.
<i>Al-Mustazhirī</i>	<i>Al-Mustazhirī: Being a Translation of Faḍā’ih al-Bāṭiniyyah wa Faḍā’il al-Mustazhiriyyah</i> (The Infamies of the Bāṭinites and the Merits of the Mustazhirites). Translated by Richard J. McCarthy.
<i>Al-Qawā’id al-‘Asharah</i>	<i>Al-Qawā’id al-‘Asharah</i> . In <i>Majmū‘ah rasā’il al-Imām al-Ghazālī</i> . Edited by Ibrāhīm Amīn Muḥammad, 457-462.
<i>Al-Wajīz</i>	<i>Al-Wajīz fī Fiqh al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī</i> (The Condensed in Imām al-Shāfi‘ī Jurisprudence). Edited by ‘Alī Mu‘awwiḍ and ‘Ādil ‘Abd al-Mawjūd.
<i>Al-Walad</i>	<i>Ayyuhā al-Walad</i> (O Youth or Son). In <i>Majmū‘ah Rasā’il al-Imām al-Ghazālī</i> . Edited by Ibrāhīm Amīn Muḥammad, 274-286.
<i>Al-Wasīṭ</i>	<i>Al-Wasīṭ fī al-Madhhab</i> (The Medium [digest] in the [Jurisprudential] School). Edited by Aḥmad Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm.
<i>Decisive Criterion</i>	<i>On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s Faysal al-Tafriqa Bayna al-Islam wa al-Zandaqa</i> (The Decisive Criterion for Distinguishing Islam from Masked Infidelity). Translated by Sherman A. Jackson.
<i>Deliverance</i>	<i>Deliverance from Error and Attachment to the Lord of Might & Majesty (Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl wa al-Muwaṣṣil ilā dhī</i>

	<i>al-‘Izzah wa al-Jalāl</i>), in <i>The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī</i> . 15-92. Translated by W. Montgomery Watt.
<i>Faḍā’ih</i>	<i>Faḍā’ih al-Bāṭiniyyah wa Faḍā’il al-Mustaẓhariyyah</i> (The Infamies [Enormities] of the Bāṭinites and the virtues [merits] of the Mustaẓhirites). Edited by Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Quṭub.
<i>Guidance</i>	<i>The Beginning of Guidance (Bidāyah al-Hidāyah)</i> , in <i>The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī</i> . 93-168. Translated by W. Montgomery Watt.
<i>Jawāhir</i>	<i>Jawāhir al-Qur’ān</i> (The Jewels of the Qur’ān). Edited by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā al-Qabbānī.
<i>Just Balance</i>	<i>The Just Balance (Al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm)</i> . Translated with introduction and notes by D. P. Brewster.
<i>Kīmīyā’</i>	<i>Kīmīyā’ Sa’ādāh</i> (The Alchemy of Happiness). Partial Arabic translation of the original Persian texts.
<i>Kings</i>	<i>Council of Kings (Nasihah al-Muluk)</i> . Translated by F. R. C. Bagley.
<i>Letters Gh.</i>	<i>Letters of al-Ghazzali</i> . Translated by Abdul Qayyum.
<i>Maqāṣid</i>	<i>Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah</i> (The Aims of the Philosophers). Edited by Maḥmūd Bijou.
<i>Mīzān</i>	<i>Mīzān al-‘Amal (Criterion of Action)</i> . Edited by Sulaymān Dunyā.
<i>Munqidh</i>	<i>Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl wa al-Muwaṣṣil ilā dhī al-‘Izzah wa al-Jalāl</i> (Deliverance from Error and Attachment to the Lord of Might & Majesty). Edited with introduction by Jamīl Ṣalībā and Kāmīl ‘Ayyād.
<i>O Youth</i>	<i>Al-Ghazali’s Ayyuha ‘l-Walad</i> . Translated by George Henry Scherer.
<i>Revival</i>	<i>Revival of Religious Learnings: Imam Ghazzali’s Ihya Ulum-id-Din</i> . Translated by Fazl-ul-Karim. 4 volumes.
<i>The Incoherence</i>	<i>The Incoherence of the Philosophers: Tahāfut al-Falāsifah: A Parallel English-Arabic Text</i> . Translated, introduced and annotated by Michael E Marmura.
<i>The Jewels</i>	<i>The Jewels of the Qur’ān (Jawāhir al-Qur’ān)</i> . Translated with an introduction and annotation by Muhammad Abul Quasem.
<i>The Niche</i>	<i>Al-Ghazzālī’s Mishkāṭ al-Anwār (“The Niche of Lights”)</i> . Translated with introduction by W. H. T. Gairdner.
<i>Timbangan Amal</i>	<i>Timbangan Amal Menuju Kebahagiaan Akhirat</i> (Malay translation of al-Ghazālī’s <i>Mīzān al-‘Amal</i>). Translated by M. Ali Chasan Umar and A. Chumaidi Umar.
<i>Iḥyā’</i>	<i>Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn</i> (The Revival of the Religious Sciences). Edited by Zayn al-Dīn Abī al-Faḍl ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn al-Ḥusayn al-‘Irāqī. 4 volumes.
<i>Iḥyā’ INF</i>	<i>The Book of Knowledge (Kitāb al-‘Ilm)</i> . Translated by Nabih Amin Faris.
<i>Iḥyā’ IWM</i>	<i>The Book of Knowledge: Being a Translation, with Introduction and Notes of al-Ghazzālī’s Book of the Iḥyā’</i> ,

- Kitāb al-‘Ilm*. Translated with introduction and notes by William Alexander McCall.
- Iḥyā’ 2* *The Foundations of the Articles of Faith: Being a Translation with Notes of the Kitāb Qawā’id al-‘Aqā’id of al-Ghazzālī’s Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. Translated with notes by Nabih Amin Faris.
- Iḥyā’ 3* *The Mysteries of Purity: Being a Translation with Notes of The Kitab Asrar al-Taharah of al-Ghazzali’s “Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din.”* Translated by Nabih Amin Faris.
- Iḥyā’ 4* *The Mysteries of Worship in Islam: Translation with Commentary and Introduction of al-Ghazzali’s Book of the Ihya’ on the Worship*. Translated by Edwin Elliot Calverley.
- Iḥyā’ 5* *The Mysteries of Almsgiving: A Translation from the Arabic with Notes of the Kitab Asrar al-Zakah of al-Ghazzali’s Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*. Translated by Nabih Amin Faris.
- Iḥyā’ 6* *The Mysteries of Fasting: Being a Translation with Notes of the Kitab Asrar al-Sawm of al-Ghazzali’s “Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din.”* Translated by Nabih Amin Faris.
- Iḥyā’ 7* *The Books on the Secret of Pilgrimage (Kitāb ‘Asrār al-Ḥajj)*. Translated by Ibrahim Umar.
- Iḥyā’ 8* *The Recitation and Interpretation of the Qur’an: Al-Ghazālī’s Theory*. Translated by Muhammad Abul Quasem.
- Iḥyā’ 9* *Invocations & Supplications: Kitāb Adhkār wa al-Da‘awāt*. Book IX of *The Revival of the Religious Sciences Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. Translated with an introduction & notes by K. Nakamura.
- Iḥyā’ 21* *The Religious Psychology of al-Ghazālī: A Translation of His Books of the Iḥyā’ on the Explanation of the Wonders of the Heart with Introduction and Notes*. Translated by Walter James Skellie.
- Iḥyā’ 31* *Al-Ghazzali on Repentance*. Translated by M.S. Stern.
- Iḥyā’ 32* *Al-Ghazālī on Patience and Thankfulness: Book XXXII of The Revival of the Religious Sciences Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*. Translated with introduction and notes by H. T. Littlejohn.
- Iḥyā’ 33* *Al-Ghazali’s Book of Fear and Hope*. Translated and annotated by William McKane.
- Iḥyā’ 35* *Faith in Divine Unity and Trust in Divine Providence: Kitab al-tawhid wa’l-tawakkul. Book XXXV of The Revival of The Religious Sciences Ihya’ ‘ulum al-din*. Translated with an introduction and notes by David B. Burrell.
- Jalan Pintas* *Jalan Pintas Meraih Hidayah: 40 Prinsip Agama* (Malay translation of *Al-Arba‘īn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*). Translated by Rojaya.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This research considers the attitudes towards good deeds—understood in the sense of any good deed or action encouraged, prescribed, or mandated by religion—taken by two great thinkers of Latin Christianity and Sunni Islam, Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) and Imām Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī al-Ṭūsī (1058-1111 CE / 450-505 AH).¹ The issue of good deeds, namely, their nature and essential requirements, their outer and inner dimensions, as well as their relation to faith, are among the central concerns of many religions. In Christianity and Islam for instance, this issue has been addressed by both Augustine and al-Ghazālī in their own unique and profound ways. Indeed, I argue that both of them offer a sophisticated way of understanding and performing good deeds, formulated within the framework of their religious traditions. Christianity and Islam differ considerably in their attitudes to religious law and the way in which an individual is brought back to God. Augustine’s theology follows Christian teaching about the soul returning to God through Christ, while al-Ghazālī is loyal to Islamic teaching about confirming the will to the Absolute Oneness, and Unity of God (a *Tawḥīdīc* approach).² Nonetheless, both thinkers address the inner dimension of good deeds and either directly or indirectly propose some inner preconditions for their performance. Augustine’s thought is often associated with the doctrines of Original Sin and divine grace. I argue that while these are significant concepts for him, what Augustine has to say about the will is comparable to what al-Ghazālī says about the heart or the soul,³ placing heavy emphasis on its need to be purified (from blameworthy character) and beautified (with praiseworthy character). There has been

¹ For further discussion of good deeds, see Chapter 3 [esp. “Definition of Good Deeds”]. Because the word “Islam” has been widely known, assimilated, and used extensively in the English language, therefore I will maintain this natural word without transliteration to “Islām.” The same applies to the word Allah, Sufi, etc. In a specific context, the term “Islam” here is used to refer to the Sunnites. Therefore, general expressions like “Islam” used in this research mostly refer to the Sunnite tradition. When dealing with the Shī‘ites, the specific terms, such as “the Shī‘ites” or “the Bāṭinites” will be used to refer to them.

² For a brief analysis of Augustine’s and al-Ghazālī’s theological frameworks, see Chapter 4, esp. 4.1.3 “The Third Phase: The Manichaeian and the Donatist Controversies,” and Chapter 6, esp. 6.1.2 “The Second Phase: During Seclusion.”

³ Al-Ghazālī uses the term heart and soul interchangeably, referring to the same thing, namely the real nature and essence of man’s spirit. See *Munqidh*, 115; *Deliverance*, 74; *Iḥyā’*, III.1, 3-5; *Revival*, III.I. 7-9.

little comparative analysis of the issue, potentially able to promote mutual understanding of both thinkers across two different traditions, each with its own way of approaching theological questions.

Christianity and Islam are two great and rich religions which have produced a large number of outstanding scholars. Augustine and al-Ghazālī are regarded as among the most prominent scholars who have played exceptional roles and left behind abiding legacies. Their influence is not only widespread within their own particular religious traditions, but also extends beyond their own religious boundaries.⁴

This research first examines the attitudes taken towards faith and good deeds in Christianity and Islam, before analysing the specific views of Augustine and al-Ghazālī on several issues. As will be discussed in Chapters Four and Six, these include their general understandings of disputed issues relating to the nature and significance of faith and good deeds, and their views on the inner dimension and inner preconditions that need to be observed in performing good deeds. Within their different theological frameworks, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī were actively defending what they believed to be the essence of the issues that they addressed, breathing into them the warmth of spirituality.

I defend the view that faith and good deeds are both indispensable elements of any religious system, whether monotheist or not. The prominent contemporary Muslim philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr affirms that a doctrine (teaching) and a method (practices) are the two essential elements which form the basis and foundation of any religion.⁵ The former requires some degree of faith, the latter some degree of performance or works, otherwise known as righteous or good deeds. Different religions, however, define faith and good deeds in their own ways, and they have different emphases and views on the nature, relationship, and role of faith and good deeds especially when they relate to righteousness and salvation.

⁴ While Augustine has influenced many philosophers, al-Ghazālī has influenced some Jewish and Christian thinkers, for example Maimonides (c. 1135/38–1204) and Thomas Aquinas. See Margaret Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic: A Study of the Life and Personality of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī, Together with an Account of His Mystical Teaching and an Estimate of His Place in the History of Islamic Mysticism* (Lahore: Hijra International Publishers, 1983), 198-226; Nabil Nofal, “Al-Ghazali,” 12-14, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/archive/publications/ThinkersPdf/ghazalie.pdf, accessed 15 March 2012—originally published in *Prospect: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* 23, no. 3/4 (1993), 519-542; <http://www.ghazali.org/site/on-jtp.htm>, accessed 18 March 2012; <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1778/Augustine-St-354-430.html> (accessed 18 March 2012).

⁵ Both doctrine and method are meant to distinguish between the Absolute or the Real (God) and the relative (creatures; human being). While doctrine reveals the true different natures of the Absolute and the relative, method provides the appropriate way to concentrate on and to live according to the Real, and thus attaches the relative to the Absolute. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, revised and updated ed. (London: Aquarian, 1994), 15ff.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all require both faith and good deeds.⁶ Nevertheless, they apply different degrees of emphasis, and have their own understandings and conceptions of both faith and good deeds, as well as of religious Law. To begin with, Judaism in general places more emphasis on good deeds rather than faith. For example, the observance of specific religious laws, commandments, rites and rituals is more emphasised than the injunction to believe in a particular doctrine. Formal articles of faith, even the idea of dogma, were not known in the early centuries of Judaism.⁷ The injunction to believe in relation to a religious commandment is also missing in its scripture, the Old Testament.⁸ The emphasis is more on trust in God's care for His people, and the obligation of His people to live according to their covenant with God. This allows the central themes of Jewish scripture to focus more on ethics and conduct, which emphasise the performance of good deeds, namely, observing the Mosaic Laws. It was only when Judaism became endangered by external pressure that creed and formal doctrines were formulated.⁹

By contrast, concern with the issue of the relationship and role of faith and good deeds¹⁰ in Christianity can be traced back to its earliest scriptures, especially the epistles of Paul and James, when disagreement about the relative role of good deeds—particularly those in the form of the Law—arose in relation to justification. Paul emphasizes justification by faith and seems to discount the benefit of good deeds, at least in terms of ritual observance.¹¹ On the other hand, James asserts that faith without works is dead, implying that without good deeds faith alone is useless and cannot guarantee salvation.¹² In addition, several interpretations that led to controversies which were either directly or indirectly related to the issue of faith and good deeds arose in Augustine's time. Such

⁶ For further discussion of the meaning and some other aspects of faith and good deeds in Christian and Islam, see the earlier parts of Chapter 3 and 5.

⁷ Alexander Altmann makes this point, see "Articles of Faith," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 529.

⁸ In this regard, Israel Abrahams argues that even the verse "believe in the Lord your God...believe His prophets..." found in II Chronicles 20:20 is actually only the advice of King Jehoshaphat to the people. Nevertheless, as Abraham further argues, there are some statements from the Old Testament which reflect the prototype of Judaism's doctrine or articles of faith, for example, Deuteronomy 6:4 (the *Shema*), Exodus 20: 1-17 as well as Deuteronomy 6-21 (the Ten Commandments), and Exodus 34:6-7, yet, these are still not comprehensive. Israel Abrahams, Jacob Haberman, and Charles Manekin, "Belief," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 290.

⁹ Abrahams, Haberman, and Manekin, "Belief," 290.

¹⁰ Hereafter will also be referred to as "the issue of faith and good deeds."

¹¹ For instance see Rom. 1:16-17, 3:20, 28, 4:3, 5, 5:1 & Gal. 2:16, etc.

¹² James 2:17 & 26. See further James 2:14-26.

controversies may be represented by Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism,¹³ but Augustine took an active part in refuting various interpretations that he considered erroneous.

In Western Christianity, the debate relating to the relative role of faith and good deeds reached its culmination in the 16th century, resulting in division between its Catholic and Protestant branches. This issue has been much debated even in the present time, and particularly related to several doctrines, such as justification, sanctification, and salvation, which in turn are related to faith, good deeds, free will, and divine grace. While Catholics would primarily argue that faith and good deeds are both essential,¹⁴ evangelical Protestants maintain that righteousness and salvation depend solely on faith—a doctrine known as *sola fide* (by faith alone).¹⁵ Therefore, their respective understandings of the nature and role of good deeds differ considerably.

Likewise, the emergence of different interpretations and sects among Muslims regarding the issue of faith and good deeds triggered a number of controversies, particularly raised by Khārijites, Murji'ites, and Mu'tazilites.¹⁶ Like Augustine, al-Ghazālī also played an important role in refuting various interpretations that he considered erroneous. For instance, in addition to these three groups, al-Ghazālī was also

¹³ Even though it can be argued that Manichaeism was not really a heresy within Christianity but a separate religion, I will still treat it together with other groups which have been regarded as heretics (Donatism and Pelagianism) in this research for several reasons. One is that Augustine himself was a Manichaean and, after conversion, he engaged in refuting its doctrines and practices. His engagement with Manichaeism is important in analysing some aspects of his view on good deeds. A second is that, Manichaeism adopted—even in perverted form—some elements of Christianity, and indeed Manichaeism claimed to bring the true message of Jesus. A third is that there are some interesting doctrines of Manichaeism which can be analysed in relation to the issue of good deeds. See Johannes Van Oort, “Augustine and the Books of the Manicheans,” in *A Companion to Augustine*, eds. Mark Vessey and Shelley Reid (Chichester, West Sussex; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 15:189.

¹⁴ See for instance Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Homebush, N.S.W.: St Pauls, 1994) especially part two section two, 311ff. See also the Council of Trent (1545-1563) especially chapter 11 in Heinrich Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari from the thirtieth edition of Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2007), 253-255.

¹⁵ For instance, see article iv of “The Augsburg Confession” in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Church*, trans. Charles Arand et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); R. C. Sproul, *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1995), 155ff; “The Augsburg Confession,” *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Lutheran Church*, <http://www.bookofconcord.org/augsburgconfession.php>, (accessed, 12 Sep. 2011). For a discussion on the concept of justification by faith, see Alister McGrath, *Justification by Faith: What It Means for Us Today* (Basingstoke: Marshal Pickering, 1988).

¹⁶ For a comparative discussion of early Muslim sects see Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 167ff. For extensive analysis of Shi'ite doctrines, thought, and spirituality, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hamid Dabashi, and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, eds., *Shi'ism: Doctrines, Thought, and Spirituality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

critical of other groups (theologians, philosophers, Bāṭinites, and certain extreme mystics) prevalent in his time.

Although almost all religious traditions, either directly or indirectly, address both the outer and the inner dimensions of good deeds, in most cases, adherents (particularly lay adherents) often only focus on the former, placing great emphasis on the outward observance of religious rites and rituals, as well as moral actions. Hence, more importance tends to be placed on the meticulous observance of their outer preconditions, often at the expense of their spiritual dimension. To some extent, this practice leads to purely dogmatic, ritualist, and legalist views of good deeds.

Both Augustine and al-Ghazālī were aware of the lack of spirituality and awareness of the inner dimension of good deeds within their religious communities. They both lamented that most adherents were only concerned with their outer self, ignoring the need to furnish the inner self (the soul) with spirituality. On a similar note, good deeds were merely regarded as a religious command, or as a mere outward observance. Augustine and al-Ghazālī were also worried about alternative interpretations and practices relating to good deeds.¹⁷ They realised that many of those interpretations and practices were not conducive to purifying the soul or the inner self, as well as to improving the spiritual relationship between man¹⁸ and God. Therefore, they criticised the ritualism, legalism, or dogmatism of certain groups, as well as the notion of the intellectual self-sufficiency of the philosophers which was devoid of spiritual dimension. While the thought of each was shaped by their religious tradition, they both made earnest efforts in their own ways to *rediscover* the inner dimension of religious observance, and to bring about a return in their societies to a more profound reflection upon the inner dimension of the spiritual life. They also both explored the inner preconditions of good deeds, essential in their view for the improvement of the soul, and thus for enhancing the relationship between man and God. Whether they speak about the will (Augustine) or the heart (al-Ghazālī), their emphasis on spirituality and inner self or the soul reflects their common interest in psychology, or rather religious psychology of man.

A comparative study of the attitudes taken towards good deeds is especially relevant to the present time when more and more people tend to see and value things

¹⁷ For more discussion on this, see Chapter 4 and 6 on their stances on different interpretations.

¹⁸ The term “man” and “men” are used in this research in their generic sense to refer to human, humanity, human kind, etc., and they will be used interchangeably. Likewise, the term “he” or “his” also is used in their generic sense which includes both genders, male and female. These terms are used so by both al-Ghazālī and Augustine.

materially, physically, and outwardly. This unhealthy state should be remedied because it will not only contribute towards developing materialism and selfishness, but also stereotypes and prejudice towards those different from themselves. In addition to this, the majority of adherents of religion in this modern era—including Christians and Muslims alike—seem to disregard, or rather are ignorant of the inner dimension and/or inner preconditions that need to be observed in performing good deeds. Therefore, they fail to experience their spiritual elements. In addition, they also fail to appreciate the importance and relationship between the outer and inner dimensions of good deeds, and their relation with divine power.¹⁹ As will be discussed further in Chapters Four and Six, it is evident that both Augustine and al-Ghazālī maintain that the observance of the inner dimension of good deeds (e.g., understanding of their inner meaning and observance of their inner preconditions) is essential, regarding it as the kernel of good deeds, without which the good deeds performed would only appear as outward actions that are devoid of real value. Consequently, good deeds which are devoid of the observance of an inner dimension might be rendered as imperfect or even invalid. In fact, there is also a danger that good deeds performed not according to their proper inner preconditions (e.g., performed with pride or for showing off) would eventually come to be considered as bad deeds or sins, which are harmful especially to the soul. In addition to this issue, the view of “works without faith” which maintains the supremacy and sole authority of humanity (e.g., the human power, ability, and will) over divine entity also characterises the modern view. Accordingly, a sense of divine presence in everyday life is also diminishing.

In the face of these problems, it is interesting to note that both Augustine and al-Ghazālī had already engaged with this issue long before, and they—either directly or indirectly—devised the theoretical and practical solutions to some of these problems in their own ways. They analysed the causes of this turbulence, provided the cures of this *sickness*, and proposed ways to overcome this confusion. Thus, without ignoring the outer dimension of good deeds, they emphasised their inner dimension and elucidated their

¹⁹ There are many causes underlying these problems. The most obvious reason is that, in this modern time, religion is being challenged from various aspects. On the one hand, various ideologies and trends of life—such as secularism, materialism, hedonism, etc.—*attack* religion from the outside. On the other hand, ignorance, blind imitation, demoralisation, misinterpretation, and lack of understanding among some of the adherents of religion erode the value and inner dimension of religion and its practices from within. This attitude, among others, results in a failure to appreciate the inner value as well as to achieve the real objective of the performance of good deeds. This problem contributes to the turbulence, *sickness*, and confusion of many modern people—again, Christians and Muslims alike—on their religious beliefs and practices.

primary inner preconditions. Perhaps they were among the earliest scholars of their own religious traditions to engage in this issue and systematise it in such profound ways.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Since good deeds are associated not only with the observance of religious duty but also with ethical aspects related to everyday life, the above brief examination suggests that the issue of good deeds²⁰ is indeed a recurring and primary concern of major religions. It is important because it touches on the most fundamental and most difficult relation in any religious tradition, namely, the relationship between spirituality and the outer manifestation of faith and good deeds. It also touches on the difficult relationship between God's omnipotence and man's freedom as exemplified in the concept of predestination and free will respectively. Although the relationship between faith and good deeds can be regarded as a *perennial* issue, and many of its aspects have been explored—especially within Western Christianity—there have not many studies conducted on this particular issue which genuinely engage in comparative study between scholars from different religions. To avoid stereotyped impressions towards those different from ourselves, we need to go beyond by promoting deeper knowledge of the great thinkers of both religions. Taking into consideration the current serious need for mutual understanding between different scholars and adherents of different religions, it is therefore necessary to analyse the issue on a wider and deeper spiritual level, especially, in the context of comparative theology as proposed by this research.²¹

Considering the above situation, therefore, a comparative study of the teachings and spiritual insights of Augustine and al-Ghazālī into good deeds is of paramount importance. This is because it will not only provide modern Christians and Muslims an understanding of their enduring theoretical teachings outside the confines of a single religion, but will also offer some practical solutions to current pressing ethical as well as

²⁰ This includes the real understanding of good deeds, their different dimensions, as well as their relationship with faith, etc.

²¹ It would therefore be important for religious scholars to contribute to this emerging field of comparative theology. Among interesting works that have been written on this field are Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Francis X. Clooney, (ed.), *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010); Fatmir Mehdi Shehu, *Nostra Aetate and the Islamic Perspective of Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Gombak, Selangor: IIUM Press, 2008); Mouhanad Khorchide and Ufuk Topkara, "A Contribution to Comparative Theology: Probing the Depth of Islamic Thought," *Religions* 4, no. 1 (2013), 67-76; Reid B. Locklin and Hugh Nicholson, "The Return of Comparative Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 2 (2010), 477-514.

religious dilemmas. A comparison of their writings will attempt to discover their respective understandings, teachings, and spiritual insights into the issues discussed. This is the premise for the objective of this research.

1.3 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND JUSTIFICATION

Saint Augustine is one of the outstanding Latin thinkers, philosophers, and Church Fathers of Western Christianity. In fact, some scholars claim him to be the greatest and most influential of the Christian Fathers.²² He has been credited with the title the *Doctor of Grace*, famous for formulating and systematising the doctrine of Original Sin and Grace. Augustine was known to be an excellent yet controversial bishop. This is because his later life and writings were filled with arguments, polemics, and controversies. He was also, however, a great preacher and inventor, leaving a great body of sermons and contributed in constituting “a newly regnant Christian orthodoxy.”²³ Scholars who appreciate his efforts hold him in high esteem and acknowledge his great contributions, especially in formulating and systematising certain doctrines, in defending orthodoxy against various interpretations that he regarded as unorthodox, and in addressing the spiritual aspect of religious observance. In addition, he was one of the most prolific authors of antiquity, leaving a voluminous body of writings and addressing various issues from theology to philosophy, and from self-confession to apologetic and polemical works.

Augustine was born on 13th November 354 CE to a devout Christian mother and pagan father at Tagaste, North Africa (today Souk Ahras in eastern Algeria). He studied at Carthage. Mastering rhetoric and equipped with a gift for eloquence, he soon became a skilful teacher of the art of rhetoric and a public speaker in several cities (Carthage, Rome, and Milan).²⁴ At the age of thirty, he already held an important academic post where he was eventually appointed as the chief professor of rhetoric for the city of Milan.²⁵ Although Augustine describes his early life as coloured with worldly pleasure, pride, and sin, he still searched for wisdom or the truth, where he used to be drawn into

²² Philip Schaff, preface to *NPNF I.1*, 2; see also <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02091a.htm>, accessed 5 Oct. 2012.

²³ John Peter Kenney, “Mystic and Monk: Augustine and the Spiritual Life,” in *A Companion to Augustine*, 22:284.

²⁴ *Confessions*, IV.ii.2, 53. See also Garry Wills, *St Augustine* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 32-33.

²⁵ Helmi Afizal Zainal, “The Concept of Sin According to St. Augustine (430 A.D) and al-Ghazali (1111 A.D): A Comparative Analysis” (Master’s thesis, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 2010), 52.

Manichaeism, Scepticism, and Neo-Platonism.²⁶ When he was a student, he was already reading philosophy, particularly Cicero's *Hortensius*, which changed and moved his feelings towards God.²⁷ Cicero is the Latin author that Augustine cited most frequently.²⁸ Paul R. Kolbet argues that Cicero's *Hortensius* played the crucial role in the development of Augustine's thought, from the pursuit of rhetoric as an end in itself toward employing it in the philosophic tradition for cultivating virtue and wisdom.²⁹ In fact, the philosophical influence on Augustine's thought is not limited to Platonism or Neo-Platonism, but as Sarah Byers has observed, it extends to Aristotelianism, Stoicism, and some other philosophical thoughts.³⁰

After failing to grasp wisdom from the Bible, and experiencing confusion with the problem of evil, Augustine embraced Manichaeism, a movement which promised him the wisdom that he had been searching for.³¹ At the age of thirty, he met Ambrose (c. 340-397 CE) who impressed him so much in that the latter was able to interpret the scriptures in the light of Neo-Platonism. After he underwent a spiritual and intellectual crisis, Augustine eventually resolved to embrace Christianity, and he received baptism from Ambrose at the age of thirty two (or thirty three). Afterwards, Augustine underwent a dramatic conversion where he broke radically with the world, retired from his prestigious post, gave up his marriage, abandoned his possessions, and devoted his life to Christianity.³² In 396 CE, he was appointed as the Bishop of Hippo where he subsequently played an important role in defending and spreading what he believed to be orthodox teachings and accurate interpretations of some doctrines. He died on 28 August 430, at the age of almost seventy-six.

²⁶ *Confessions*, IV.i.1, 52-53; V.iii.3, 73; V.xiv.24-25, 88-89; VII.ix.13-xx.26, 121-130; Helmi Afizal, "The Concept of Sin," 51; Daniel G. Shaw, "City or Garden: St. Augustine and al-Ghazālī on the Final Estate of the Blessed" (PhD thesis, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois 1987), 39-60.

²⁷ *Confessions*, III.iv.7, 38-39.

²⁸ Danuta Shanzer, "Augustine and the Latin Classics," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 13:161-174.

²⁹ Paul R. Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), esp. Part Two.

³⁰ See Sarah Byers, "Augustine and the Philosophers," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 14:175-187. For the influence of some earlier Christian scholars on Augustine's thought, see Mark Edwards, "Augustine and His Christian Predecessors," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 17:215-226.

³¹ *Confessions*, III.v.9, 40; vii.12, 43-44; IV.i.1, 52-53; Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 46-48.

³² *Confessions*, VIII.xii.28-30, 152-154; IX.ii.2-v.13, 155-163; Possidius, *The Life of Saint Augustine*, The Augustinian Series, vol. 1, intro. and notes Michele Pellegrino, ed. John E. Rotelle (Villanova, PA: Augustinian Press, 1988), 41; Phillip Schaff, *Prolegomena: St. Augustin's Life and Work*, in *NPNF I.1*, 11-12; Helmi Afizal, "The Concept of Sin," 52.

Imām al-Ghazālī has been credited with various titles including *Islam’s ha-Nesher ha-Gadol* and *Doctor Angelicus*,³³ *Hujjat al-Islam (Proof of Islam)*,³⁴ *Zayn al-Dīn (the Ornament of Faith)*, and *Sharaf al-A’immah (the Nobility of the Leading Scholars)*.³⁵ Many scholars regard al-Ghazālī as the greatest scholar Islam has ever produced, and also as one of the world’s most influential thinkers.³⁶ For instance, Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (1327-1370 CE) describes him as “Highway of Religion, whereby men may be enabled to reach the Abode of Peace.”³⁷ Indeed, he regards al-Ghazālī not just as a great scholar and thinker, but as a seer.³⁸ In the West, Ernest Renan—the 19th century European philologist—called him “the most original mind among Arabian philosophers.”³⁹ In the same regard, Watt also acknowledges al-Ghazālī’s high status and considers him as “the leader in Islam’s supreme encounter with Greek philosophy,” from which Islamic theology attained its victory and in which philosophy—particularly Neo-Platonism—“received a blow from which it did not recover.”⁴⁰

Al-Ghazālī was born on 1058 CE/450 AH in Ṭūs, a city in Khurasan province in Persia. After his father’s death, he and his brother Aḥmad Ghazālī (c. 1061-1123/26 CE) were put into the care of a Sufī who was his father’s friend. In 1080 CE, at almost 23 years old, he travelled to Nīshāpūr where he studied under Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī⁴¹ (1028-1085 CE), the greatest theologian of his time, and he became the Imām’s favourite student. Al-Ghazālī’s scholarship impressed Nizām al-Mulk (1018-1092 CE), the powerful Seljuq vizier, who gave al-Ghazālī an honourable place in his camp-court. From youth, al-Ghazālī rejected *taqlīd* (naïve belief or blind following of the view and

³³ M. Afifi al-Akiti, “On Celebrating the 900th Anniversary of al-Ghazālī,” *The Muslim World* 101, no. 4 (2011), 573.

³⁴ Al-Qaraḍāwī. *Al-Imām al-Ghazālī bayna Madiḥih wa Nāqidih*. 4th ed. (Bayrūt: Mu’assasah al-Risālah, 1994), 11ff.; Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi’iyyah al-Kubrā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw and Maḥmud Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī, vol. 6 (Cairo: Dār Aḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1968), 191ff.; Ebrahim Moosa, “Ghazali, Al- (C. 1059-1111),” in *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, ed. Richard C. Martin, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 274; W. Montgomery Watt, “Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Al-,” In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., vol. 5 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 3469-3472.

³⁵ Thomas Glick, Steven J. Livesey, and Faith Wallis, eds., *Medieval Science, Technology, and Medicine: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 194.

³⁶ Watt, introduction to *Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, trans. W. Montgomery Watt (1953; repr., Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2004), 13; Ebrahim Moosa, *Ghazālī and the Poetics of Imagination* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 2.

³⁷ Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 191; Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 215.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Quoted in S. Nomanul Haq, foreword to *Decisive Criterion*, ix.

⁴⁰ Watt, introduction to *Faith and Practice*, 13.

⁴¹ Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī. Imām al-Ḥaramayn means “leading master of the holy cities” of Mecca and Medina.

authority of others), and was earnestly searching for “necessary truths” or the reality of things (e.g., infallible or certain knowledge and the reality of things). To satisfy his intellectual and spiritual quest, he scrutinised the beliefs and teachings of various sects and disciplines.⁴² In 1091 CE when he was 33 years old, al-Ghazālī was appointed as chief professor in the Nizāmiyyah college of Baghdād, the most distinguished academic position of his age.⁴³ Four years later (1095 CE), after falling into a spiritual crisis which also affected his health, he suddenly retired from his prestigious post, renounced his worldly possessions, and lived in seclusion as a Sufi. After nearly eleven years of retirement and solitude, at the request of the Seljuq minister Fakhr al-Mulk, al-Ghazālī eventually appeared in public life and resumed teaching in 1106 CE at Nizāmiyyah College in Nīshāpūr for a short period. He subsequently retired to Ṭūs where he established his own *madrasah* (religious school) in order to teach and share his teachings and spiritual experience.⁴⁴ He died on Monday 18th December 1111 CE (14th Jumāda II 505 AH), at the age of fifty-three.

Augustine and al-Ghazālī have been chosen for the present research for a number of reasons. Even though living at different periods and coming from different religious traditions, both thinkers addressed the issue of faith and good deeds in profound and, to some extent, parallel ways albeit with some differences in details. The similarity can be seen in their emphases on the interiority of the issues, namely, on the inner dimensions of faith and good deeds. Based on their spiritual experiences, they also emphasised the psychological aspect of man, namely, the inner self or the soul, and therefore, both offered their deep and spiritual analyses of man’s nature vis-à-vis the inner dimension of religious observance of their respective religious traditions. In this regard, they harmonised mysticism or spirituality⁴⁵ with orthodox teachings.⁴⁶ Daniel G. Shaw observed that even though they both lived in different centuries and places, the conditions in their periods and the theological developments of their respective religious traditions were quite similar. Both of them lived in periods of transition between the classical and medieval phases of their respective religious traditions.⁴⁷ Furthermore, they earnestly safeguarded

⁴² *Munqidh*, 60-64, 69-109; *Deliverance*, 17-20, 26-66.

⁴³ Watt, introduction to *Faith and Practice*, 9.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 33.

⁴⁵ I use the term Sufism, mysticism, and spirituality (as well as their adjectives) in a general sense to refer to spiritual life and experience, and therefore, they are used interchangeably.

⁴⁶ Claudia Reid Upper, “Al-Ghazālī’s Thought Concerning the Nature of Man and Union with God,” *The Muslim World* 42, no. 1 (1952): 23.

⁴⁷ Shaw, “City or Garden,” x.

the orthodox stance and the spiritual elements of their respective religions from various views and interpretations that they regarded as erroneous.

Moreover, both of them have been known as the most prominent and influential scholars in their time up to this present day. They have each been regarded as outstanding saints, allowing them to have a parallel status. Both are highly respected in their own religious traditions. In Christianity, Augustine's teachings have been highly regarded (if also much debated) by Catholics and Protestants alike, both of whom have claimed their legitimacy in their own traditions. Augustine has been regarded as Christianity's al-Ghazālī and likewise, al-Ghazālī as Islam's Augustine.⁴⁸ Both have also been acknowledged as among the authentic speakers and defenders of their respective religious traditions, and they made a significant contribution to religious studies.

Arguably, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī were responsible for the renewal or revival of their respective religious traditions. They both underwent a spiritual conversion and attained as well as propagated spiritual insights. They interpreted their spiritual experiences in the light of what they believed to be orthodox teachings.⁴⁹ They both wrote autobiographies (the *Confessions* and *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl* [the Deliverance from Error] respectively)⁵⁰ which recounted their spiritual transformations, struggles, mystical visions, among other experiences.⁵¹ It has been accepted that al-Ghazālī injected spirituality into a potentially arid body of traditional Islamic theology. On similar terms, Augustine also brought in spiritual elements and synthesised some Neo-Platonic concepts into Christianity. In addition, they each systematised certain disciplines or sciences, harmonising or at least bridging the gap between them. They also introduced fresh interpretations, especially in spiritual tones, of certain traditional principles.

⁴⁸ In comparing al-Ghazālī to prominent Christian scholars, many scholars regard him as equal to Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. For instance, see Humayun Kabir, foreword to *The Revival of Religious Sciences: A Translation of the Arabic Work Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, by al-Ghazālī, trans. Bankey Behari (Farnham: Sufi Publishing Co., 1972), v; Eric Ormsby, preface to *Ghazali: The Revival of Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), ix; Upper, "Al-Ghazālī's Thought," 23.

⁴⁹ Upper, "Al-Ghazālī's Thought," 23.

⁵⁰ There are several English translations available on these works. For the *Confessions*, see *The Confessions* in *NPNF I.1*, 53-359; Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. with intro. and notes Henry Chadwick (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). For the *Deliverance*, see Richard Joseph McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl and Other Relevant Works of al-Ghazālī* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 61-143; Al-Ghazālī, *Deliverance from Error and Attachment to the Lord of Might and Majesty*, book 1 in *The Faith and Practise of al-Ghazālī*, trans. W. Montgomery Watt (1953; repr., Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2004).

⁵¹ For a comparative analysis of their spiritual transformation, see James A. Highland, "Alchemy: The Transformation of the Soul in the Conversion Narratives of Augustine and Ghazzali" (PhD thesis, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, 1999).

Augustine is famously known for his doctrinal and spiritual insight. His understandings of Original Sin, grace, and free will have long been accepted as the standard interpretations or doctrines in Western Christianity, although they have also been very controversial. He introduced and systematised the doctrine of Original Sin based on his understanding of Paul's teachings. While Augustine's critics have often accused him of holding a pessimistic view of the human condition, it can also be argued that his great contribution was to focus on psychological issues of the will and inner intent. His contribution in systematising the doctrine of Grace has led to him being accorded the title of the *Doctor of Grace (Doctor Gratiae)*.⁵² Indeed, because of his great contribution Augustine is regarded as the greatest Doctor of the Church, exerting a powerful influence—especially in Western Christianity—up to the present.⁵³

For his part, al-Ghazālī has been recognised not only in theology and jurisprudence, but also in ethics, Sufism, and some other fields.⁵⁴ He successfully synthesised Sufism with traditional Islam, which prior to his endeavours were in conflict. He also systematised “the Science of the Way of the Afterlife (*‘Ilm Ṭarīq al-Ākhirah*) or “the Science of the Hereafter (*‘Ilm al-Ākhirah*).”⁵⁵ Thus, as many scholars have observed, he gave a proper place to Sufism in Islam.⁵⁶ Al-Ghazālī's treatment of philosophy has also been very influential. While he treated Sufism positively, he was more critical towards philosophy. Many scholars suggest that al-Ghazālī attacked and *dethroned* philosophy from Islam. Nonetheless he did not reject philosophy *in toto*. The philosophy

⁵² For a brief analysis of Augustine's doctrine of grace as well as some other doctrines, see Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 24-26, 443-454, and 465-467; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th rev. ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1977), 361-369.

⁵³ R. J. Teske, “Augustine, St.,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 1. (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 850-8851.

⁵⁴ Indeed, he was a polymath, an encyclopaedic author, theorist, theologian, jurist, moralist, Sufi, and reformer—to mention only a few—who wrote in various disciplines of knowledge. See M.S. Stern, introduction to *Iḥyā'* 31, 8; see also <http://www.ghazali.org/books/md/IIA-02trans.htm>; <http://www.ghazali.org/site/gz-mini.htm>.

⁵⁵ See Timothy J. Gianotti, “Beyond both Law and Theology: An Introduction to al-Ghazālī's ‘Science of the Way of the Afterlife’ in *Reviving Religious Knowledge (Iḥyā' ‘Ulūm al-Dīn)*,” *The Muslim World* 101, no. 4 (2011), 597-613; Kenneth Garden, “Coming Down from the Mountaintop: Al-Ghazālī's Autobiographical Writing in Context,” *The Muslim World* 101, no. 4 (2011), 583-584.

⁵⁶ Duncan B. MacDonald, “The Life of Al-Ghazālī, with Especial Reference to His Religious Experience and Opinions,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 20 (1899): 71-72; Aaron Hughes, “Imagining the Divine: Al-Ghazālī on Imagination, Dreams, and Dreaming,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70, no. 1 (2002), 35.

that he refuted was the kind which he regarded as *unIslamic*. Indeed, he himself, on some occasions, employed the philosophical method.⁵⁷

Al-Ghazālī has been regarded as the *mujaddid* (the reviver or the Islamic reformer) of the 5th century AH of Islam, and has been credited with various titles, of which the most famous is as *Hujjat al-Islam (Proof of Islam)*.⁵⁸ His *iṣlāḥī* teachings (Islamic reform),⁵⁹ and his systematisation of the doctrine of the heart and soul, the concept of wayfarer (spiritual journey to God), as well as the spiritual relationship with God—for instance through *fanā'* (a state of self-annihilation or a complete absorption in God)—have been widely celebrated.⁶⁰ His spiritual outlook pervades his writings.

Neither of these two scholars limited themselves within the customary purview of their respective religious traditional stances, but rather they moved beyond them, reaching the real essence and spiritual dimension of religious observance. Thus, both of them have also been regarded as great thinkers, philosophers, theologians, mystics,⁶¹ and doctors of their own religious traditions.

With regard to the issue of good deeds, as mentioned above, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī offered critical analyses of different interpretations, and, were involved in controversies that were either directly or indirectly related to the issue of faith and good

⁵⁷ Some modern scholars have observed this fact. For instance, Mahmud Hamdi Zaqud argues that al-Ghazālī was a great philosopher and that he appreciated and gave a proper place to philosophy in Islam. Martin Whittingham also acknowledges that al-Ghazālī had a strong interest in aspects of philosophy, especially logic. See further Mahmud Hamdi Zaqud, introduction to *Antara Falsafah Islam dan Falsafah Moden Barat: Suatu Perbandingan Antara al-Ghazali dan Descartes* [Islamic Philosophy and Modern Western Philosophy: A Comparison Between al-Ghazali and Descartes], trans. Mohd. Sulaiman Hj. Yasin (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1993); Martin Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qur'ān: One Book, Many Meanings* (London & New York: Routledge, 2007), 6. See also Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Taneli Kukkonen, "Al-Ghazālī on Accidental Identity and the Attributes," *The Muslim World* 101, no. 4 (2011), 658-679; Taneli Kukkonen, "Receptive to Reality: Al-Ghazālī on the Structure of the Soul," *The Muslim World* 102, no. 3-4 (2012), 541-561; M. Afifi al-Akiti, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of *Falsafa*: Al-Ghazālī's *Maḍnūn*, *Tahāfut* and *Maqāṣid* with Particular Attention to their *Falsafī* Treatments of God's Knowledge of Temporal Events," in Y.T. Langermann (ed.), *Avicenna and His Legacy: A Golden Age of Science and Philosophy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 51-100.

⁵⁸ Al-Qarāḍāwī, *Al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, 11ff; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 191ff.; Moosa, "Ghazali, Al- (C. 1059-1111)," 274; Watt, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Al-," 3469-3472.

⁵⁹ This is the term used and suggested by Mohamed AbuBakr A al-Musleh. See his "Al-Ghazālī as an Islamic Reformer (*Muṣliḥ*): An Evaluative Study of the Attempts of the Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī at Islamic Reform (*Iṣlāḥ*)" (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, 2008). For the discussion of the term see pp. 30-40.

⁶⁰ For an analysis of al-Ghazālī's concept of establishing relationship with God through *fanā'*, see Maha Elkaisy-Friemuth, *God and Humans in Islamic Thought: 'Abd al-Jabbār, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī* (London: Routledge, 2006), 121-151.

⁶¹ The term "mystic" here is used as equivalent to Sufism—which refer to mystical or spiritual thought, life, and experience—in which mystical thought and social engagement are not seen as mutually contradictory. It is therefore not to be understood in a narrowly understanding as an otherworldly attitude and contemplation to religion, nor to be associated with the notion of celibacy.

deeds. Augustine engaged in arguments against those views he considered to be unorthodox, such as those that belong to Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism. For his part, al-Ghazālī refuted the views of the Mu‘tazilites, the Khārijites, and the Murji’ites that he regarded as heretical. He also analysed and criticised some traditional views and practices that he disagreed with, as well as some views of the main groups that he called “seekers after truth,” namely, the theologians, the philosophers, the Bāṭīnites (the Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ite, also known as the Ta‘līmītes),⁶² and some extreme mystics or pseudo-Sufis.⁶³ It is true that both Augustine and al-Ghazālī place great importance on faith and God’s grace in salvation.⁶⁴ However, as I will argue, not only do they maintain the need to perform good deeds, but they also emphasise the importance of observing their inner dimension. Each of them refutes the extreme view that good acts are useless, or conversely, that one can merit salvation without God’s intervention. Augustine and al-Ghazālī were each formulating their reflections on good deeds at a time of great controversy and debate on the subject within each of their traditions. While neither offered the last word on the subject within their religious traditions, they both focused on their inner dimension in a way that deserves attention from Muslims and Christians alike. Their spiritual insights are not only helpful in improving the quality of good deeds, but also pave a way for a personal transformation in returning to God.

1.4 RESEARCH SCOPE

This research examines good deeds and their relationship to faith from a theological perspective. Particular focus is placed on the spiritual insights and attitudes of Augustine and al-Ghazālī towards good deeds. The discussion is divided into two main parts. The

⁶² This group was known with different names by different people or in different places. For instance, in Iraq, they were known as the Bāṭīnīyyah (the Bāṭīnites) the Carmathians and the Mazdīkites. They were also known as the Ta‘līmītes and heretics in Khurāsān. As for the title of the Bāṭīnites, it was given because of their belief in the existence of the esoteric meaning and interpretation for every exoteric teaching and revelation. See al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, trans. AK Kazi & JG Flynn (London; Boston: Kegan Paul International, 1984), 165.

⁶³ Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī considered Sufism as the best way that can help men to attain *ma‘rifatullāh* (the true knowledge of God) and nearness to God. He only criticised some views of extreme *Sufis* or pseudo-Sufis.

⁶⁴ “Salvation” in an Augustinian Christian perspective is associated with redemption from Original Sin. See W. G. Topmoeller, “Salvation,” In *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 623. Among the Qur’ānic terms used synonymously with, or to denote, “salvation” are *al-falāḥ* and *al-najāḥ* which are used more accurately to imply the state of successful or blissful life or happiness in the Hereafter. As will be discussed later, al-Ghazālī has his own conception of salvation. However, the term “salvation” is used in this research in a general sense to refer to the ultimate end (e.g., ultimate happiness, success, or blissful life in the Hereafter) according to a general religious perspective.

first part considers how the concepts of faith and good deeds have been addressed and understood in both Christianity and Islam, as well as establishing the significance of good deeds in both religions. The second part analyses some relevant issues in depth that are related to the attitudes and spiritual insights of Augustine and al-Ghazālī on good deeds. The main subjects to be analysed here are their stances on some relevant controversies, their understandings of the nature and significance of faith and good deeds, and their particular views of the inner dimension of good deeds, such as their inner meaning and inner preconditions. This research focuses on examining and comparing relevant issues from a religious or theological perspective, rather than attending to philosophical analysis. Without denying that there are significant differences on the theological frameworks and the ways Augustine and al-Ghazālī analysed the relevant issues, this research is more interested in scrutinising their common spiritual insights into good deeds.

Thus research confines its scope to Western Christianity and the Sunnite tradition of Islam. Nevertheless, the research does not place particular emphasis on the specific contents of faith and good deeds. Neither will the research deal extensively with the history of any religion, nor is it meant to focus on the biography of any particular theologian. Some brief background, however, is given in order to enable a clear understanding of the issue at hand, such as on some early alternate interpretations or controversies related to the issue of faith and good deeds, and the stances of Augustine and al-Ghazālī in the midst of those controversies.

The experiences and knowledge of Augustine and al-Ghazālī are indeed wide and deep, and are filled with spiritual mysteries like a vast ocean. It is not an easy task to be selective in discussing their treatment of the concept of good deeds. For that reason, I limit the scope of this research to only analysing selected primary issues that are pertinent to the subjects under discussion. Because of this specific scope, therefore, this research in no way intends to be, nor can be taken as, the comprehensive representation of the Christian and Islamic stances on the issues addressed in this research. However, it can provide some insights towards a better understanding of the general views of both religious traditions on those issues.

Both Augustine and al-Ghazālī are known as prolific writers who have left the world a massive legacy of writings. It is claimed that 5,000,000 words of Augustine

survive today.⁶⁵ Despite the fact that not all of his works have been successfully translated into English, there are nonetheless several collections of translations available. I have mostly used the collection of translations by Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (*NPNF*, series I) accessed from a digital library known as The Christian Classics Ethereal Library (CCEL). Although not a new translation, this collection offers the most extensive translation of Augustine's works. The majority of relevant treatises of Augustine are available in this collection, and for the sake of consistency, it is used as the main reference. Nevertheless, cross references to other translations are also made whenever necessary.

Unlike Thomas Aquinas' (1225-1274 CE) *Summa Theologica* and al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), there is no special book of Augustine that encapsulates all his thought on the issue at hand.⁶⁶ Many of his thoughts on the issue are scattered throughout his works, especially of anti-Pelagian works. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Augustine is known more as a controversialist rather than a systematic thinker. As Caroline Humfress has observed, Augustine and Jerome were "products of a highly personalized agonistic culture" and both of them were "professional controversialists in an age that valorized verbal combat."⁶⁷ With regards to Augustine's analysis of the will, James Wetzel argues that he was "an exquisite dramatist of the will, but not a great theorist."⁶⁸ His life and career were overburdened with controversy. While he produced systematic reflections on many aspects of Christian doctrine (such as the Trinity, free will, baptism), he also developed many ideas in treatises directed against the view of particular individuals. He was also a great preacher, who composed many hundreds of sermons covering a wide range of topics.⁶⁹ In addition, he was also known as a good administrator of his own religious community.⁷⁰ For this research, I focus more on those works of Augustine that deal with particular heretical

⁶⁵ See "Augustine: Texts and Translations," accessed 6 Oct. 2010, <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/textstrans.html>; Mark Vessey, "Augustine among the Writers of the Church," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 19:240-254; for al-Ghazālī's works, see <http://www.ghazali.org/site/oeuvre.htm>.

⁶⁶ Even though Augustine's *The City of God* and the *Confessions* have been highly regarded as his *magnum opus* or most important works, nevertheless these works do not really focus on the issue at hand, namely, on the concept of good deeds. Nonetheless, some insights of his thought concerning the issue are found scattered in these works and elsewhere.

⁶⁷ Caroline Humfress, "Controversialist: Augustine in Combat," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 25: 323-324.

⁶⁸ James Wetzel, "Augustine on the Will," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 26:351.

⁶⁹ For an analysis of Augustine as a preacher, see Hildegund Muller, "Preacher: Augustine and His Congregation," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 23:297-309.

⁷⁰ See Neil B. McLynn, "Administrator: Augustine in His Diocese," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 24:310-322.

views, namely, the Donatists, the Manichaeans, and the Pelagians, as well as certain of his doctrinal and moral treatises (vols. 3 & 5 of *NPNF I*). I also consulted his most important works, such as *The City of God* (vol. 2 of *NPNF I*) and the *Confessions* (vol. 1 of *NPNF I*).⁷¹ In addition, I have also referred to some other relevant works which are not available in *NPNF* collection, such as *On Faith and Works*, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, and *Answer to Julian (or Against Julian)*.⁷² Augustine's sermons and letters—although rich in reflection on many specific issues—have not been used as a principal source for several reasons. Firstly, their contents are rather general and unsystematic, and not directly related to the focus of this research. There is also no equivalent corpus of texts from al-Ghazālī's works. Thus, most of Augustine's relevant works consulted in this research come from, and are limited to, the first five volumes of the first series of *NPNF* collection.⁷³

As regards al-Ghazālī, he also left millions of words and they deal with almost all branches of knowledge known in his time.⁷⁴ However, only theological and ethical works related to the issues at hand have been chosen for this research.

There are different views among scholars on the chronology of al-Ghazālī's writings and concerning the authenticity of several books attributed to him. Several scholars have attempted to resolve this problem.⁷⁵ I follow the latest of these analyses, namely, George F. Hourani's *A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings* (published in 1984), which is the revised version of his previous edition (published in 1959).

⁷¹ However, for the *Confessions*, I will refer to the translation by Henry Chadwick.

⁷² All of these works come either from the collections of ACW or WSA.

⁷³ Among these works, in addition to the above mentioned works, are; *The Enchiridion, A Treatise on Faith and the Creed, On the Creed, A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, A Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter, A Treatise on Nature and Grace, A Treatise Concerning Man's Perfection in Righteousness, A Treatise on the Grace of Christ, and on Original Sin, A Treatise on Grace and Free Will*, and some others.

⁷⁴ The majority of al-Ghazālī's works can be found in al-Ghazālī's website—thanks to Muhammad Hozien, the editor of the website—<http://www.ghazali.org/>.

⁷⁵ For instance are Ignaz Goldziher, *Streitschrift Des Gazālī Gegen Die Batinijja-Sekte* (Leiden, 1916); Louis Massignon, *Recueil de Textes Inédits Concernant l'histoire de La Mystique En Pays d'Islam* (Paris, 1929); M. Asin Palacios, *La Espiritualidad de Algazely Su Sentido Cristiano* (Madrid: Imprenta de Estanislao Maestre, 1935); W. Montgomery Watt, "The Authenticity of the Works Attributed to Al-Ghazālī," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (New Series)* 84, no. 1-2 (1952): 24-45; George F. Hourani, "The Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 79, no. 4 (1959): 225-233; Maurice Bouyges, *Essai de Chronologie des Oeuvres de al-Ghazali (Algazel)*, ed. Michel Allard (Beirut: L'Institut de Lettres Orientales de Beyrouth, 1959); 'Abdurrahman Badawī, *Mu'allafāt al-Ghazālī*, 2nd ed. (Kuwayt: Wakalat al-Maṭbū'āt, 1977); Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in al-Ghazzali* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1975); George F. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104, no. 2 (1984): 289-302.

The ethical works of al-Ghazālī which are filled with spiritual insights are the focus of this research, and hence form my main reference. They are *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), *Kīmīyā’ Sa’ādah* (The Alchemy of Happiness or Eternal Bliss), and *al-Arba‘īn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* (The Forty Fundamentals of Religion). In addition, I have also consulted other relevant works, such as *Mīzān al-‘Amal* (The Criterion of Action), *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (The Deliverance from Error), *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah* (The Beginning of Guidance), *al-Mustazhirī*, or also known as *Faḍā’ih al-Bāṭiniyyah wa Faḍā’il al-Mustazhiriyyah* (The Infamies of the Bāṭinites and the Merits of the Mustazhirites), *Fayṣal al-Tafriqa Bayna al-Islām wa al-Zandaqa* (On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam), *Ayyuha al-Walad* (O Beloved Son), and some other works.⁷⁶ I believe, by focusing on these works, a sufficiently comprehensive summary of their thoughts can be achieved.

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The issue of and the relationship of good deeds to faith is a recurring one, and in Islam and Christianity, this issue has provoked considerable disagreement, contributing to the creation of rival sects with different interpretations, accused by others of being heretics. With regard to Christianity, this debate is as old as its scripture, because the conflict over this matter can be found in the epistles of Paul and James. While the former places great emphasis on faith, the latter maintains that faith without good deeds is useless. Various debates have arisen and different views have been proposed. On the one hand, there is a group of scholars who believe that both James and Paul clearly contradict each other and therefore their views can never be harmonised. Martin Luther (1483-1546 CE) championed this stance in the 16th century. In the 20th century, this stance has been supported by J. T. Sanders, J. H. Ropes and R. Bultmann, E. C. Blackman, J. C. Becker, S. Laws, G. Bornkamm, and some others.⁷⁷ On the other hand, there are other groups who

⁷⁶ Among his important works in Sufism and ethics, I only avoid to consult *Minhāj al-‘Ābidīn* [Curriculum of the Worshipers or The Path of the Worshipful Servants]. I agree with some scholars (e.g., Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240) and Mashad al-‘Allāf) to doubt its authenticity as a work of al-Ghazālī for several reasons; using different and odd style as compared to other works of al-Ghazālī (e.g., makes reference to “our Sheikh said...”—which is never used by al-Ghazālī in his other writings); makes reference to unknown works; does not make reference to any works of al-Ghazālī which is known; and proposes some different views on several issues. The most obvious is its extreme concept of absolute or passive *Tawakkal* (God reliance) which contradicts al-Ghazālī’s view found in his widely known writings. See <http://www.ghazali.org/biblio/AuthenticityofGhazaliWorks-AR.htm>.

⁷⁷ See Jeremy T. Alder, “The Relationship between Faith and Works: A Comparison of James 2:24 and Ephesians 2:8-10” (Master’s thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2005), 4-5. See further Jack T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 121-122; James Hardy Ropes,

argue that both James and Paul are united and complementary. In contradistinction to Luther, John (Jean) Calvin (1509-1564 CE) held this stance in the 16th century. In the 20th century, this view was propagated by Douglas J. Moo, R. C. Sproul, James B. Adamson, George Eldon E. Ladd, W. J. Burghardt and T. C. Lawler, and some others.⁷⁸ Augustine himself believed that the views of Paul and James were not contradictory but complementary.⁷⁹

In Augustine's time, the 4th/5th century, some controversies that were either directly or indirectly related to this issue became more intense, ending with the charge of heresy being applied to certain groups (Manichaeism,⁸⁰ Donatism, and Pelagianism). Several councils (e.g., Carthage in 412, 416, and 418, Ephesus in 431) were held to condemn those views (particularly Pelagianism) which were considered as heretical, and to defend as well as to articulate the orthodox position. Augustine was the authority who played a central role in tackling these controversies.⁸¹ Perhaps it was due to his relentless endeavour and strong influence that the Church of his time, especially the North African Church, actively engaged in these controversies.⁸² The debate rose again and reached its peak in the 16th century, the beginning of the modern era, when controversy over faith and justification *assailed* the late medieval Christendom, eventually resulting in the schism of Protestantism from Catholicism. Figures, such as Luther and Calvin, and the Council of Trent (1545-1563 CE) were important in defining the manifestation of the controversy in this period. Since then, there has been recurring debate continuing to modern times. This issue also develops and finds its own manifestation in a new century.⁸³

A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1916), 35-36; Rudolf Bultman, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1955), 2:163; E. C. Blackman, *The Epistle of James* (London: SCM, 1957), 96; J. C. Becker, *Paul the Apostle* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 251; S. Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 132-133; G. Bornkamm, *Paul* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 153-154.

⁷⁸ See Alder "The Relationship," 5-6. See further Douglas J. Moo, *James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 45-46; Sproul, *Faith Alone*, 160-171; James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 34-36; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 638-639; W. J. Burghardt and T. C. Lawler, eds., introduction to *On Faith and Works*, by Augustine, trans. Gregory J. Lombardo (New York: Newman Press, 1988), 3-4.

⁷⁹ See *On Faith and Works*.

⁸⁰ As already noted, although Manichaeism was a separate religion, it will be treated together with the other groups considered as heretic for the reasons already mentioned.

⁸¹ Denzinger, *The Sources*, 52; Warren Thomas Smith, "Augustine of Hippo," In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 624-630; Teske, "Augustine, St.," 858-861.

⁸² While it is true that there was already a debate over these controversies before Augustine's involvement (e.g., by Jovinian and Jerome, etc.), the debate only reached its peak in the time of Augustine.

⁸³ For instance, in the 20th century, the controversy found its new manifestation in the debate between Zane Hodges and John MacArthur which represents *free grace* and *lordship theology* views respectively. The

As regards Islam this issue has also caused conflicts, particularly in the early centuries. Not only did certain early sects or movements address this issue (Khārijites, Murji'ites, and Mu'tazilites, as mentioned above), but Bāṭinites advocated that all faith and good deeds must be in accordance with the teachings of their *Imām*—a doctrine which al-Ghazālī earnestly refuted. All these propositions were ultimately regarded as heretical views, and therefore all these groups were charged with heresy.

The issue of faith and its relationship to justification or salvation has not been discussed on its own, but has always been related to the issue of good deeds. It is the former, however, which has been regarded as the major issue, and has therefore been given greater emphasis in the circles of academic and non-academic works alike. Nevertheless, a majority of these discussions—either descriptive or comparative—have been mostly conducted within the context of Western Christianity, specifically the Catholic and the Protestant traditions. Perhaps this trend is due to the fact that there is no other religious tradition which has been so directly affected and challenged by this issue as Western Christianity. On the other hand, the issue of good deeds has not really been systematically addressed in a comparative context between two religions (Christianity and Islam), and particularly between Augustine and al-Ghazālī.

As argued above, the issue of good deeds (e.g., their essential requirements, nature, and role) is also as important as the issue of faith, for good deeds are not only the fruits but also a direct manifestation of true faith. This issue has played its own controversial *role*, especially in the early centuries of Christianity and Islam, when some groups were excommunicated and charged as heretics. Further, as stated above, in the 16th century this issue, together with those issues of faith and justification, also *contributed* towards the schism between Catholicism and Protestantism. The issue of good deeds is complex and worthy of study.

In addition to this, ignorance and confusion over the essence and different dimensions of good deeds necessitate this research. There is a tendency for Christians and Muslims in modern societies to overlook their inner dimension, which is their essence, to the extent that the majority of them do not even realise its existence. Consequently, the sense of divine presence in everyday activity, the spirituality within oneself, beautiful inner qualities, such as sincerity and humility are also deteriorating. Therefore, some fall

former maintains that salvation does not require good deeds and the latter argues that if there are no good deeds, salvation is uncertain. See Alder "The Relationship," 6-9.

short in putting into proper balance the observance of the inner and outer dimensions of their deeds. Deeds are wrongly perceived to be not more than physical actions that are devoid of an inner or spiritual dimension. In other words, certain practices of religious observances have become purely ritualistic, dogmatic, or legalistic, being devoid of spirituality. This leads to the problem of performing good deeds proudly, heedlessly, ignorantly, insincerely, and the like. Since Augustine and al-Ghazālī have already addressed this issue in profound ways, it is hoped that a comparative study of their spiritual insights into the concept of good deeds might contribute to the overcoming of this pressing problem.

A vast body of literature has been written and published about Augustine and al-Ghazālī, addressing various aspects of their lives, teachings, thoughts, and philosophies.⁸⁴ Several comparative studies between Augustine and al-Ghazālī have also been conducted.⁸⁵ As far as the attitudes taken towards good deeds is concerned, however, no work has yet attempted such a comparative analysis between these two great scholars as is proposed by this research. Specific comparative studies on good deeds between Christianity and Islam in general, and between Augustine and al-Ghazālī in particular, are still underdeveloped. While both thinkers have generated many scholarly analyses from within their religious traditions, there have been few attempts to compare their spiritual insights into good deeds. There is a need for students of both Islam and Christianity to understand common concerns in both religious traditions, even if articulated within different theological frameworks. Here lies the major contribution of this research, that is, to analyse and compare another less focused, yet quite significant issue in the perspective of two of the greatest scholars from two major religious traditions. By analysing these aspects in the works of Augustine and al-Ghazālī, within the framework of their different religious traditions, it is hoped that this research will contribute some insights into how to improve the quality of the performance of good deeds among Christians and Muslims. It is also hoped that this research will contribute to a clearer mutual understanding and respect between the adherents of religions, especially between Christians and Muslims.

⁸⁴ Because of the vast quantity of literature on both Augustine and al-Ghazālī, I have to admit my inability to consult all of them. However, I have tried my best to consult those which are relevant and accessible to me during my studies.

⁸⁵ See Chapter 2 of literature review on available comparative study on Augustine and al-Ghazālī.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The general questions this research seeks to answer are as follows:

1. How have the concepts of faith and good deeds been addressed and understood in Christianity and Islam?
2. How did Augustine and al-Ghazālī respond towards different interpretations or controversies that are directly or indirectly related to the issue of good deeds and their relationship to faith?
3. What are the fundamental teachings and spiritual insights of Augustine and al-Ghazālī concerning good deeds?
4. Are there any similarities and differences between the stances and views of Augustine and al-Ghazālī on the above issues?

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Therefore, the purposes of this research are:

1. To examine briefly the concepts of faith and good deeds according to the Christian and Islamic perspectives.
2. To analyse Augustine's and al-Ghazālī's stances towards different interpretations or controversies that are directly or indirectly related to the issue good deeds and their relationship to faith.
3. To analyse the fundamental teachings and spiritual insights of Augustine and al-Ghazālī concerning good deeds.
4. To highlight the similarities and the differences between Augustine's and al-Ghazālī's stances and teachings on the issues discussed above.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research falls within the domain of the history of religious thought with a comparative focus on a specific issue, namely, the attitudes taken towards good deeds between two major religious traditions (Christianity and Islam) with particular reference to two of their most prominent scholars (Augustine and al-Ghazālī respectively). It is therefore theoretical in nature, and it involves bibliographic research. It uses descriptive, analytic, and comparative methods. Both primary and secondary sources in English, Arabic, Malay, and Indonesian languages were consulted. With regard to the works of

Augustine and al-Ghazālī, as mentioned above, only the major writings of each author relevant to this research are studied.⁸⁶

Christianity and Islam have different histories, with each becoming established in a unique way. On the one hand, Christianity took a long time to become established due to its process of separation from Judaism, the establishment of its scriptures, and the gradual formulation of its doctrines and authorities, among other factors. Augustine was living in the formative period of Latin Christianity when many doctrines had not yet been formulated. Therefore, there were different interpretations and debates on certain fundamental issues. On the other hand, Islam had established itself quickly. Among the main reasons for this is that its authority, namely, the revelation or the Qur’ān, was clear and accepted unanimously by Muslims. It is therefore not surprising to find that various exegeses of the Qur’ān developed in the early centuries of Islam. When al-Ghazālī was born, Islamic schools of thought were already established. Because of these differences, certain arrangements of the earlier chapters that deal with Christianity and Islam are not identical. Some parts are dealt with more extensively than the others depending on their contexts.⁸⁷

Since Augustine and al-Ghazālī employed different methods in their writings and in addressing the concept of good deeds, their arguments cannot be analysed in identical fashion. Even though al-Ghazālī wrote on various disciplines and he did not limit his writing to explaining the concept of good deeds, most of his relevant writings are straightforward. This is because al-Ghazālī was a systematic thinker and writer, and despite living in a time coloured with various conflicting views,⁸⁸ many of his relevant works consulted in this research were written in a *peaceful* period of his life (in retirement or seclusion, and while teaching), and many of these works were meant as guide books and inspiration for people. On the other hand, the time of Augustine was coloured by bitter conflicts with some groups with whom he actively engaged. Most of his writings were prepared as answers, defences, or refutations of some conflicting views prevalent in his time. It is therefore not an easy task to find and examine his teachings on the concept

⁸⁶ Because I do not know Latin, I therefore rely entirely on the English translations of Augustine’s writings. Likewise, my references to al-Ghazālī’s writings also come mainly from the English translation. However, I also consulted some of their original Arabic writings.

⁸⁷ This is evident especially in the earlier discussions of faith and good deeds in Christianity and Islam, where unlike in the case of Christianity, I need to analyse the issues according to Islamic perspective in the light of the main Qur’ānic exegeses and different established schools of law.

⁸⁸ For a brief analysis of various groups together with their conflicting attitude and beliefs, see W. N. Arafat, “Al-Ghazālī on Moral Misconceptions,” *Islam Quarterly* 14 (1970): 57-62.

of good deeds which are spread throughout his works. For that reason, the organization of certain parts of the relevant chapters will not be identical. Indeed, as Highland has remarked in his thesis “to try to make them identical would not allow us to understand how each thinker ordered his own thought.”⁸⁹

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research consists of seven main chapters. This first chapter examines the relevant important areas which form the framework of this research. The areas covered in here are research background, significance of the research, biographical sketch and justification, research scope, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, research methodology, and lastly organisation of the research.

The second chapter is devoted to a literature review in which relevant works are consulted and analysed. While many writings are available that are either directly or indirectly related to different aspects of this research, only some of them which can provide a general context to this research are reviewed. Older literature on the issue of faith and good deeds has also been consulted (particularly in relation to Muslim literary tradition), as it can sometimes still offer significant discussion of relevant issues.

The discussions of the subsequent chapters are arranged first according to Christian perspective and specifically those of Augustine, then followed by the Islamic perspective and those of al-Ghazālī. Since faith and good deeds are both fundamental aspects of religion, and controversies over good deeds are always associated with faith and vice versa, the third and fifth chapters are therefore aimed at examining the general understanding and relationship of these two aspects of religion according to the Christian and Islamic perspectives respectively. In addition, they are aimed at establishing the dynamic nature of faith, and the significance of good deeds in both of these religious traditions. Firstly, the general meanings of the terms “faith” and “good deeds” as well as some related concepts are highlighted briefly. This introductory section is only meant to give a rather general definition of the relevant concepts based on general sources. Next, the concepts of faith and good deeds as found in the Christian and Islamic scriptures are analysed. Since al-Ghazālī came long after the Islamic schools of thought already established, the views of the Sunnites, as well as of the Shi‘ites—particularly the Bāṭinites—are also examined briefly.

⁸⁹ Highland, “Alchemy,” 8.

The next part of Chapters Three and Five examine the characteristics and relative importance of faith and good deeds as exemplified in the Bible and the Qur'ān, as well as in the Prophetic traditions. The accounts of both scriptures on the role and relationship between faith and good deeds are also analysed. Different relevant alternate interpretations on the issue of faith and good deeds within Christianity and Islam are considered briefly at the end of each of these chapters. All of these views are helpful in order to understand the broader context of the issue within religious traditions from which Augustine and al-Ghazālī arrived.

Chapters Four and Six are devoted to analysing some of the relevant issues according to Augustine's and al-Ghazālī's perspectives in more detail. Each chapter consists of two parts. The first part examines their backgrounds, stances towards relevant different interpretations or controversies, as well as their dynamic views of faith and good deeds. Their particular understandings of the inner dimension of good deeds—such as inner meanings and inner preconditions—are the focus of the second part. Both insist that good deeds are essential, and that human beings are accountable before God for their actions. Consequently, man's deeds will either merit reward or punishment.⁹⁰ However, their understandings of good deeds are deeper than this and filled with rich spiritual insights, addressing them in their own unique and profound ways. They believe that there is an inner dimension of good deeds that needs to be observed. They therefore believe that apart from the outward performance of good deeds, believers also need to understand their inner meanings, and observe some inner preconditions or acquire some inner qualities, which form their real essence.

Chapter Seven is dedicated to a comparative analysis of selected primary aspects of the issues discussed in the previous chapters. It examines the similarities and differences on those issues between the Christian and Islamic perspectives in general, and the views of Augustine and al-Ghazālī in particular. Without neglecting certain significant differences in their theological frameworks, this chapter is more interested in examining their common spiritual insights into relevant issues. The last part of this research draws a general conclusion about the whole discussion.

⁹⁰ *City of God*, V.9-10, 155-157; *Christian Doctrine*, I.21, 835; *Grace & Free Will*, letter II.1, 818-819, etc.; *Iḥyā'*, I.1, 74-75; III.9, 360; IV.1, 23-32; *Revival*, I.1, 84; III.9 268; IV.1, 25-34; *Iḥyā'* 31, 65-81; *Alchemy*, 108ff., etc.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a vast literature, either directly or indirectly relevant to the general scope of this research, relating to either Augustine or al-Ghazālī.¹ Yet although the issue of good deeds and their relationship to faith has generated several debates in the early Christian and early Islamic centuries, there are not many studies which compare issues related to good deeds according to Christianity and Islam in general, and Augustine and al-Ghazālī in particular. Comparative study of the issue of good deeds according to these two thinkers is still underdeveloped. This chapter will review some relevant literature, beginning with an overview of the available comparative studies between Augustine and al-Ghazālī, based on the general organisation of this research.

2.2 COMPARATIVE STUDIES ON AUGUSTINE AND AL-GHAZĀLĪ: AN OVERVIEW

The first scholar to attempt to compare these two outstanding thinkers was Heinrich Frick, in a thesis submitted in 1919.² In the late 1990s, Frick's interest was taken further by James A. Highland.³ Both scholars were interested in comparative analysis of conversion or spiritual transformation in Augustine and al-Ghazālī. Highland reports that Frick was interested in tracing the influence of Neo-Platonic thought on each thinker's account of their conversion, namely, the *Confessions* and *Munqidh*, arguing that Neo-Platonism played a significant role in both accounts, and this is among the reasons for their similarity.⁴

Highland, on the other hand, focuses on the process of the transformation of the soul between Augustine and al-Ghazālī, based on their conversion narratives. His main

¹ For instance see Thomas Williams, "Recent Work on Saint Augustine," <http://philpapers.org/rec/WILRWO-2>; <http://www.ghazali.org/biblio/gazali.htm>; <http://www.ghazali.org/site/misc.htm>; <http://www.ghazali.org/site/dissert.htm>.

² Heinrich Frick, "Ghazali's Selbstbiographie: Ein Vergleich mit Augustins Konfessionen," (PhD thesis, Universitat Giessen, 1919), published by J. C. Hinrichs, Leipzig with the same title in the same year.

³ Highland, "Alchemy," (1999).

⁴ See James A. Highland, "Alchemy: The Transformation of the Soul in the Conversion Narratives of Augustine and Ghazzali" (PhD thesis, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, 1999), 15. As I have not been able to obtain Frick's dissertation, I am relying on Highland's report of Frick's studies.

argument is that the transformation of the soul is fundamental to both thinkers. He contends that other aspects of their thoughts were of secondary importance compared to the spiritual transformation. Highland asserts that for both, the transformation of the soul should be described as a spiritual alchemy; by doing so, readers can understand the reason why both of them regard devotion to God, including the performance of good deeds, as a continual and effortless process, and indeed, is the most important aspect in life.

Frick and Highland are right in maintaining that the spiritual transformation undergone by Augustine and al-Ghazālī played a central role in shaping their thoughts. Without a doubt, the spiritual or mystical context forms not only the foundation of their theology, but their vision and goal (e.g., to attain the highest level of happiness, the nearness to God, or the spiritual union with God). For that reason, they turned their focus towards the inner spiritual dimension of good deeds, and proposed certain inner preconditions to religious observances, seen as essential towards achieving this spiritual goal.

Daniel G. Shaw is interested in comparative eschatology in their understanding of the final estate of the blessed in the life to come based on Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* (Book 22, chapters 29 and 30) and al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* (Book 40, part 2, sections 13 through 19). He analyses the hermeneutic approaches of Augustine and al-Ghazālī in interpreting eschatological beliefs of "the future." He suggests that although eschatology has been long neglected by scholarship, it is far more valuable than previously thought.⁵ He found that although there are some differences on issues of detail, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī maintain the reality of eternal reward in the Hereafter for the blessed soul. Both agree that there are different grades of eternal happiness attained, depending on spiritual attainment and the degrees of personal relationship with God. In addition, they both emphasise the enlightenment of the inner self, the blessed soul, through personal relationship with God. Certainly, this relates to the spiritual aspect of religious life, and among the ways to attain this is by observing the inner dimension of religious observances.

⁵ Shaw suggests three assumptions; 1) that eschatological texts can offer valuable information on the central values and aspirations of certain cultures; 2) that knowledge and various contexts surrounding particular authors and their writings are important to the understanding of the texts; 3) that the most authentic texts for such an assessment are those which have been widely celebrated throughout the ages by various generations of their traditions. See Daniel G. Shaw, preface to "City or Garden: St. Augustine and al-Ghazālī on the Final Estate of the Blessed" (PhD thesis, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois 1987), vii.

Perhaps the most recent comparative study on Augustine and al-Ghazālī is a thesis by Helmi Afizal Zainal, submitted in 2010.⁶ Helmi Afizal compares their concept of sin, maintaining that although both approach the concept of sin in their own ways and thus differ in their interpretations, they both insist that sin is the primary factor which separates man from God and His love. Sin is therefore regarded as the barrier and the detrimental factor to the spiritual relationship between man and God. Thus, in order to attain God's love, both urge purification from sin. Helmi Afizal's study is thus useful in understanding the views of Augustine and al-Ghazālī on factors that are harmful to good deeds and thus to the soul. While this has been one of several comparative studies, none specifically analyses and compares their understanding of good deeds as such.

The following discussion is devoted to reviewing some of the relevant literature, still worthy of attention, arranged and examined according to the general organisations of the chapters of this research, namely, the conceptualisation of faith and good deeds, the alternate interpretations and relevant controversies that are either directly or indirectly encountered by Augustine and al-Ghazālī, the biographical studies, as well as scholarly research on both of the thinkers.

2.3 THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS: INTERPRETATIONS AND CONTROVERSIES

Good deeds have a close connection to faith, and therefore have always been discussed together. In order to expound the meaning as well as the scriptural accounts of these concepts, some general references and exegetical studies have been consulted. The Bible and the Qur'ān are the main sources for identifying the scriptural concepts of faith and good deeds, as well as their characteristics. *The New American Bible* (NAB)⁷ and the English translation of the Qur'ān by Ali Unal entitled *The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English*⁸ have been used as the main references. In addition, different Biblical and Qur'ānic exegetical studies as well as Prophetic traditions have

⁶ Helmi Afizal Zainal, "The Concept of Sin According to St. Augustine (430 A.D) and al-Ghazali (1111 A.D): A Comparative Analysis" (Master's thesis, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 2010)."

⁷ *The New American Bible*, trans. from the original languages (Nashville: Catholic Bible Press, 1987). Henceforth referred to as NAB. All the Biblical quotations especially in the earlier chapters are based on this version. When quoting from Augustine's own quotations, however, I will use the Biblical passages that are used in the *NPNF* translation.

⁸ Ali Unal, *The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English*, New Jersey: Tughra Books, 2008.

been consulted in order to get a deeper perspective of the issue discussed.⁹ All these sources are important not only in order to examine the different meanings and contexts of faith and good deeds as found in the scriptures, but also to understand some causes that led to different interpretations and controversies about these concepts, and later, to analyse the stances of Augustine and al-Ghazālī on them.

Useful accounts of various controversies and councils in Christian history relating to faith and good deeds have been provided by Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, with key documents provided by John F. Clarkson (et al.) and Heinrich Denzinger.¹⁰ Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism all raised issues relating to faith and good deeds in Christianity, especially in Augustine's time. These controversies were often addressed in church councils and Augustine relentlessly refuted their views, which he regarded as unorthodox.¹¹ The introductions to Augustine's involvement in these controversies given in volumes 4 and 5 of NPNF collection (series I) also serve as a good starting point in understanding this issue in the early Christian centuries.¹² Gerald Bonner also offers a good elaboration on these three groups or movements as well as on Augustine's engagement with them.¹³ Other studies, especially biographies of Augustine that address these controversies either directly or indirectly are also important.

One such useful source is a compilation of scholarly articles in a volume entitled *A Companion to Augustine*.¹⁴ In Part IV of the volume, Johannes Van Oort contributes an

⁹ Among the Bible commentaries consulted are *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, and *William Neil's One Volume Bible Commentary*. See John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York: Oxford University, 2001); Charles M. Laymon, ed., *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible: Including All the Books of the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha, Together with Forty-Three General Articles* (London: Collins, 1972); and William Neil, *William Neil's One Volume Bible Commentary* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1962). As for the Qur'ān, there are various individual *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis) available since early centuries of Islam. I have focused my reference more on the *Ummahāt al-Tafāsīr* (the major exegeses). However, I have also consulted a few other exegetical studies (e.g., from Sūfī and Shi'ite perspectives).

¹⁰ See Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, *A History of Christian Doctrine: In Succession to the Earlier Work of G.P. Fisher*, Published in the *International Theological Library Series*. Assisted by Benjamin Drewery (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1978); John F. Clarkson et al., trans., *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation* (St. Louis, Mo.: Herder, 1995); Heinrich Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari from the thirtieth edition of Henry Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2007)

¹¹ See the last section of Chapter 3 for a brief examination of their views which have been regarded as heretical, and Chapter 4 for Augustine stance on these groups.

¹² See Albert H. Newman, introductory essay on the Manichaean heresy, in *NPNF I.4*, 5-37; Chester D. Hartranft, introductory essay, *NPNF I.4*, 509-551; Benjamin B. Warfield, introductory essay on Augustine and the Pelagian controversy, in *NPNF I.5*, 8-86.

¹³ Gerald Bonner, *St Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 3rd ed. (SCM Press: 1963; Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2002). Citations afterwards refer to the Canterbury edition.

¹⁴ Mark Vessey and Shelley Reid, eds., *A Companion to Augustine* (Chichester, West Sussex; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). Citations afterwards refer to individual articles.

important article on Augustine and the Manicheans.¹⁵ Oort argues that Augustine considered Manichaeism as a Christian heresy, considering it to be “Christian in essence, though of a very dangerous heretical cast.”¹⁶ Oort maintains that Augustine had a wide and thorough knowledge of the Manichaean writings. This helped him a lot in refuting Manichaean doctrines. However, Oort does not hesitate to acknowledge that Manichaeism had a considerable influence on Augustine’s thoughts (e.g., on some of his Biblical interpretations, on the doctrine of sexual concupiscence, on the doctrine of two antithetical kingdoms, etc.).

An introductory essay on the Manichaean heresy by Albert H. Newman in the volume *NPNF I.4* is another useful source, even if a little dated.¹⁷ Newman gives a brief, yet quite comprehensive, description of Manichaean history, philosophy, system, and doctrines. He also identifies its relation to some other religions, such as Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity.¹⁸ In relation to Christianity, he contends that Manichaeism is a perverted Christian doctrine, stating that even though Mani (c. 216–276 CE)—the founder and the Prophet of Manichaeism—presented his own corrupted version of Jesus Christ, he still claimed to be the promised Paraclete of Christ.¹⁹ Newman also gives a brief account on Augustine’s engagement with the Manicheans. Yet, his contention that Augustine was “never wholly a Manichaean” but regarded it just “a matter of opinion,” is not really accurate. Newman is unwilling to acknowledge that, in his Manichean period, Augustine converted some of his friends to Manichaeism.²⁰ Augustine himself recounted in his *Confessions* (book 3) how desperate his mother was and how hard she tried to get him back to Christianity.²¹ In addition, as Peter Brown argues, Augustine had once been confident that he found the “wisdom” he had been searching for in Manichaeism, and that from day to day, his “love” for Manichaeism grew more and more.²² In relation to this, other scholars also maintain that Augustine was “genuinely committed” to Manichaeism in his early phase.²³ Nevertheless, it is true that when he was a Manichaean, Augustine

¹⁵ Oort, “Augustine and the Books of the Manicheans,” in *A Companion to Augustine*, 15:188-199.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁷ Newman, introductory essay, 5-21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 21-32.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28-32.

²⁰ *Confessions*, IV.i.1, 52.

²¹ In his *Confessions*, Augustine recounts that his mother persistently hoped, prayed, and wept to God. She even begged a priest to debate with him with the hope that he will come back to Christianity. See *Confessions*, III.xi.19-xii.21, 49-51.

²² See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, esp. Chap. 5.

²³ Allan D. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1999), 39.

was satisfied to remain as a Hearer, a lay order of the Manichaeans, and never advanced himself to be one of the Elect.²⁴

Among the earliest and most important sources on Manichaeism is *The Fihrist* (The Catalogue) of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995 or 998 CE).²⁵ Even though Manichaeism is not his focus, he still devotes a chapter to it where he explains the history of Manichaeism, its doctrines, practices, and development. Indeed, Newman himself has benefited much from *The Fihrist*. Ibn al-Nadīm's exposition of the Manichaean doctrine on the origin of man is important in identifying Mani's attitude on man's nature and his deeds. Ibn al-Nadīm argues that Mani was not really concerned with embodied deeds, for the flesh was regarded as the creature of demons. This is because Mani believed that Adam and Eve were born out of demons' copulations between them.²⁶ This belief forms an integral part of Manichaean doctrines. Augustine was influenced by this belief and attitude when he was a Manichaean. Its consequence was to regard the flesh as evil. Thus, one had to liberate oneself through rigorous asceticism and certain ceremonial observance. This negative attitude of the Manichaeans towards man's nature, or to borrow Warren Thomas Smith's expression—the *malefic nature of flesh*²⁷—and their over emphasis on spiritual liberation, lessened the Manichaean commitment to observance of good deeds. Manichaeism and Augustine's involvement in the movement have generated many studies helpful to this research.²⁸

²⁴ There are two classes in Manichaeism, the Elect and the Hearer. The Elect refers to the upper class, the initiate or the monk who has passed through certain strict ceremonies. The Elect were believed to have attained the Light and therefore has to observe rigorous asceticism. The Hearers were the lay adherents which were not subjected to the strict rules, for instance, they could marry and had property.

²⁵ Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist: A 10th Century AD Survey of Islamic Culture*, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge (1970; repr. Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, Inc.; Chicago: Distributed by KAZI Publications, 1998). He was a prominent Muslim scholar, scientist, and bibliographer of the 10th century.

²⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 783. Ibn al-Nadīm argues that Mani said, “[t]hen one of those archons and the stars and urging, craving, passion, and guilt had sexual intercourse and from their intercourse there appeared the first man, who was *Adam*. What brought this to pass was [the intercourse of] the two archons, male and female. Then intercourse took place again, from which there appeared the beautiful woman who was *Eve* (Ḥawwā’).”

²⁷ Warren Thomas Smith, *Augustine: His Life and Thought* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 23.

²⁸ For instance, Brown analyses Manichean concepts of dualism and gnosis. He agrees with the standard view that Augustine was interested in Manichaeism because he believed that Manichaeism could offer the wisdom he had been searching for. Smith observes that Manichaeism “offered the type of pseudo-philosophical faith that would appeal to young Augustine the pseudo-intellectual.” The most important issue that led Augustine to Manichaeism was the problem of evil. He was once confident that the Manichean concept of dualism was the rational answer he had been looking for to solve the problem of evil. See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 46-60; Smith, *Augustine*, 23; Fitzgerald, *Augustine through the Ages*, 39; David E. Roberts, “The Earliest Writings,” in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. Roy W. Battenhouse (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 100, etc.

After almost nine years of believing in Manichaeism,²⁹ Augustine became dissatisfied with its answers to some problems. He eventually disengaged from it, and returned to Christianity. This important event—which took place in 386 CE, beginning in the garden of Milan—is known as his conversion and is well documented in his *Confessions*.

With regard to Donatism, Alexander Evers offers a useful study of Augustine’s involvement in the Donatist controversy.³⁰ Evers begins his article by examining the historical part of persecution and schism, arguing that Donatism “grew out of an older African theological tradition.”³¹ Evers affirms that the Donatist controversy centred on the issue of “clerical holiness.” In general, he observes that the Donatists made at least three main charges against the Catholics, namely, “that they [the Catholics] had been the original *traditores*; that they had then become persecutors; and that they were forever contaminated by the sins of those who had lapsed.”³² All these charges had been refuted by Augustine from different aspects. Although brief, Evers’ analysis of Augustine’s anti-Donatist writings, as well as his role in the controversy provides a useful contribution to this research.

Chester D. Hartranft provides a brief, but significant analysis of the Donatist schism and Augustine’s involvement in the controversy.³³ Bonner on the other hand, presents a more comprehensive treatment of Donatism, covering its history, development, theology, and Augustine’s involvement in the controversy.³⁴ In examining its theology, Bonner argues that its thought was influenced by St. Cyprian (c. 200-258 CE).³⁵ The Donatists believed that Cyprian stressed the holiness of the Church and regarded apostasy as among the gravest of sins. Appealing to Cyprian’s teaching, the Donatists advocated that the Church should be a congregation of saints, maintaining the need of the holiness and purity of the priest. The Donatists placed great emphasis to the need for observing good deeds and avoiding sin, especially among the priesthood, opposing anyone they regarded as a *traditor* (traitor) from administering the sacraments. As Henry Chadwick has observed, they did this in order to preserve the Church from *pollution* in accordance

²⁹ *Confessions*, III.xi.20, 50; IV.i.11, 52.

³⁰ Alexander Evers, “Augustine on the Church (Against the Donatists),” in *A Companion to Augustine*, 29:375-385.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 377.

³² *Ibid.*, 382.

³³ Hartranft, introductory essay, 509-551.

³⁴ Bonner, *St Augustine*, 237-311.

³⁵ St Cyprian—the martyr-bishop of Carthage—was highly revered, and considered as the great hero adorned with great personality. Therefore, he was regarded as the ideal example in Christian life.

with Paul's statement that the Church is "without spot or blemish."³⁶ As is widely known, disagreeing with the Donatist views, Augustine engaged in the controversy and wrote several works refuting and invalidating their interpretations.³⁷

The Pelagian controversy is the last but most serious controversy Augustine ever encountered.³⁸ It has been traditionally accepted that Pelagianism was a heretical movement. Possidius—the earliest Augustine biographer—declares that Pelagianism was a sect that deserved to be "abhorred and condemned."³⁹ One reason for this serious condemnation is that the Pelagians were charged with denying the doctrine of Original Sin, the foundation of Augustine's theology. In addition, the Pelagians were also charged with arguing that every man was born sinless, and that man was capable of attaining virtuousness, righteousness, or salvation through good deeds, independent of God's grace. Thus the Pelagians were accused of placing great emphasis to free will and good deeds at the expense of God's grace. Augustine perceived this as a dangerous threat to the central tenet of Christianity. Based on this premise, he relentlessly waged a series of campaigns against Pelagianism until his death.

This view, established as the standard position towards Pelagianism since Augustine's time, has also been accepted by many scholars. Thus, it is not surprising to see that the majority of Augustine's biographers adopt this view. However, there are some scholars who are ready to re-examine this standard position, or at least, ready to give less negative and more nuanced evaluation of Pelagianism, such as B. R. Rees and Bonner.⁴⁰ Perhaps, it is Bonner who most champions this new interpretation, paving a new way of reading the Pelagian controversy. Disagreeing with the traditional view of Pelagianism as a threat or a mass movement, Bonner proposes that Pelagianism was instead "a succession of accidentals"⁴¹ that needs to be re-assessed. In order to analyse Augustine's

³⁶ Henry Chadwick, *Augustine* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 82.

³⁷ For Augustine's writings against Donatism, see *NPNF I.4*.

³⁸ On the letters of Pelagius, see B. R. Rees, *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY, USA: Boydell Press, 1991).

³⁹ Possidius, *The Life of Saint Augustine*, 79.

⁴⁰ See B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Wolfboro, N.H.: Boydell Press, 1988). There are several studies by Bonner on this, for instance see "How Pelagianism was Pelagius? An Examination of the Contentions of Torgny Bohlin," in *Church and Faith in the Patristic Tradition: Augustine, Pelagianism, and Early Christian Northumbria* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1996), III, 350-358; "Augustine and Pelagianism," in *Church and Faith in the Patristic Tradition*, VII, 27-47; "Pelagianism and Augustine," in *Church and Faith in the Patristic Tradition*, VI, 33-51; and "Pelagianism Reconsidered," in *Church and Faith in the Patristic Tradition*, V, 237-241.

⁴¹ Bonner, "Pelagianism Reconsidered," 241.

teaching and thought on good deeds, all these groups and controversies (Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism) will be examined in the light of Augustine's views.

Augustine certainly engaged directly with these three controversies. Many of his writings are coloured by, and indeed, are directed at these debates. Among the primary issues that are relevant to this research dealt with in the Manichaean controversy are the nature of good and evil as well as the nature of soul. Augustine had already written five anti-Manichaean books before his ordination,⁴² and more were written after that. In the Donatist controversy, the primary relevant issue was the status of merit or deeds of priests in relation to their administration of the sacraments. Finally, in the Pelagian controversy, many important issues were involved, including man's nature, free will, infant baptism, God's grace, and many others. Augustine left a vast amount of writing related to the Pelagian controversy. In fact, it was this last controversy where Augustine advanced his most celebrated—but also controversial—views of Original Sin, corrupted free will, predestination, and the necessity of grace.

The issue of faith and good deeds also caused some conflicts in the early centuries of Islam. Thus, as in Christianity, there were some controversies that either directly or indirectly underscored the issue of faith and good deeds in the Islam. Ṭāhā Jābir al-ʿAlwānī in *The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam* provides a good historical analysis of some disagreements that arose in the early Islamic centuries.⁴³ Those relevant to this research are the controversies associated with the Khārijites, the Murji'ites, the Muʿtazilites, and the Bāṭinites (the Ismaʿīlī Shīʿites or the Taʿlīmītes).⁴⁴ The first two groups were no longer in existence in al-Ghazālī's time. Some of their views, however, still echoed in Muslim lands, and therefore, al-Ghazālī did not hesitate to refute their views, which he considered as heretical.⁴⁵

⁴² They are *On Free Will*, *On Genesis*, *Against the Manichaeans*, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, *On the Morals of the Manichaean*, and *On True Religion*.

⁴³ Ṭāhā Jābir al-ʿAlwānī, *The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam*, prepared from the original Arabic by AbdulWahid Hamid, ed. A.S. al Shaikh-Ali (1993; repr., Herndon, Va.; [Great Britain]: International Institute for Islamic Thought, 1994).

⁴⁴ See the last section of Chapter 5 for a brief examination of their views which have been regarded as heretical. Although one may argue that the Khārijites were subgroup of the Shīʿites, they developed into different group and had significant differences on some aspects. This research maintains that they are different groups for several reasons; that the Khārijites is examined (not as the Shīʿites) in relation to their action to the Murji'ites; the particular Khārijites already extinct, but not the Shīʿites which still flourish in some Muslim countries; the modern Shīʿites have their own distinctive teachings, such as on the *Imamate* doctrine, which is unknown to the Khārijites, etc.

⁴⁵ There were already many prominent Muslim scholars who refuted the views of these groups before al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī's argument and refutation of these views—especially of the Bāṭinite views of *imām*—however, are extensive, forceful, and sharp.

Among the earliest accounts of these heretical sects and their views are *Al-Ibānah ‘an Uṣūl al-Diyānah* (The Elucidation of Islam’s Foundation) and *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (Theological Opinions of the Muslims) of al-Ash‘arī (873-935 CE), of whom al-Ghazālī accepted his views in theology (*kalām*).⁴⁶ In his *Ibānah*, al-Ash‘arī exposes briefly the beliefs of the heretical groups that he calls deviators and innovators. He includes among them the Mu‘tazilites, the Khārijites, the Murji’ites, and the Shī‘ites. Al-Ash‘arī’s detailed explanation of their doctrines is to be found in his *Maqālāt*, where he divides the unorthodox sects into ten main groups. Again, the Mu‘tazilites, the Khārijites, the Murji’ites, and the Shī‘ites are included in these divisions. His treatment of these groups is extensive, attaching great focus on their ideological and doctrinal disagreements.

There are other monumental heresiographical studies that offer more systematic accounts of different sects in the early centuries of Islam. The most important of these are those of Abū Manṣūr ‘Abd al-Qāhir ibn Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī⁴⁷ (d. 1037 or 1038 CE) and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm Aḥmad al-Shahrastānī⁴⁸ (1076/86-1153 CE). All of them arrange the different sects systematically, but they employ their own approaches in classifying various sub-sects of those sects. For instance, al-Baghdādī classifies the Khārijites into twenty sub-sects, the Murji’ites into five sub-sects, and the Mu‘tazilites into twenty sub-sects. Al-Shahrastānī, however, divides the Khārijites into eight main sub-sects, the Murji’ites into four main sub-sects, the Mu‘tazilites into twelve sub-sects, and the Shī‘ites into five main sub-sects. Some of them are further divided into several sub-sub-sects. Other important witnesses of these sects and controversies include Ibn Ḥazm⁴⁹ and (994-1064 CE) Ibn Ishāq al-Nadīm (d. 995/98 CE).⁵⁰ There are also many secondary sources on this issue that are helpful to this research.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Abū al-Ḥassan ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl al-Ash‘arī, *Al-Ibānah ‘an Uṣūl al-Diyānah*, trans. with intro. and notes Walter C Klein (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1940; repr. New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967). Citations afterwards refers to Kraus edition; *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, 2nd ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ḥadāthah, 1985). Al-Ash‘arī was the founder of Islamic theology and the theological school which bears his name. Although al-Ghazālī followed Ash‘arite theology, he did not accept all their views blindly. He was critical and even questioned some views of the Ash‘arite and of other schools of thought.

⁴⁷ See his *Moslem Schisms and Sects (Al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq): Being the History of the Various Philosophic Systems Developed in Islam*, trans. Kate Chambers Seelye (New York: Aims Press, 1966).

⁴⁸ See his *Muslim Sects and Divisions*.

⁴⁹ Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī Ibn Ḥazm. See his *Al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥal* [The Separator Concerning Religions, Heresies, and Sects] (Al-Qahirah: [1963?]).

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*.

⁵¹ E.g., M. M. Sharif, ed., *A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*, vol. 1 (Karachi: Royal Bool Company, 1963); Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology*; W. Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998). To mention briefly, Ibn al-Nadīm provides a good introduction to different

Al-Ghazālī did not remain indifferent towards the various interpretations of the above groups (the Khārijites, the Murji'ites, the Mu'tazilites, and the Bāṭinites) which he considered as heretical. Indeed, as I will discuss in Chapter Six, he ardently refuted them in many of his works. He also relentlessly rebutted the prevalent misconceptions among the Muslim society in his time.⁵² Because the Mu'tazilites and the Bāṭinites still existed in his time, he did not hesitate to refute their errors—especially the latter—in a bolder way. And because the Bāṭinites posed a threat not only to theology but also to politics, administration, and religion as whole, al-Ghazālī—with the support of the current ruler—devoted special books to refuting their errors.⁵³

2.4 BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES, PUBLICATIONS, AND SCHOLARLY RESEARCH ON AUGUSTINE

Since his own time Augustine has been regarded as a very influential thinker, prolific writer, and great preacher, with an enormous body of sermons and writings. Nevertheless, he has also been known as a controversial figure in the history of Christianity, directly criticised by some of his contemporaries especially those he considered as Pelagians, such as Pelagius (c. 354-418), Caelestius (Coesius or Celestius), Julian of Eclanum (c. 386 - 454), and John Cassian (c. 360-435). His engagement with these important figures contributed to the rise of a series of debates and various polemical treatises. The uniqueness of his life, character, and views has attracted the attention of many scholars from various fields, some of which are still studied and even criticised in the present time.

Pelagius disliked Augustine's theology of absolute dependence on God's grace. Caelestius advanced and publicised further some views and interpretations of certain issues which contradicted Augustine's understanding. However, it was Julian—allegedly the most acute and formidable of the Pelagian writers—who actively criticised Augustine and challenged his authority. While Julian was condemned as a heretic, Augustine was accused of being influenced by Manichaeism.⁵⁴ Their engagement generated a series of debates and polemical treatises. In fact, Augustine devoted a great part of his later life

Muslim sects and some prominent Sunnite Scholars. *A History of Muslim Philosophy* offers critical analyses given by different writers on the Mu'tazilites as well as on other theological schools of thought, such as Ash'arism and Māturīdism. Goldziher in his treatment on Muslim sects is interested more in expounding on the Shi'ite history and belief system in comparison to the Sunnites. Meanwhile, Watt analyses the development of different Muslim sets and discusses some of their theological foundations.

⁵² See Arafat, "Al-Ghazālī on Moral Misconceptions," 57-62.

⁵³ For al-Ghazālī's works in refuting the Bāṭinite doctrines, see his *Faḍā'iḥ* (for the English translation see *al-Mustaẓhirī*); *Just Balance; Decisive Criterion*.

⁵⁴ See Warfield, introductory essay, III, 62-66.

until his death to refuting Julian, with his last incomplete work—*The Unfinished Work*—being written particularly against him.⁵⁵

There has been no shortage of biographical studies of Augustine. Mention can be made of the monumental biography of Bonner, published in 1963.⁵⁶ In 1967, Peter Brown published his biographical study of Augustine which offers a chronologically based account of the different periods, events, and places in his life.⁵⁷ This approach is also found in the studies by Warren Thomas Smith and Garry Wills published in 1980 and 1999 respectively.⁵⁸ In 1986 Henry Chadwick published his biography of Augustine which is arranged more around themes.⁵⁹ Regardless of the different arrangements and approaches they employ, each of these biographies not only presents the facts and portions of Augustine's life and activities, but offers something new. In fact, their different approaches add and extend the dimensions of Augustine's biography.

Biographical studies on Augustine still attract the attention of some scholars. In 2005, James J. O'Donnell attempted to shed a new light on Augustine's life, examining many new aspects of Augustine's life, thought, and activities.⁶⁰ His book claims to reveal much of what Augustine did not acknowledge. O'Donnell justifies this claim by his efforts to go beyond the traditional sources of the previous biographers that focus much on, and limit their analyses within, the purview of the *Confessions*.⁶¹

Mary Patricia Garvey and James A. Highland have observed the different interpretations and positions taken towards Augustine's *Confessions* and his conversion. Some scholars argue that there are inconsistencies in his account and challenge the traditional view which holds that Augustine's conversion was to Christianity, suggesting either directly or indirectly that it was to Neo-Platonism.⁶² Nevertheless, the positive

⁵⁵ Another important series of treatise entitled *Answer to Julian or Against Julian*, written in 421 which consists of six books. This treatise is known as the longest works of Augustine's Anti-Pelagian writings.

⁵⁶ Bonner, *St Augustine*. Bonner divides his account of Augustine's life into two parts. The first part is based on the *Confessions*' account which covers the period up to the death of Monica, Augustine's mother. The second part focuses more on "Augustine the man" merged with "Augustine the thinker." Here starts Augustine's new era as the defender of orthodoxy against "the prevalent challengers" of Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism.

⁵⁷ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*.

⁵⁸ Smith, *Augustine* and Garry Wills, *St Augustine*.

⁵⁹ Henry Chadwick, *Augustine*.

⁶⁰ James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography* (New York: Ecco, 2005).

⁶¹ O'Donnell asserts that only part of the story is recounted in the *Confessions*. He argues that Augustine's *Retractions*, as well as his letters and sermons, also serve as primary sources of Augustine's life and activities.

⁶² See Mary Patricia Garvey, *Saint Augustine: Christian or Neo-Platonist? From His Retreat at Cassiacum until His Ordination at Hippo* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 1939); Highland, "Alchemy," 16-19. As Highland has observed, among those who challenge the traditional view are Gaston Boissier, Adolf Harnack, Freidrich Loofs, Louis Gordon, O. Scheel, Hans Becker, Wilhelm

perspective which maintains the authenticity and unity of the *Confessions*, as well as the genuine Christian conversion of Augustine has been established as the standard view. In spite of these disagreements—but bearing in mind the existence of these different views—I personally believe that Augustine’s conversion was genuinely to Christianity, while at the same time acknowledging the various influences on, and sources used by, him. Neo-Platonism, for instance, influenced and helped Augustine to a great extent in rebuking Manichaeism and some other groups.⁶³

No one denies that faith plays an important role in Augustine’s theology. All good deeds are worthless without faith, the primary foundation of Augustine’s theology. Although he recognises the importance of reason, he maintains that faith should not be subservient to reason, for it has its own limitations.⁶⁴ As Robert E. Cushman has shown, Augustine argues that faith should precede reason and that the latter should always be guided by the former. If it is unguided by faith, reason will lead to false-knowledge.⁶⁵

W. Wylie Spencer has analysed the relationship and role of philosophy and religion on Augustine.⁶⁶ He argues that Augustine was less concerned with doing good deeds than to emphasise the purification of the will. Spencer believes that this was because Augustine laid a greater emphasis on the inward aspect of morality. For him, turning attention towards “the inward or subjective aspects of reality” was the primary influence of religion on Augustine.⁶⁷

Thimme, and the strongest advocate of this view, Prosper Alfarc. This new and critical outlook on Augustine’s conversion has not occurred without being challenged and criticised. There are several scholars who disagree, refute, and invalidate the argument of this group. See also Robert Crouse, “*Paucis Mutatis Verbis*: St. Augustine’s Platonism,” in *Augustine and His Critics*, eds., Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London: Routledge, 2002), 37-50.

⁶³ See Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 16-18; Newman, introductory essay, 32-33. Apart from those already mentioned above, there are still many other studies useful for this research. For instance, see W. Montgomery, *St Augustine: Aspects of His Life and Thought* (London; New York, Horder and Stoughton, 1914); M. C. D’Arcy et al., *A Monument to Saint Augustine: Essays on Some Aspects of His Thought Written in Commemoration of His 15th Centenary* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1930); Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L. E. M. Lynch (New York: Random House, 1960); and Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁶⁴ See *Faith of Things Not Seen*, 504ff.

⁶⁵ Robert E. Cushman, “Faith and Reason in the Thought of St. Augustine,” *Church History* 19, no. 4 (1950): 271-294. See also *Creed*, 4, 547.

⁶⁶ W. Wylie Spencer, “St. Augustine and the Influence of Religion on Philosophy,” *International Journal of Ethics* 41, no. 4 (1931): 461-479.

⁶⁷ Spencer declines to accept that Augustine was a mystic, arguing he was a philosopher instead. However, he acknowledges that there was a penetration of mysticism in Augustine’s religious experience.

Anton-Hermann Chroust's article on Augustine's conception of law is another interesting study.⁶⁸ Chroust argues that Augustine's concept of law is consistent with his theistic philosophy. He divides Augustine's understanding of law into three categories, namely, the *lex aeterna* (the eternal law), the *lex naturalis* (the natural (moral) law), and lastly, the temporal or man's law. As the divine reason and will of God, the *lex aeterna* was the foundation of the *lex naturalis*. It defines what is good, righteous, evil, and bad. The *lex naturalis*, on the other hand, is the imprint of the *lex aeterna* on the man's soul. In other words, mankind has been imprinted with *lex aeterna* so that they can easily act according to the dictates of *lex aeterna* (e.g., God's will). Augustine grounds the basic principle of *lex naturalis* on the golden rule.⁶⁹ In addition, his definition of what constitutes right and justice is exclusively based on "the natural order of things as ordained by God Himself."⁷⁰ In relation to temporal or man's law, Augustine argues that for it to be considered as just and righteous, it should be derived from the *lex aeterna*, the eternal principle of justice and order, and should be in conformity with the *lex naturalis*, the manifestation of the *lex aeterna*. This is because temporal law is not meant to promote virtue and the virtuous life, but merely attempt to prevent "obvious abuse and the crudest maladjustments."⁷¹ This analysis is important because it paves the way for understanding Augustine's position on different kinds of law.

The issues that form the foundation of Augustine's theology include Original Sin, free will, grace, and predestination. Each is necessary to understand his view of good deeds. It is widely known that Augustine emphasised free will in refuting Manichaeism, its negative concept of human nature, and the nature of evil. However, he was later forced to develop and even to modify his interpretation of free will in order to rebut the Pelagian concept of free will and efficacy of man's deeds. Augustine argues that although originally man's nature was good, man's will has been corrupted as a result of the Fall, and without God's grace man is unable to choose and do good things. Original Sin, the cause of the ruined state of human race, is the barrier that enslaves man's will. Although he taught that Original Sin was wiped away with baptism, he argued that its

⁶⁸ Anton-Hermann Chroust, "The Philosophy of Law of St. Augustine," *The Philosophical Review* 53, no. 2 (1944): 195-202.

⁶⁹ The version of the golden rule employed by Augustine are "do nothing unto another you would not have done unto yourself" and "no one would do unto another what he would not suffer himself." Quoted in Chroust, "The Philosophy of Law," 199.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

effects still remain on the human will, and still needs divine grace to be purified.⁷² Here he seems to move towards determinism or predestination. However, as I will argue further in Chapter Four, Augustine addressed the issue at this stage in a mystical or spiritual context, emphasising man's weakness in order to re-establish the spiritual relationship between man and God which he perceived had diminished since the Fall.

Augustine's views and solutions to several related issues were not always straightforward or without difficulty. Even though many scholars agree that Augustine successfully explained and reconciled different issues and doctrines, there are still scholars who doubt his ability to do so. Indeed, being regarded as a great Christian scholar, his teachings and thoughts have been subjected to intense scrutiny and criticism. For instance, James Bissett Pratt argued that Augustine faced the problem of reconciling his views on man's freedom, grace, and determinism—ideas he developed in different controversies.⁷³ Pratt concluded that despite the fact that Augustine tried to keep both freedom and determinism together, he was still led to inconsistency, and was therefore unsuccessful. As will be further reviewed later, William L. Rowe also criticised Augustine's solution in reconciling God's foreknowledge with man's free will.

Joseph Fitzpatrick devoted four articles on Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin which were published in 2009 and 2010, criticising the psychological inadequacy of the doctrine.⁷⁴ He offers a new interpretation of relevant Biblical verses (Genesis 3), suggesting "original sinfulness" as an alternative to Original Sin. However, Fitzpatrick's criticism has been criticised by Simons Heans in 2013, arguing that it was unsuccessful and that "original sinfulness" is not an acceptable Biblical hermeneutic.⁷⁵ In 2012 Dominic Keech argued that Pelagianism was Augustine's invention, created in order to conceal his own debts to Origen whose books had become banned for certain teachings.⁷⁶

⁷² Augustine reiterates these ideas in many places of his works. For his view on Original Sin and the only way to be saved from it, see for instance, E.g. *Forgiveness & Baptism*, I.19.XV-20, 116-117; 33, 127; 55.XXVIII, 143-145; II.34.XX, 184-185; 45.XXVIII, 193; *Grace & Original Sin*, II.34.XXIX, 506-507; *Enchiridion*, 41:382; 50, 387; 61-62, 393-394, etc. For man's nature and will that have been corrupted, see for instance, *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.5.V, 160; 37.XXIII, 187; *Nature & Grace*, 3.III, 290-291; 22.XX, 301-02; *Enchiridion*, 33, 377-378, etc. For the need of God's grace and help, see for instance, *Grace & Free Will*, 7, 829 ff.; *Spirit & Letter*, 16.X, 235ff.; *Nature & Grace*, 4.IV, 291; 29.XXVI, 307-308; *Enchiridion*, 106, 420; *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.5V, 160-161, etc.

⁷³ James Bissett Pratt, "The Ethics of St. Augustine," *International Journal of Ethics* 13, no. 2 (1903): 222-235.

⁷⁴ Joseph Fitzpatrick, "Original Sin or Original Sinfulness?," *New Blackfriars* 90, no. 1028 (2009), 401-515; no. 1029, 517-634; no. 1030, 635-751; 91, no. 1031 (2010), 66-82.

⁷⁵ Simon Heans, "Original Sin or Original Sinfulness? A Comment," *The Heythrop Journal* 55, no. 1 (2013), 55-69.

⁷⁶ Dominic Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

As will be examined later, B. R. Rees and Bonner offer a less negative and more nuanced evaluation of Pelagianism.

Despite these criticisms and re-evaluations, Augustine's ideas, views, and teachings are still influential and defended. Many Augustinian scholars agree that Augustine's views, in fact, do not contradict each other as they may seem to at the outset. They maintain that Augustine was able to reconcile his several apparently contradictory views—such as views on man's free will, God's grace, and predestination. Augustine's views need to be read within their original context. For instance, Paul J. Weithman has analysed the consequence of the doctrine of Original Sin and the Fall in Augustine in relation to political authority.⁷⁷ Weithman argues that these doctrines affected Augustine's view on political authority. He asserts that Augustine relates the need for political authority to the doctrine of Original Sin, without which Augustine argues, men would not have needed any political authority, and even any law, for in such a state men would have lived a good social life. It was because of Original Sin and the Fall that men "lost" their ability—power and will—to do good and live a good life. In such a state, avarice and concupiscence reign. This idea also posits that Augustine maintains that Original Sin has corrupted men's good nature, and therefore, unless aided by God's grace, men will not be able to do good deeds.

With respect to free will in Augustine's thought, for instance, William L. Rowe's interpretation as presented in his article published in 1964 has been accepted as the standard interpretation for quite some time.⁷⁸ Rowe criticises and even rejects many of Augustine's views and solutions to the problem of free will. For instance, he argues that Augustine's reasoning in maintaining God's foreknowledge and man's free will at the same time is wrong, and therefore Augustine's solution is rejected. Rowe's criticism, however, was in turn criticised by Jasper Hopkins in 1977.⁷⁹ Hopkins points out that there

⁷⁷ Paul J. Weithman, "Augustine and Aquinas on Original Sin and the Function of Political Authority," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 30, no. 3 (1992): 353-376.

⁷⁸ William L. Rowe, "Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will," *The Review of Metaphysics* 18, no. 2 (1964): 356-363. See also in his same essay in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. Markus (Gardner City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, 1972), 209-217.

⁷⁹ Jasper Hopkins, "Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 8, no. 2 (1977): 111-126. Also published in his *Philosophical Criticism: Essays and Reviews* (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1994), Chap. 3, 75-89.

are many mistakes in Rowe's analysis and he even argues that the five major theses that were once established as a standard position are flawed.⁸⁰

Augustine's conception of free will did not end with the debate between Rowe and Hopkins. Some new aspects have been explored, and new interpretations offered. The difficult question surrounding the issue of free will is acknowledged by E. J. Hundert, who argues that Augustine was "entirely puzzled" by the question of man's will.⁸¹ Based on his own experience, Augustine did not accept the standard Greek moral philosophy as exemplified in Socrates, Aristotle, and Cicero—that attributed morality to one unique factor, namely, rational will or reason—as psychologically credible.⁸² Examining his own experience, Augustine observed that there were "insistent conflicts" and these were "the expression of the internal divisions that beset humanity at large."⁸³ Thus, Augustine criticised the power and efficacy of the mind. In his arguments on many issues, Augustine frequently resorted to the Scripture as his authentic sources. Augustine's use of the scriptures was gradual and his perspective on it is "marked by both continuity and dynamic movement."⁸⁴ Believing that the scriptures must always be true and consistent, Augustine allowed allegorical interpretation whenever necessary. For Augustine, the scriptures led to the knowledge of the will of God and the truth. They cover many things including the goal of the Christian life, namely, faith, hope, and love. They are beyond reason and therefore it is necessary to accept them and their contents by faith. However, Augustine's Biblical sources and interpretation are not without criticism.⁸⁵ Examining Augustine's attitude towards the scripture is also useful in understanding his view of good deeds.

Although there are not many studies which specifically analyse Augustine's view of good deeds, some of them do address certain issues that support different aspects of this research. While some of Augustine's thought, theology, and writings are

⁸⁰ These five theses are discussed under; 1. *Augustine's statement of the initial problem*, 2. *Augustine's solution*, 3. *Two criticisms of Augustine's solution*, 4. *Rowe's own solution to the initial argument*, and 5. *Augustine's additional argument*.

⁸¹ E. J. Hundert, "Augustine and the Sources of the Divided Self," *Political Theory* 20, no. 1 (1992): 86-104.

⁸² The standard feature of this view was that there was an inherent love of the good and that man was motivated by his rational character. This moral system was simple and it made rational will or reason as the unique factor. Socrates argued that this character could be distorted by ignorance and Aristotle argued by improper education. Cicero also believed that reason was the dominant factor in determining morality (*ibid.*, Hundert).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁸⁴ Mervin Monroe Deems, "Augustine's Use of Scripture," *Church History* 14, no. 3 (1945): 188-200; Michael Cameron, "Augustine and Scripture," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 16:201.

⁸⁵ For a brief analysis of this criticism, see Helmi Afizal, "The Concept of Sin," 82-86.

controversial, they offer rich aspirations and guides to Western civilization.⁸⁶ As indicated in Chapter One, not only has he influenced many contemporary and later scholars of his own tradition, but his influence has also reached other traditions to some extent.⁸⁷ Hence Augustine remains as perhaps the most important figure in the Western Christian Tradition.

2.5 BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES, PUBLICATIONS, AND SCHOLARLY RESEARCH ON AL-GHAZĀLĪ

As with the life of Augustine, the life of al-Ghazālī has attracted the attention of many scholars, both Western and non-Western. A number of his writings have been translated into different languages since the 12th century. For instance, his *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* was translated into Latin in the third quarter of the 12th century, and into Hebrew in 1292 CE.⁸⁸ The wide influence of al-Ghazālī is known, among other ways, through his quotations by many Western scholars of the Middle Ages and early modern period.⁸⁹ This indicates that like Augustine, the influence of al-Ghazālī is not limited within his own tradition, but is felt both in the East and the West, reaching Jewish and Christian traditions.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Daniel D. Williams, “The Significance of St. Augustine Today,” in *A Companion to the Study of Augustine*, 3-5.

⁸⁷ To mention a few, among great scholars who have been influenced by Augustine includes Anselm (1033-1109 CE), Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 CE), Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1221-1274 CE), and Thomas Aquinas in the medieval period, Luther and Calvin in the 16th century, as well as other thinkers and scholars, such as Rene Descartes (1596-1650 CE), Paul Tillich (1886-1965 CE), Karl Barth (1886-1968 CE), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951 CE), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976 CE), Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971 CE), Hannah Arendt (1906-1975 CE), Pope Benedict XVI (b. 1927 CE), R. C. Sproul (b. 1939 CE), John Piper (b. 1946 CE), and many others.

⁸⁸ Frank Griffel, “Al-Ghazali,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, first published on Tue Aug 14, 2007 and was last modified on Aug 29, 2008, accessed 6 March 2011, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/al-ghazali/>.

⁸⁹ Among them are Albert the Great (c. 1206-1280 CE), Roger Bacon (c. 1214/20–1292/94 CE), Thomas Aquinas, Dante Alighieri (1265–1321 CE), and David Hume (1711-1776 CE). For further discussion of the influence of al-Ghazālī, see Margaret Margaret Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic: A Study of the Life and Personality of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī, Together with an Account of His Mystical Teaching and an Estimate of His Place in the History of Islamic Mysticism* (Lahore: Hijra International Publishers, 1983), 198-226; Nabil Nofal, “Al-Ghazali,” 12-14, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/archive/publications/ThinkersPdf/ghazalie.pdf, accessed 15 March 2012—originally published in *Prospect: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* 23, no. 3/4 (1993), 519-542.

⁹⁰ Margaret Smith has devoted a chapter on al-Ghazālī’s influence. She observes that among early prominent figures from Islamic traditions who were influenced by al-Ghazālī include some founders of the Sufi orders, such as ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (1077–1166 CE), Ahmad al-Rifā‘ī (1119-1182 CE), the founder of Qādiriyyah and Rifā‘iyyah Sufi orders respectively. Others include Ibn Tufayl (1105-1185 CE), al-Suhrawardī (1144-1234 CE), Ibn al-‘Arabī (1164/65-1240 CE), ‘Aḥīf al-Dīn Yāfī‘ī (1298-1367 CE), Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (c. 1327/28-1370 CE), and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī (or Sha‘rāwī, c. 1492/93-1565 CE). Upon mediaeval Jews, al-Ghazālī left a considerable influence on Maimonides (c. 1135/38-1204), Johanan Alemans, and on some theories found in the *Zohar*. As regards Mediaeval Christianity, al-Ghazālī’s thoughts influenced Jacobite Christian Yuhanna Abu al-Faraj Barhebraeus—also known as Gregorius—(1226-1286 CE), Dominican Raymond Martin (or Marti, d. 1284 CE), and French mystic Blaise Pascal

The widespread teachings and influence of al-Ghazālī are not without criticism. Most critics focus on the mystical teachings of al-Ghazālī, which are regarded as unusual during the time, or even as unorthodox. Al-Ghazālī was condemned by Abū ‘Abdallāh M. b. Ḥamdīn—the *Qāḍī* (judge) of Cordova—and his books were once burned in Andalusia, before being accepted and admired with a great esteem later.⁹¹ Among the prominent critics of al-Ghazālī are Ibn Rushd⁹² (Averroes, 1126-1198 CE) and Ibn al-Jawzī⁹³ (1114-1200 CE).

Ibn Rushd bitterly criticised some mystical concepts of al-Ghazālī and his negative attitudes towards philosophy. In *Al-Kashf ‘an Manāḥij al-Adillah fī ‘Aqāid al-Millah* (Clarifying the Systems of Proof in the Beliefs of the Nation [of Muslims]), he claimed that some of al-Ghazālī’s teachings were inconsistent,⁹⁴ and some of them were dangerous to *Sharī‘ah* (the Islamic Law) and philosophy.⁹⁵ However, Smith observes that Ibn Rushd did not appreciate the developments of al-Ghazālī’s thought and his different approaches. Smith states “Ibn Rushd perhaps failed to distinguish between al-Ghazālī the orthodox theologian and al-Ghazālī the mystic, and between his earlier opinions and those of his later years....”⁹⁶ Indeed, al-Ghazālī employed different approaches to suit different readers. He states in *Mizan* that opinions are of three kinds, namely, those which are shared with the public, those given only to those who asked, and ones which are kept secretly.⁹⁷ Thus, the teachings of al-Ghazālī, especially which contain deep mystical insight, should be read in their contexts.

(1623-1662 CE), and many others. Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 198-226. However, as Smith and Nabil Nofal have established, it was Thomas Aquinas, who was clearly indebted to al-Ghazālī. Nofal states “In his *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) draws heavily on al-Ghazali’s ideas contained in *Ihya’ ‘Ulum ad-Din*, *Kimiya-yi Sa‘adat* and *Ar-Risala al-Laduniya*.” Whereas, Smith writes “[t]he greatest of these Christian writers who was influenced by al-Ghazali was St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who made a study of the Arabic writers and admitted his indebtedness to them.” See Nofal, “Al-Ghazali,” 13; Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 220. See also Moosa, *Ghazālī and the Poetics of Imagination*, esp. p. 12ff.

⁹¹ Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 198. See also Moosa, *Ghazālī and the Poetics of Imagination*, 21-25.

⁹² Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Rushd. He was a Muslim Spanish polymath, a prominent Muslim philosopher, and theologian, and mastered various disciplines of knowledge, such as logic, jurisprudence, politic, Arabic music, medicine, astronomy, geography, mathematic, physic, etc.

⁹³ Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī. He was a prominent jurist, theologian, historian, celebrated preacher, and the most learned writer of his time.

⁹⁴ E.g., the inconsistency of his doctrine of emanation as found in his *Mishkāt al-Anwār* [The Niche for Lights].

⁹⁵ See Ibn Rushd, *Al-Kashf ‘an Manāḥij al-Adillah fī ‘Aqāid al-Millah*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī (Bayrūt: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-‘Arabiyyah, 1998), 150-152, 207.

⁹⁶ Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 199.

⁹⁷ See *Mizān*, 405-409; *Timbangan Amal*, 236-239; Nakamura, “Was Ghazālī Ash‘arite?,” *Memoirs of Research Department of the Tokyo Bunkoo* 51, (1993): 1-24 20; Moosa, *Ghazālī and the Poetics of Imagination*, 141-142.

Ibn Rushd also published *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence) as a refutation to al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers)—al-Ghazālī's most celebrated work in criticizing philosophy.⁹⁸ The book attempts to defend the use of Aristotelian philosophy within Islamic thought, which was bitterly attacked by, and met its downfall (from Muslim lands) through al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut*. Despite this bitter criticism, al-Ghazālī's works, teachings, and position on various issues have been widely accepted and established as among the orthodox positions in many Muslim lands.

Ibn al-Jawzī was very critical and hostile to Sufism, and was among the most vocal critics of al-Ghazālī. He rebutted al-Muḥāsibī⁹⁹ (781-857 CE), whose mystical teachings inspired al-Ghazālī. Since al-Ghazālī adhered to Sufism and accepted al-Muḥāsibī's views, Ibn al-Jawzī refuted his mystical teachings, especially those which are contained in *Iḥyā'*—al-Ghazālī's *magnum opus*. As G. F. Haddad has observed, Ibn al-Jawzī dismisses *Iḥyā'* in four of his writings.¹⁰⁰ He claimed that it had many errors, collecting them in his *I'lām al-Aḥyā' bi' Aghlāt al-Iḥyā'* (Informing the Living about the Mistakes of the Iḥyā').¹⁰¹ The critical views of Ibn al-Jawzī towards al-Ghazālī influenced Ibn Taymiyyah¹⁰² (1263-1328 CE), who in turn influenced Dhahabī¹⁰³ (1274-1348 CE), and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1792 CE), the founder of the Wahhabi Movement. Ibn Taymiyyah—regarded as another important critical reader of al-Ghazālī—read extensively al-Ghazālī's corpus and offered his critical views of certain teachings. For instance, Yahya M. Michot has analysed that Ibn Taymiyyah uttered a

⁹⁸ For a parallel English-Arabic text of *Tahāfut*, see al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: Tahāfut al-Falāsifah: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, trans. intro. and anno. Michael E Marmura, 2nd ed. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2000). There are several Arabic editions, as well as English translation of *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* available online in Muslim philosophy website of Ibn Rushd. For the Arabic versions, see <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/books/taf-taf.pdf>; <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/books/tt-ir-maj.pdf>; for English translation, see <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ir/tt/index.html>; or also http://www.newbanner.com/Philosophy/IbnRushd/Tahafut_alTahafut_en.pdf.

⁹⁹ Abū 'Abdullāh al-Ḥarith ibn Asad al-'Anazī al-Muḥāsibī. He was a great Sufi master and theologian,
¹⁰⁰ I.e., *I'lām al-Aḥyā' bi' Aghlāt al-Iḥyā'* [Informing the Living about the Mistakes of the Iḥyā'], *Talbīs Iblīs* [The Devil's Deception], *Kitāb al-Quṣṣās wa al-Mudhakkirīm* [The Book of the Story-tellers/Admonishers and Those Who Remind], and his history *Al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Muluk wa al-Umam* [The system in the History of Kings and Nations]. See G. F. Haddad, "Those Who Attack Imam Ghazali," *Living Islam*, accessed, 10 Oct. 2011, http://www.livingislam.org/n/atgz_e.html#up-4.

¹⁰¹ Not printed and not known mss copies. See Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 200.

¹⁰² Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn al-Salām ibn Taymiyyah al-Ḥarānī. He was a prominent Muslim theologian and logician. For Ibn Taymiyyah's analysis of al-Ghazālī's writings and teachings, see Yahya M. Michot, "An Important Reader of al-Ghazālī: Ibn Taymiyya," *The Muslim World* 103, no. 1 (2013), 131-160.

¹⁰³ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Uthmān ibn Qaymāz ibn 'Abdullāh Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abdullāh al-Dhahabī.

strong condemnation of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* in three points: that al-Ghazālī's treatment of Sufism in the *Iḥyā'* was "a travesty benefiting the enemies of Islam;" that "imāms [leaders] of the religion" have also criticised the *Iḥyā'*; and that the *Iḥyā'* was "the work of a sick person infected by Avicenna."¹⁰⁴

However, all these criticisms were not influential except on some small local groups, as al-Ghazālī's influence has been enormous.¹⁰⁵ Many scholars came forward to defend al-Ghazālī and his works, particularly *Iḥyā'*.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, al-Ghazālī himself wrote his own defence of *Iḥyā'* known as *al-Imlā' fī Ishkālāt al-Iḥyā'* (Dictations in the Ambiguities of *Iḥyā'* or Notes on Issues of *Iḥyā'*).¹⁰⁷ He was able to justify himself and succeeded in giving a place to Sufism in Islamic tradition.¹⁰⁸ His success in bridging Sufism with orthodoxy is acknowledged both by Eastern and Western scholars. Thus, al-Ghazālī established himself firmly within the Islamic tradition. His works are continuously referred to and quoted. Various scholars, from the East to the West, admire al-Ghazālī and his works, and some of them regard him as the greatest scholar Islam has ever produced.¹⁰⁹

Biographies of al-Ghazālī were already written in Arabic as early as the 12th century.¹¹⁰ Frank Griffel has observed that there are several accounts of al-Ghazālī by his contemporaries.¹¹¹ One, for instance, was provided by his student 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 1135 CE) in 1113 CE,¹¹² later condensed by Ibrāhīm al-Ṣarīfīnī (d. 1243 CE).¹¹³ Others are found in the works of Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī (d. 1076-1148 CE)¹¹⁴—a student

¹⁰⁴ Michot, "An Important Reader of al-Ghazālī," 137.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 202.

¹⁰⁶ For the list of these works, see <http://www.ghazali.org/site/ihya.htm>.

¹⁰⁷ See <http://www.ghazali.org/books/imla-gz.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸ MacDonald, "The Life of Al-Ghazālī," 71-72.

¹⁰⁹ W. Montgomery Watt, introduction to *The Faith and Practice*, 13.

¹¹⁰ For the list of the original sources on al-Ghazālī's life, see <http://www.ghazali.org/site/osm.htm>. For the secondary sources, see <http://www.ghazali.org/site/ssm.htm>.

¹¹¹ Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 21-23.

¹¹² 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *Al-Siyāq lī Tārīkh Naysābur* [Sequel to the History of Nishapur], <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/agh-frsi.htm>, (accessed, 4 Sept. 2010).

¹¹³ Ibrāhīm al-Ṣarīfīnī, *Al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq lī Tārīkh Naysābur* [Selections from the "History of Nishapur"], ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad 'Abd al-'Azīz (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1989).

¹¹⁴ Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī, *Al-'Awāṣim min al-Qawāṣim* [Defense Against Disaster], ed. 'Ammār Ṭālibī (al-Qāhirah: Maktabah al-Turāth, 1997). His full name was Muḥammad b. 'Abdallah ibn al-'Arabī al-Ma'āfirī al-Iṣbīlī Abū Bakr. He was an Andalusian scholar, a master of Mālikī jurisprudence.

of al-Ghazālī—Ibn ‘Asākir (1106-1175/76 CE),¹¹⁵ Ibn Tufayl (1105-1185/86 CE),¹¹⁶ and Ibn al-Jawzī.¹¹⁷ Other important studies from the 14th century are those of al-Dhahabī,¹¹⁸ Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (1327-1370 CE),¹¹⁹ and Ibn Kathīr (1301-1373 CE).¹²⁰ Al-Subkī’s study is known to be the most important biographical entry on al-Ghazālī.

The commentary of *Iḥyā’* by Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (1732-1790/91 CE)¹²¹ is also an important source. In addition to his voluminous commentary of *Iḥyā’*, Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī devotes an early section to recounting al-Ghazālī’s life and discussing the authenticity of his works.¹²² His account is considered as among the primary sources of al-Ghazālī’s biography. There are also a large number of secondary studies devoted to al-Ghazālī’s life in Arabic and English languages.¹²³ However, only some of those in English will be reviewed below.

Perhaps the earliest monumental study on al-Ghazālī’s life in English is that of Duncan B. MacDonald.¹²⁴ His influential article on al-Ghazālī, published in 1899, has shaped the traditional outlook on his life. MacDonald observed several primary contributions of al-Ghazālī, observing that he completed a systematic Islamic scholastic

¹¹⁵ Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tabayīn Kadhib al-Muftarīfīmā Nusiba ilā al-Imām Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī* [The Exposition of the Fabricator’s Lies in What He Attributed to al-Ash‘arī] (Al-Qāhirah: Maktabah al-Qudsī, 1928), 291-306. His full name was Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Hibatullāh ibn ‘Asākir. He was a Syrian scholar who wrote an important treatise on history of Damascus.

¹¹⁶ Ibn Tufayl, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān: Philosophical Tale*, trans. with intro. and notes Lenn Evan Goodman (New York : Twayne Publishers, 1972). His full name was Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Tufayl al-Qaysī al-Andalusī.

¹¹⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Muluk wa al-Umam*, vol. 8 (Ḥaydrābād: Maṭba‘ah Dā’irah al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyyah, 1940), 168-170.

¹¹⁸ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar I‘lām al-Nubalā’* [The Lives of Noble Figures], 322-346, <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/siyar.pdf>; *Tārīkh al-Islām* [History of Islam], 115-126, <http://www.ghazali.org/articles/trk-islam.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyyah al-Kubrā*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāh Muḥammad al-Ḥilw and Maḥmud Muḥammad al-Ṭanāhī, vol. 6 (Cairo: Dār Aḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1968), 191-389. His full name was Tāj al-Dīn Abū Naṣr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Kāfī al-Subkī. He belonged to al-Subkī’s family, the renowned family of the 7th and 8th centuries. Their members were well-known for their high positions as judges, preachers, professors, writers, as well as for their learning.

¹²⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* [The Beginning and the End], ed. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki, vol. 16 (Gizah: Dar Hijr, 1998), 213-215. His full name was Abū al-Fidā’ ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl bin ‘Umar bin Kathīr al-Qurashī al-Buṣrawī. He was a scholar of *ḥadīth*, jurist, historian and exegete.

¹²¹ Al-Zabīdī, *Iḥāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīm bi Sharḥ Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* [Presents from Pious Chieftains: Commentary on al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*], 10 vols. (Bayrūt: Mu’assisah al-Tārīkh al-‘Arabī, 1994). His full name was Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ḥusaynī al-Zabīdī, Abū Fayḍ. He was a Ḥanafite prolific writer, a scholar of *ḥadīth*, genealogy, and biographies.

¹²² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 1-55.

¹²³ For the list of the secondary sources both in Arabic and English languages, see <http://www.ghazali.org/site/ssm.htm>.

¹²⁴ Duncan B. MacDonald, “The Life of Al-Ghazzālī, with Especial Reference to His Religious Experience and Opinions,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 20 (1899), 71-132.

theology, especially of the Ash‘arite school.¹²⁵ He also contends that al-Ghazālī “saved it [Islam] from the scholastic decrepitude”¹²⁶ of his time. However, among al-Ghazālī’s various contributions, it is his achievement in bridging mysticism, or rather Sufism, with Islamic tradition that is generally most celebrated. To quote MacDonald’s famous expression, al-Ghazālī “bridged the widening gap, took over mysticism with its intuitionism and spiritual life into the dry body of theology, and gave the Church of Islām a fresh term of life.”¹²⁷

MacDonald offers a clear-cut division of the life of al-Ghazālī into two parts, namely, before and after the transformation. Each division is characterised with its own opposite character of al-Ghazālī. MacDonald contends that before his transformation to Sufism, al-Ghazālī was materialistic, selfish, and even immoral, irreligious, and impious, and that it was only after transformation that he became other-worldly, pious, and a great Sufi. Nevertheless, as I will argue later, this contention can no longer be accepted as a sufficiently realistic view, and thus needs to be re-examined. Nonetheless, many scholars accept MacDonald’s view, and therefore, it has been regarded as the standard stance on his life.

However, in 1985 Kojiro Nakamura challenged MacDonald’s clear-cut division into two of al-Ghazālī’s life, namely, “the former as this-worldly and irreligious and the latter as other-worldly and extremely pious.”¹²⁸ Indeed, he questioned the traditional reading of al-Ghazālī’s account of his life as found in the *Munqidh*. This is because, he argues, the *Munqidh* was written by al-Ghazālī long after his transformation, namely, when he was a “veteran Sufi.” Therefore, as Nakamura observes, it is quite natural for al-Ghazālī to be “excessively critical” about his previous life.¹²⁹

Before briefly analysing this stance, it is interesting to note that, as within Augustine’s conversion and his *Confessions*, there are also some issues with al-Ghazālī’s *Munqidh* and his retirement, as well as intellectual and mystical evolutions. Some

¹²⁵ However MacDonald’s (as well as some other Western scholars’) expression of “the Church of Muḥammad” to refer to Muslim community is not appropriate. This is because there is no concept of church in Islam. The term *Muhammadism* is another misleading term. The modern term of *ummah* or *ummatic* is more accurate. Otherwise, the phrase “Muslim community” is already sufficient.

¹²⁶ MacDonald, “The Life of Al-Ghazālī,” 71.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹²⁸ Kojiro Nakamura, “Ghazali’s Life and Its Difficulties,” chap. 1 in *Ghazali and Prayer* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2001). See also his article “An Approach to Ghazali’s Conversion,” *Orient* 21 (1985): 46-47.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

scholars have doubted the reliability or authenticity of *Munqidh*.¹³⁰ A few scholars have also doubted the sincerity of al-Ghazālī's retirement, attributing it to another motive instead.¹³¹ Highland argues that some are uncertain whether al-Ghazālī was a real practicing Sufi.¹³² Nevertheless, many scholars who study al-Ghazālī carefully have proven convincingly that his *Munqidh* is authentic and reliable, that his retirement and transformation were sincere, and that he was a great Sufi. This has become the standard view on al-Ghazālī, which is also my position in analysing his view in this research.

Agreeing with Nakamura's analysis above, I argue that some parts of MacDonald's account overstate his case. In tandem with some other scholars, he fails to acknowledge the positive side of al-Ghazālī's life, character, and activities before the transformation that are quite significant, and need to be read along with his *Munqidh*. Al-Ghazālī was highly respected even before his transformation to Sufism. He was known as a brilliant person; he was the favourite student of Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī—the greatest theologian of his time—and he captivated the attention of the great Vizier Niẓām al-Mulk.¹³³ At an early age (34 years old), he was appointed as chief professor, the highest academic position, at the Niẓāmiyyah College in Baghdad—perhaps the most prestigious college of the time. He earned the honorific titles of *Imām* Khurāsān and *Imām* al-Irāq,¹³⁴ and was well-versed in different branches of knowledge, especially in jurisprudence, Sufism, theology, and philosophy. His scholarship was recognised by both friends and foes alike.¹³⁵ Among many of his positive traits, he was widely consulted by different levels of people, from the layman up to the kings. All these are not without significance, and therefore, it is quite impossible to plainly claim that such a great personality was merely irreligious, materialistic, and “this-worldly.” Some of al-Ghazālī's statements in the *Munqidh* cannot be taken literally. They are expressed in a radical way in order to stress his critical view and spiritual regret. There is no doubt that reading al-Ghazālī's books attentively reveals that he is speaking not as an ordinary man, but as a sincere spiritual master who regards even enjoying the permissible things for normal pleasure as

¹³⁰ Among them are Julian Baldick and ‘Abd al-Da‘im al-Baqari. For further discussion on this, see Highland, “Alchemy,” 34ff.; Nakamura, “Ghazali's Life,” and “An Approach,” 47; McCarthy, introduction to *Freedom and Fulfillment*.

¹³¹ Among them are Farid Jabre and ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Sawwaf. See further discussion in McCarthy, introduction to *Freedom and Fulfillment*; Nakamura, “Ghazali's Life,” and “An Approach,” 47.

¹³² Highland, “Alchemy,” 37. Highland argues that among them are David Burrell, Ali Issa Othman, Richard Frank, M. Umaruddin, Margaret Smith, and George F. Hourani.

¹³³ He was the great vizier of Malik Shāh, the successor of Alp Arslān.

¹³⁴ Faris, “Al-Ghazzālī's Rules of Conduct,” 43.

¹³⁵ Al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 194.

excessive acts or even sins.¹³⁶ Therefore, as Nakamura has suggested, it is no surprise to see al-Ghazālī as “excessively critical” of his former life after his transformation to Sufism. Indeed, to be critical of oneself is a common practice in Sufism, and this practice continues till his death.

Samuel M. Zwemer examines the Islamic approach to seeking God through the teaching of al-Ghazālī, which is considered as another early English study on al-Ghazālī.¹³⁷ Without denying Zwemer’s excellent account of al-Ghazālī’s life, I argue that some of his analyses reflect a bias towards Christian and Orientalist attitudes, and are therefore, inaccurate. He reads al-Ghazālī from a Christian perspective, and consequently, he does not take into account the whole dimension or other perspectives (e.g., the Islamic and mystical dimensions) of the issues highlighted. For instance, having quoted Adolf Wuttke’s negative statement on Islamic ethics, and after proudly stating that it needs no proof, Zwemer is incorrect to conclude that “the ethical standard is so low” in Islam and in al-Ghazālī.¹³⁸ Indeed, Islam, as well as al-Ghazālī himself, is very concerned with ethics and is positive towards good deeds in ethical and religious aspects. Several books and articles have been published to analyse his theory of ethics.¹³⁹ In another part of his book, Zwemer’s accusation that al-Ghazālī’s theory of conduct is inconsistent and has many contradictions is misleading.¹⁴⁰ He fails to appreciate that al-Ghazālī employs a different approach on different contexts and people as mentioned above.¹⁴¹ In his excellent analysis, Hourani proves that he finds “a consistent theory” in al-Ghazālī’s ethics of action.¹⁴²

¹³⁶ E.g. *Iḥyā’*, III.6, 220-221; *Revival*, III.6, 169.

¹³⁷ Samuel M. Zwemer, *A Moslem Seeker after God: Showing Islam at Its Best in the Life and Teaching of Al-Ghazali, Mystic and Theologian of the Eleventh Century* (New York, Chicago etc.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 197-198. He also is wrong in asserting that the ideal virtue of Muslim, which is based on imitation of the Prophet, has practically abrogated the moral law. He fails to acknowledge that most of the ethics of the Prophet indeed confirm the moral law and some of them do transcend the normal moral law.

¹³⁹ See for instance, M. ‘Umaruddīn, *The Ethical Philosophy of al-Ghazzālī*, rev. ed. (1962; repr., Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 1996); Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975); Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam*, Monographs in Islamic Religion and Theology (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1978); and George F. Hourani, “Ghazali on the Ethics of Action,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96, no. 1 (1976): 69-88.

¹⁴⁰ See Zwemer, *A Moslem Seeker*, 214.

¹⁴¹ See *Mīzān*, 405-409; *Timbangan Amal*, 236-239; Nakamura, “Was Ghazālī Ash‘arite?,” 20.

¹⁴² Hourani, “Ghazali on the Ethics of Action.” Indeed, there are still some other issues which seem inaccurate and misleading in Zwemer’s study. For instance, his accusation that some of the Prophetic traditions quoted by al-Ghazālī are in fact taken from the Bible is mistaken. Some other scholars (such as Frank Hugh Foster and Morris S. Seale) also repeat this mistake. But it is true that al-Ghazālī frequently referring to Jesus’ saying which indicates that he is referring to the Biblical texts, although some of them are not reported by the later versions of the Bible. Among Zwemer’s misleading accusations and

Other important biographical studies on al-Ghazālī include those of W. Montgomery Watt and Margaret Smith.¹⁴³ Watt’s analysis is important for understanding on the socio-political background of al-Ghazālī’s time. Watt’s in-depth examination of philosophical, theological, and intellectual issues also provides an invaluable foundation for identifying al-Ghazālī’s reactions towards different groups and views in his time. Smith’s analysis, on the other hand, is valuable in order to grasp the mystical dimension of al-Ghazālī’s explanation of good deeds.

Without denying that al-Ghazālī sometimes refers to Biblical statements that were available in his time, there are a few points that need to be re-examined in Smith’s analysis of the issue. For instance, her arguments that elements of Pauline teachings were contained in some of al-Ghazālī’s accounts, and that some statements quoted by al-Ghazālī are indeed words of Paul’s are inaccurate. Traditionally the Muslim view of Paul has been negative, accusing him of having distorted the teachings of Jesus. As a prominent orthodox ‘*ulamā*’ (Muslim scholar), it was quite impossible for al-Ghazālī to resort to Paul’s teachings for his argument. Indeed, his quotations are genuinely from the Qur’ān or Prophetic tradition that in some cases may have a resemblance to Christian scriptures.¹⁴⁴ Smith is correct to argue that al-Ghazālī “speaks of the human soul as Divine in origin.”¹⁴⁵ Because of this, al-Ghazālī believes that man can nurture divine qualities,

conclusions are his statement that it is “the tragedy of Islam” that al-Ghazālī “failed to find in Mohammed [Prophet Muhammad] the ideals of his own heart” (p. 218) and his “Christian conclusion” that “the mystics in Islam are near the Kingdom of God and for them al-Ghazali may be used as a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ” (p. 294). For the former, it could be argued by the fact that al-Ghazālī always takes and reminds Muslims to take Prophet Muḥammad as their example, and he devotes a section in his *Iḥyā’* to discuss the beautiful conduct and character of the Prophet. James Robson for instance, affirms that al-Ghazālī stresses the importance and necessity of imitating the Prophet; see James Robson, “Al-Ghazālī and the Sunna,” *The Muslim World* 45, no. 4 (1995): 324-333. For the latter, Zwemer is negligent of the fact that Muslims highly revere Jesus Christ as a prophet as they revere other prophets. Therefore, al-Ghazālī’s frequent reference to Jesus cannot be totally interpreted as Zwemer does, that is, “to lead men to [Christian] Christ”, for it is misleading to accuse a great Muslim scholar to lead Muslims to Christianity. Indeed, al-Ghazālī wants to show the true teachings of Jesus according to the Islamic perspective.

¹⁴³ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963); Margaret Margaret Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic: A Study of the Life and Personality of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī, Together with an Account of His Mystical Teaching and an Estimate of His Place in the History of Islamic Mysticism* (Lahore: Hijra International Publishers, 1983).

¹⁴⁴ See Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 118-120. For instance, Smith argues that al-Ghazālī quotes Paul’s words on the Beatific Vision “that God has prepared for His faithful servants ‘what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and what has not entered in to the heart of man’.” Compare with the traditions; Abī al-Ḥusayn Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: Being Traditions of the Sayings and Doings of the Prophet Muhammad as Narrated by His Companions and Compiled under the Title al-Jami-us-Ṣaḥīḥ*, trans. ‘Abdul Ḥamid Siddiqī with explanatory notes and brief biographical sketches of major narrators (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 2001) [henceforth referred to as *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*], XXIV:MCLXXI:6780, where the Prophet said “Allah the Exalted and Glorious, said: I have prepared for My pious servants which no eye has ever seen, and no ear has ever heard, and no human heart has ever perceived but it is testified by the Book of Allah”. See also no. 6781-6783. For the Qur’ānic accounts, see for instance, 32:17, etc.

¹⁴⁵ Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 143.

and therefore has the potential to attain spiritual union with God. However, Smith offers a perplexed statement in arguing that prayer is no longer required for a worshipper who, having attained “[c]ontemplation (*mushāhada*)...have entered the sanctuary.”¹⁴⁶ She might be correct if by “prayer” she means *du‘ā’*, namely, invocation or supplication. But it is inaccurate if she is referring to *ṣalāh*, the prescribed prayer. Since this prescribed prayer is the most important devotional act (*‘ibādah*) and also the foundation of good deeds in Islam, such a contention would indirectly imply that other good deeds are also no longer required for such a person. This opposes the fundamental teachings of Islam as well as al-Ghazālī’s own teachings, which maintain the need to observe prayer and other good deeds at all stages of life.¹⁴⁷ Her conclusion that al-Ghazālī’s mystical system developed into a “pantheistic system of philosophy” seems unaware of a subtle difference between the concept of pantheism and mystical union.¹⁴⁸ In the former, the union is more physical whereas, in the latter, the union is spiritual.¹⁴⁹

Several books and articles that either directly or indirectly discuss al-Ghazālī’s concept of good deeds are worth mentioning. It should be noted in this context, however, that “good deeds” is a general term that covers both moral or ethical and religious deeds. Mohamed Ahmed Sherif argues that al-Ghazālī put forward his theory of virtue into three main categories, namely, the philosophic, religious-legal, and mystical virtues.¹⁵⁰ He examines different individual virtues and claims that al-Ghazālī accepted the philosophic virtues but made some modifications to them. The religious-legal virtues are associated with the fulfilment of religious commandments and these virtues were harmonised with the mystical ones. All of these are the means to attain ultimate happiness, but it was the mystical virtues which al-Ghazālī regarded as the ideal and higher in level.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 171.

¹⁴⁷ *Al-Walad*, 275, 277; *O Youth*, 54, 58-60; *Letters Gh.*, 2:28, 12:64; *Alchemy*, 505; *The Niche*, 78. In addition to al-Ghazālī himself, other scholars who devoted their studies to al-Ghazālī also affirm that al-Ghazālī teaches that Sufism can never oppose religion. For instance, see W. R. W. Gardener, “Al-Ghazali as Sufi,” *The Muslim World* 7, no. 2 (1917): 132-133; and Hourani, “Ghazali on the Ethics of Action.” Likewise, Robson, in “Al-Ghazālī and the Sunna,” also affirms that despite having attained the higher level of a master Sufi, al-Ghazālī has always been committed to following the *Sunnah*.

¹⁴⁸ Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 234-236.

¹⁴⁹ As mentioned above, there are many other biographical works on al-Ghazālī. Eric Ormsby’s study which was published in 2008 is the latest biographical study on al-Ghazālī. See Eric Ormsby, *Ghazali: The Revival of Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008). Frank Griffel’s article on al-Ghazālī—available online in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*—is also a new work on al-Ghazālī. However it just gives a very brief account of al-Ghazālī’s life and focuses more on some philosophical and ethical issues, see <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/al-ghazali/>.

¹⁵⁰ Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue*.

Muhammad Abul Quasem covers the background of al-Ghazālī's ethics as well as his view of man's nature and aims, underpinning his theory of ethics.¹⁵¹ In addition, he also examines briefly other aspects of good deeds, namely, devotional acts and different kind of duties, as proposed by al-Ghazālī. Like Quasem, 'Umaruddin's treatment is comprehensive, perhaps, more so than Quasem's with respect to his examination of the foundation and philosophy of al-Ghazālī's theory of ethics.¹⁵² In examining virtues according to al-Ghazālī, M. 'Umaruddin proceeds to discuss other general virtues, such as social virtues and religious duties. All of these are important for they are part of good deeds.¹⁵³

These studies focus more on al-Ghazālī's ethics than on his views of good deeds in religious aspects. 'Umaruddin and Sherif just give a very brief account of religious duties or acts of worship according to al-Ghazālī, and generally they omit the analysis of their mystical aspect. Nevertheless, Quasem's examination of al-Ghazālī's view of devotional acts is of paramount importance to this research. Although Quasem is interested to analyse the functions of devotional acts in moral life, his method offers a good model to analyse al-Ghazālī's view of the inner dimension of good deeds.

In addition to the above books, there are several articles that either directly or indirectly analyse al-Ghazālī's views of good deeds, such as Hava Lazarus-Yafeh's "Place of the Religious Commandments in the Philosophy of al-Ghazālī."¹⁵⁴ She argues that al-Ghazālī always emphasised the observance of religious commandments, but gave "a deeper content to the religious life."¹⁵⁵ She unfolds the meaning and spiritual dimension of religious deeds. In doing this, al-Ghazālī successfully extirpated the two extreme attitudes towards good deeds—especially those good deeds in the form of religious commandments—namely, those who observe religious good deeds punctiliously and literally, and those Sufis who were indifferent towards them.

¹⁵¹ Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*.

¹⁵² M. 'Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy of al-Ghazālī*, rev. ed. (1962; repr., Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 1996).

¹⁵³ For an Arabic book on al-Ghazālī's ethics, see Zakī Mubārak, *Al-Akhlāq 'ind al-Ghazālī* (Ṣaydā: Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-'Aṣriyyah, 1924). This book offers an extensive account of al-Ghazālī's ethics. Because of its broad scope, however, many of its discussions are rather brief.

¹⁵⁴ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Place of the Religious Commandments in the Philosophy of al-Ghazālī," *The Muslim World* 51, no. 3 (1961): 173-184.

¹⁵⁵ Lazarus-Yafeh, "Place of the Religious Commandments," 173.

An extensive analysis of al-Ghazālī's view of the ethics of action is offered by George F. Hourani.¹⁵⁶ His analysis is based on, and confined to, the three major works of al-Ghazālī, namely, *Ihyā'*, *al-Iqtiṣād*, and *Mustasfā*. Hourani claims to find a consistent theory in his treatment of the subject.¹⁵⁷ Knowledge of ethics is the central concern of al-Ghazālī, 'ilm al-akhlāq (the science of character) superior to *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).¹⁵⁸ Hourani also explains al-Ghazālī's view of the axiological concepts (such as *wājib* [compulsory], *ḥasan* [good], *qabīḥ* [evil], and others). He observes that in discussing these concepts, al-Ghazālī did not hesitate to refute the Mu'tazilite view concerning them. There are some other important issues discussed by Hourani that makes his articles useful to this research.

Quasem also contributes several articles on al-Ghazālī.¹⁵⁹ He maintains that al-Ghazālī was always optimistic towards good deeds. Indeed, al-Ghazālī considered 'amal (action or deed) as the primary requirement and the mean—along with 'ilm (knowledge, or faith)—in realising different objectives (e.g., piety, happiness, nearness to God, etc.).

Nabih Amin Faris's article which briefly examines al-Ghazālī's ten rules based on *Al-Qawā'id al-'Asharah* (The Ten Rules) is also significant.¹⁶⁰ Faris states that al-Ghazālī set up these rules for himself, some of which are helpful in understanding his stance on good deeds. For instance, his first and second rules, namely, having the right intention and serving God alone, serve as the foundation of his attitude towards good deeds. However, al-Ghazālī's seventh rule, which Faris argues implies the doctrine of salvation by faith, is to be analysed and compared with his tenth rule, which signifies the need for good deeds. Faris gives a brief explanation of these rules but further analysis is still needed in order to relate them to al-Ghazālī's view of good deeds.

R. A. Blasdell's article entitled "Religious Values in al-Ghazālī's Works" is another attempt to analyse religious deeds in al-Ghazālī's writings.¹⁶¹ However, it is unfortunate that Blasdell employs the term "religious values" to refer only to views that

¹⁵⁶ George F. Hourani, "Ghazali on the Ethics of Action," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96, no. 1 (1976): 69-88.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁵⁸ Or also defined by al-Ghazālī as "the science of scriptural rules established for the acts of people under obligation (*al-mukallafīn*)."

¹⁵⁹ See Quasem, "Al-Ghazali's Theory of Devotional Acts," *Islamic Quarterly* 18, no. 3-4 (1974): 48-61; "Al-Ghazali's Theory of Good Character," *Islamic Culture* 51 (1977), 229-239; "Aspects of al-Ghazali's Conception of Islamic Piety," *Islamic Culture* 56 (1982), 135-148.

¹⁶⁰ Nabih Amin Faris, "Al-Ghazālī's Rules of Conduct," *The Muslim World* 32, no. 1 (1942): 43-50.

¹⁶¹ R. A. Blasdell [sic], "Religious Values in al-Ghazālī's Works," *The Muslim World* 36, no. 2 (1946): 115-120.

correspond with Christian teachings. He argues that al-Ghazālī recognised Christian values and therefore al-Ghazālī can be used to present Christian truth to Muslims. Without giving further evidence, Blasdell also argues that many of al-Ghazālī’s ideas in his writings are close to the spirit of Christianity. Indeed, the few instances he uses to support his argument are misleading. For instance, he wrongly interprets al-Ghazālī’s statement that the way to overcome vices is vague, to mean that Islamic method is obscure and that Islamic practices are tedious.¹⁶² This misreading of certain ideas has affected his analysis and conclusion. It is unfortunate for Blasdell that in spite of his noble intention to help Muslims to better appreciate Christianity and to eliminate *foreign* attitudes, he falls prey to the biased approach of reading al-Ghazālī in a Christian context, neglecting the other and real context of the ideas examined.

In his attempt to analyse outer and inner religious expression in one of al-Ghazālī’s writing, *the Child or O Youth (Ayyuha al-Walad)*, Frank Hugh Foster observes that al-Ghazālī anticipates that faith should be accompanied with good deeds.¹⁶³ Foster agrees that faith which does not lead to good deeds is in fact no faith. Foster also examines al-Ghazālī’s mystical outlook of man’s deeds, his view that good deeds should be always oriented towards God, for this is the purpose of man’s creation. Al-Ghazālī argues that even the faithful who would be indifferent towards the rewards of good deeds will still perform them. The importance of intention and knowledge behind good deeds is also stressed by al-Ghazālī. In his own words, “[k]nowledge without good works is madness, while good works without knowledge is useless.”¹⁶⁴ However, as in the case of some scholars mentioned above, Foster fails to escape misattributing some of al-Ghazālī’s arguments or quotations which come from genuine Islamic tradition to Biblical verses.¹⁶⁵ However, this small inaccuracy does not really affect his analysis.

¹⁶² Ibid., 120.

¹⁶³ Frank Hugh Foster, “Ghazali on the Inner Secret and Outward Expression of Religion, in His ‘Child’,” *The Muslim World* 23, no. 4 (1933): 378-396.

¹⁶⁴ *Al-Walad*, 277; *O Youth*, 58.

¹⁶⁵ For instance, Foster mistakenly claims that al-Ghazālī’s quotation which is from a genuine Prophetic tradition—that “the faith of the servant towards God is not perfect until he loves other men as he loves himself”—as repeating Matthew, xxii: 39 (p. 396). The fact is that, perhaps they are coincidentally quite similar. For comparison, see for instance the tradition which states that the Prophet said “None of you will have faith till he likes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself.” See Abī ‘Abdillāh ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Mukhtaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī: The Translation of the Meanings of Summarized Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Arabic-English*, compiled by Zayn al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Zubaydī, trans. Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān (Riyadh: Maktabah Dār al-Salām, 1996) [henceforth referred to as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*], 2:6:13. See also no. 14 and 15. For *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, see chapter XVII:70-71; XVIII:72-73.

As good deeds are always considered as a requirement to attain salvation, it is also useful to understand at the outset al-Ghazālī's view of salvation. This is because al-Ghazālī's conception of salvation is not as is generally understood, and this will affect his view on good deeds. Agreeing with other Sufis, such as Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī¹⁶⁶ (d. 996 CE) and al-Muḥāsibī, al-Ghazālī developed the concept of a happiness that is higher than salvation. Al-Ghazālī's conception of happiness was analysed by Quasem.¹⁶⁷ Salvation (*al-najāh*), according to al-Ghazālī, is only related to safety, namely being saved from suffering in hell. The higher degree of salvation is success (*fawz*) or happiness (*sa'ādah*) where he or she is not only saved from the hell but also achieves rewards in paradise.¹⁶⁸ An understanding of this issue will reveal al-Ghazālī's view of different stages of the performance of good deeds that will help men to attain different grades of happiness.

Since al-Ghazālī is regarded as among the greatest figures in Sufism and in the Sunnite school of law, with particular inclination to the Shāfi'ite school in jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and to the Ash'arite school in theology (*'ilm al-kalām*), it is helpful to understand the context and stance of al-Ghazālī towards these schools. For instance, W. R. W. Gardener offers an analysis of al-Ghazālī in the context of his status as a Sufi, but some of his claims should be read carefully and critically.¹⁶⁹ W. Montgomery Watt on the other hand analyses al-Ghazālī's stance on the Sunnite tradition.¹⁷⁰ He argues that even after his transformation, al-Ghazālī still remained faithful to the Sunnite tradition, and despite being a great mystic, he still played the role as jurist and theologian.¹⁷¹ This stance is

¹⁶⁶ He was a scholar of *ḥadīth*, Shāfi'ite jurist and a Sufi.

¹⁶⁷ Muhammad Abul Quasem, "Al-Ghazālī's Conception of Happiness," *Arabica* 22, no. 2 (1975): 153-61.

¹⁶⁸ See *Al-Arba'īn*, 38; *Jalan Pintas*, 19; Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 57; Quasem, "Al-Ghazālī's Conception of Happiness," 159.

¹⁶⁹ W. R. W. Gardener, "Al-Ghazālī as Sufi." Gardener's claims, such as there is no "hope of salvation" in orthodox Islam and therefore Islam can never be "a religion of joy and confidence," and Islam does not show the way to overcome sin and evil, are erroneous (p. 132). Gardener appears to be simply unaware of the abundance of the Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic traditions on these matters (for instance, on the possibility of attaining salvation even with faith equal to a grain of mustard, barley, wheat or even an atom, see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:12:21, etc.; on Prophetic traditions that whoever bear witness sincerely that Allah is God and Muhammad is His messenger will enter paradise, see *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I:XI:39-42, 50; on faith and deeds that draw to Paradise, see *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I:V:11-17; on repentance which cleans or expiates sin, see the Qur'ān 4:16, 17, 25, 27; 5:39; 9:15, 27, 104; 11:3, 90; 25:71; 40:3; 42:25, etc.; on religion or religious way is easy, see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:26:37; the Qur'ān 2:185, 286, etc.; on to do good deeds just according to one's capacity, see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:29:41, etc.). In addition, his contention that "becomes like the Deity" is "a partial understanding of spiritual attainments," and his claim that this is among al-Ghazālī's doctrine of happiness are ambiguous (p. 134). Without a proper explanation, this contention will amount to an accusation of pantheism. But, these few issues do not deny Gardener's contribution in analysing many other mystical concepts of al-Ghazālī which are helpful to this research.

¹⁷⁰ W. Montgomery Watt, "The Study of al-Ghazālī," *Oriens* 13/14, no. 1 (1960/61): 121-131.

¹⁷¹ However, unlike Jabre who maintains "an essential unity" in the thought and writing of al-Ghazālī, Watt contends that there were modifications, at least in gradual stages, in al-Ghazālī's intellectual position. He also disagrees with Jabre on al-Ghazālī's central concerns. While Jabre asserts that it was the problem of

affirmed by James Robson who offers a good examination of al-Ghazālī's attitude towards the *Sunnah* (the Prophet's examples and his way of life).¹⁷² He observes that al-Ghazālī maintains that the best way of performing good deeds is through imitating the way of the Prophet, and consequently believes that the *Sunnah* of the Prophet should always be observed at all stages of life.

Nakamura and R. M. Frank are among those "revisionists"¹⁷³ who go a step further by analysing al-Ghazālī's attitude towards the Ash'arite school of thought.¹⁷⁴ Nakamura tries to prove that many of his views (e.g., those on optimism, atomism, and the soul) differ from the views of the traditional Ash'arite. He argues that this is because al-Ghazālī is addressing two different groups and therefore has two standpoints.¹⁷⁵ Frank expresses his agreement with Nakamura in asserting that he was not a fully orthodox Ash'arite. He argues that al-Ghazālī's real devotion to Ash'arite orthodoxy was "tenuous in the extreme."¹⁷⁶

The above revisionist approach and views have been challenged and even refuted by several scholars. Oliver Leaman published an article to reanalyse some issues—such as on causality and atomism—also questioned by other revisionists.¹⁷⁷ He argues

certitude, namely that problem of attaining certainty, Watt argues convincingly that they were the problems of attaining everlasting happiness, avoiding hell, and most importantly, getting near to God. This central concern would ultimately affect his outlook on good deeds. See Watt, "The Study of al-Ghazālī," 124.

¹⁷² Robson, "Al-Ghazālī and the Sunna."

¹⁷³ It has been widely accepted that al-Ghazālī was faithful to the Ash'arite school. However, some scholars began to raise questions on this standard view. These groups are known as "revisionist."

¹⁷⁴ Nakamura, "Was Ghazālī Ash'arite?," 1-24; R. M. Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1994); Oliver Leaman, "Ghazālī and the Ash'arites," *Asian Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (1996): 17-27; and Michael E. Marmura, "Ghazali and Ash'arism Revisited," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 12 (2002): 91-110.

¹⁷⁵ Al-Ghazālī groups the Muslim community into two groups, namely, the common people (*'awwāmm*) and the elite (*khawāṣṣ*) or the elite of the elite (*khawāṣṣ al-khawāṣṣ*). Nakamura concludes that al-Ghazālī deals with both groups separately and therefore has two standpoints. As he is also concerned with the salvation of the common people, al-Ghazālī deals with them as an Ash'arite. However, when dealing with the elite to which group he belonged, he will have "stepped over the boundary of traditional Ash'arism in some respects." Thus, some different views of al-Ghazālī to that of the traditional Ash'arite can be noticed. See Nakamura, "Was Ghazālī Ash'arite?," 20. Because of having these two different standpoints, Nakamura invalidates Watt's proposal that Ash'arism is among the criteria to determine the authenticity of al-Ghazālī's writings. For Watt's principles and arguments in identifying the authenticity of al-Ghazālī's works, see Watt, "The Authenticity," 24-45.

¹⁷⁶ His main argument is based on al-Ghazālī's negative stance on *kalām* (the speculative science or theology, or the science of the fundamental doctrines of Islam) as compared to the Ash'arites. Frank contends that in his treatment on *kalām*, al-Ghazālī was apparently inconsistent. Indeed, he argues, al-Ghazālī discarded the traditional Ash'arite theology and rejected *kalām*. However, he affirms that other writings of al-Ghazālī were essentially consistent. See Frank, preface to *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School*.

¹⁷⁷ Oliver Leaman, "Ghazālī and the Ash'arites." In 2002, Michael E. Marmura attempted to analyse al-Ghazālī's approach in using some Ash'arite methods, especially of *kalām*. He contends that although al-Ghazālī did not employ and regarded the Ash'arite *kalām* as the end, nevertheless it can serve as an aid to

convincingly that al-Ghazālī was Ash‘arite, and that the revisionist claims are faulty. All of these analyses—though they may not be directly related—are still useful in understanding al-Ghazālī’s position on the Sunnite view in general, and the Ash‘arite view in particular, on good deeds.

2.6 CONCLUSION

While there are many studies that are useful to different aspects of this research, comparative studies on good deeds between Christianity and Islam in general, and between Augustine and al-Ghazālī in particular, are still underdeveloped. Even the majority of studies which exclusively analyse the thoughts of these two great thinkers individually do not directly scrutinise their detailed views and spiritual insights of good deeds. Although there are a few studies that seem to be relevant to the scope of this research, they vary in their specific focus in relation to Augustine and al-Ghazālī. Even though some studies are critical, the majority of them admire these two great thinkers and are able to appreciate their thoughts and contexts, thus placing them in the position that they really deserve. Considering that there is a serious need for comparative study of good deeds, and realising the pressing religious-moral condition of this present era, this research presents the theoretical and practical solutions of Augustine and al-Ghazālī to some religious, spiritual, and ethical dilemmas still facing this modern world.

sālik (i.e., those who traverse the path to God). See Michael E. Marmura, “Ghazali and Ash‘arism Revisited,” 91-110.

CHAPTER THREE

FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS IN CHRISTIANITY

3.1 GENERAL DEFINITION OF FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS

In order to better understand the views of Augustine and al-Ghazālī on the concept of good deeds, it is essential to briefly examine their relationship to faith in their respective religious traditions. This chapter is therefore devoted to examining scriptural and traditional perspectives on this matter within Christianity, as defined in the New Testament. The general definitions and the scriptural accounts of “faith” and “good deeds” will be examined first, before analysing their characteristics and relative importance, as well as their interrelationship. A brief review of some alternate interpretations provoking controversy, as discussed by Augustine, will conclude the discussion. This forms a background to understanding his thought which developed in response to unresolved controversies within their traditions.

3.1.1 Definition of Faith

Faith (*pistis* in Greek, *fides* in Latin and *īmān* in Arabic) has been defined in several ways. In religious perspective, faith refers to belief, inner conviction, acceptance, or trust in God and His revelation or in an ultimate end.¹ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, however, argues that there are different meanings and dimensions of faith. One of those meanings is that faith “is the ‘assent’ to the truth as such.”²

Two terms closely connected to faith are “belief” and “creed,” often used interchangeably with faith. In the Catholic tradition the terms “faith” and “belief” are understood synonymously. Even the New Testament does not draw a clear distinction between them. It was Thomas Aquinas who attempted to identify faith with the act of belief. However, Smith attempts to distinguish between them, seeing faith as deeper and

¹ See C. H. Pickar and A. R. Jonsen. “Faith,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 5 (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 589; *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “faith,” 15th ed., vol. 4, 660.

² Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief: The Difference between Them* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998), 168. When faith is examined in its intellectual dimension, he argues that “faith is first of all recognition of truth, insight into reality; and its conceptualization (the “belief” that goes with it) must on the one hand be sincere, subjectively, a close approximation to what one personally apprehends (is apprehended by), and on the other hand be valid, not only in the objective sense of being a significantly close approximation to Reality, to final Truth, but also in the dynamic and demanding sense (thus linking the subjective and the objective) of the closest approximation possible.” See *ibid.*, p. 169.

richer, and associated with more basic and more personal matters—be it in one’s religion or personal life.³ It concerns one’s fundamental relationship with God. On the other hand, belief is regarded as secondary to faith, namely, “the holding of certain ideas” and related more to intellectual issues, namely, the conceptualisation or formulation of religious matter and doctrines.⁴

The term “creed,” derives from the Latin verb *credo* (“I believe”), sometimes connected to the combination of the words *cor/cordis* (heart) and *do/dere* (give, or to give place).⁵ Generally, creed refers to a confession⁶ or a statement of faith, recapitulating fundamental beliefs. A creed also refers to systematised articles of faith, presenting the systematic formulation of the belief of a particular religion, sect, or group, with various functions in different religions.

In Judaism creed refers to the *Shema* (literally meaning “Hear”) which is Judaism’s credal expression of monotheistic faith taken from Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one God.” In Christianity, it can refer to the formal creeds, especially the three ecumenical creeds or symbols, namely, the Apostles’, the Nicene, and the Athanasian. Whereas, the Islamic creed can be referred to as *al-‘Aqīdah al-Islam* (the Islamic Fundamental Articles of Faith) particularly “the Six Articles of Faith” (*al-Arkān al-Īmān*).⁷ They are recapitulated in *al-Shahādātayn* (the Twofold Witnesses or Testimonies of Faith) “I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that (the Prophet) Muḥammad is the Servant and Messenger of Allah.”

Thus, in a general sense faith, belief, and creeds are interrelated. Even though they are not identical, they have a very close connection, and in some contexts they are concerned with the same things, placed in different dimensions or perspectives. For instance, to assent to a particular idea or truth is called faith, and to hold or accept that

³ Smith has devoted a specific book to discuss the relationship and difference between faith and belief in different contexts and traditions. His study draws on several religious traditions to show how the terms “faith” and “belief” have been understood differently and their meanings have been altered with time. See Smith, *Faith and Belief*.

⁴ Smith, *Faith and Belief*, 12; D. M. Doyle, “Beliefs,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 222.

⁵ Smith, however, argues that to translate *credo* as “I believe” is an over-simplification and is a mistranslation. He does not equate faith with belief. For him, faith and belief are different things. See his *Faith and Belief*, 9ff.

⁶ This should not be confused with the Sacrament of Confession (also known as the Sacrament of Penance) which is performed as the acknowledgement of sinfulness in order to obtain divine forgiveness.

⁷ The six articles of faith in Islam are to believe in God, to believe in the Angels, to believe in the Scriptures, to believe in the Prophets, to believe in the Hereafter, and to believe in Ordinance and Pre-measurement (Divine Destiny).

particular truth is regarded as a belief, and to confess this belief when it is put into formal terms is considered as a creed.

Nevertheless, faith, belief, and creeds are not merely abstract concepts, ideas, or intellectual states. They involve and indeed require some level of commitment, otherwise known as actions, works, or deeds. This is because faith has theoretical and practical dimensions.⁸ Just to have faith in certain ideas or truths is a theoretical dimension of faith, but its practical dimension is to live up to, or to act according to that faith. It is only at this stage that one's faith can be considered as perfected. To act in contradiction to one's faith is to act hypocritically. Thus, a true sincere and perfect faith requires commitments or actions in accordance with that faith. In other words, people of faith should perform good deeds.

3.1.2 General Definition of Good Deeds

“Good deed” is a general concept with no specific and unanimous definition. Different religions may have their own specific definitions of, and outline certain specific criteria to good deeds. For instance, in his analysis of the relationship between faith and works based on epistle of James and Ephesians, Jeremy T. Alder maintains that there are certain different views of good deeds between James and Paul. Nevertheless, based on his analysis he concludes that in Christian perspective, good deeds refer to “anything done in obedience to God,” and this includes loving, mercy, and kindness, which are parts of “acts of charity.”⁹ He affirms that good deeds should not be limited to the acts of charity, but it also includes any good actions that are done in obedience to God.¹⁰ As will be discussed further in Chapter Five, there are also slight variations of opinions among Muslim scholars on what constitutes good deeds.¹¹ However, all of them agree that in a general Islamic perspective, good deeds can be referred to any good action that is commanded, encouraged, or praised by the *Sharī'ah*, and is done for the sake of Allah.

In general, a deed refers to one's action and good deeds are commonly understood as meritorious actions, namely, those actions considered as morally right. From the religious perspective, good or righteous deeds refer to those deeds—either

⁸ For a discussion on the intellectual dimension of faith, see Smith, *Faith and Belief*.

⁹ Alder “The Relationship,” 22.

¹⁰ Ibid. See also Moo, *James*, 101-102.

¹¹ See esp. 5.1.2 “The Comprehensive and Dynamic Nature of *Īmān* (Faith) and *A'māl Ṣāliḥāt* (Good Deeds).”

outward or inward deeds—that are done rationally, intentionally, freely, and in conformity with religious principles or values, which in turn are normally in harmony with moral norms (i.e., religio-moral principle).¹² Thus, right living is commonly associated with the observance of these religious and ethical principles. From a religious viewpoint, good deeds performed accordingly can also be regarded as acts of devotion. Both Christianity and Islam agree that a deed is regarded as good when it conforms to particular principles or standard values, and considered bad when it contradicts those principles or values fundamental to those religious traditions. Primarily, the foundations of religious principles are based on revelation, and/or scriptures, or the fundamental teachings of the founder of a particular religion.¹³ In Islam, they form the eternal law and are considered as the higher standard, to which the ethical norms need to conform. In Christianity, the emphasis is less on notions of eternal law, and more on the values espoused by Jesus in the Gospels and subsequently developed within the Christian tradition.

This research is not concerned with analysing good deeds in philosophical perspective, nor does it scrutinise particular kinds of good deeds. Its focus is rather on examining the attitudes and spiritual insights of Augustine and al-Ghazālī towards the practice of good deeds, understood here in its generic religious sense of any meritorious deed, action, or work endorsed by religious principles or values as good, righteous, virtuous, praiseworthy, and the like. In other words, it considers deeds that are prescribed or highly encouraged by religion, namely, ethical actions (e.g., charity, humbleness/humility, generosity, etc.) or observances of specific rites and rituals instituted by religious law (e.g., prayer, almsgiving, fasting, offering, etc.). The former falls under ethical principles, the latter under worships or devotional acts.¹⁴

Christianity and Islam have both developed sophisticated traditions of reflection on moral behaviour, although formulated in different ways. I argue that there are important parallels in the way thinkers in both religious traditions have thought about good deeds, in particular in the way both Augustine and al-Ghazālī attend to the inner

¹² These are some of the common principles in religion. There might be some more specific principles that is/are required by certain religions, such as sincerity, etc.

¹³ These three foundations are the characteristics of revelation-based religions such as the Abrahamic religions. The foundation of Hinduism is based more on its scriptures with an ambiguous concept of revelation.

¹⁴ In Judaism, they might be broadly included in the Laws (e.g., the observance of Jewish Laws), and therefore, they will be used as such when examining Augustine's view of Jewish attitudes to good deeds (i.e., the observance of the Laws).

dimension of good deeds. Despite focusing more on ethical issues, al-Ghazālī has also devoted a systematic discussion of the inner dimension of certain devotional acts, connecting them to the heart and spiritual growth. In the case of Augustine, reflection on good deeds is also much influenced by his thinking about the corruption of the will, and the soul's need for grace. Their views of some other relevant ethical principles are also addressed and embedded in the discussion.

3.2 FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS IN THE BIBLE (THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS)

3.2.1 Faith in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, “faith” and its related terms appear much less frequently than in the New Testament.¹⁵ The term “faith” appears twice only in the Authorized Version of the Old Testament (Deut. 32:20; Hab. 2:4), and eighteen times in its Revised Standard Version where it is used to refer to breaking faith or acting in good faith (twelve times altogether e.g., Lev. 5:15, Judg. 9:15f.) and at times to refer to trust (six times).¹⁶

C. H. Pickar argues, however, that there is an extensive list of Hebrew terms which denote faith, or are associated with it, connected to trust and hope.¹⁷ This is because faith, as it was used in Israel, had a close connection with the notion of “trust in Yahweh,” and therefore it often looked toward the future. He contends:

Since Israel’s faith was closely connected with the idea of trust in Yahweh, another verb, when used with God as the object, that implicitly connotes faith is *bāṭah* (to feel secure, to rely, to trust: Dt 28.52; Is 31.1; etc.), with its corresponding noun *beṭah*: (security, trust: Is 32.17; Jgs 8.11), which is used mostly as an adverb (securely, confidently: Dt 33.28; Prv 10.9; etc.). A similar verb that may connote the idea of faith is *hāsā* (to seek refuge, to trust: Dt 32.37; Jgs 9.15). Furthermore, since the Israelite’s attitude of faith often looked to the future, Hebrew verbs meaning to hope were used (especially in the later OT writings) with a connotation of faith, such as *qāwā* or *qīwwēh* (e.g., Gn 49.18; Is 40.31;49.23), *yihēl* [e.g., Ps 30 (31).25; 32 (33).22], *hikkēh* (e.g., Is 8.17;30.18), all of which, with God as the object, signify to wait for Him with confidence, to hope in Him, and therefore, implicitly, to believe in His promises.¹⁸

¹⁵ For instance, based on the King James Version of the Bible, the term “faith” appears around 246 times, the term “faithful” occurs 82 times, the term “faithfully” used 8 times, the term “faithfulness” takes place 19 times and 4 times the term “faithless.” See James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 340-341.

¹⁶ J.D. Douglas, *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 496.

¹⁷ Pickar describes them as follows: “The most common Hebrew root employed to express Israel’s faith in God is *’mn*, of which the basic meaning is firmness, certainty, reliability, and trustworthiness. From this root are derived the adjective *’ēmûn* (faithful: 2 Sm 20.19; trustworthy: Prv 13.17), the nouns *’ēmûnâ* [steadiness: Ex 17.12; security: Ps 36 (37).3; fidelity, faithfulness: 1 Sm 26.23; Hb 2.4, and often predicated of God, as in Dt 32.4; Ps 35 (36).6; etc.] and *’emet*, for original *’ement* [trustworthiness: Ex 18.21; Jos 2.12; constancy, fidelity, faithfulness: Gn 24.27, 49; Is 38.18–19; Ps 24 (25).10; 39 (40).11–12; etc.; truth, reality: Dt 22.20; Jer 9.4; Is 59.14–15], and the adverb *’āmēn* (AMEN or surely, in an assent to something said: Nm 5.22; Dt 27.15–26; Jer. 11.5). As a verb this root is used only in the reflexive (niphal) form *ne’man* (to prove faithful, reliable, true, etc.: Gn 42.20; Dt 7.9; 1 Sm 25.28; etc.) and in the causative (hiphil) form *he’ēmîn* (to hold as trustworthy, to trust, to believe: Gn 15.6; 45.26; Dt 9.23; etc.)” See Pickar and Jonsen, “Faith,” 589.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 589-590.

The various terms and verses of the Old Testament given by Pickar, however, are used in a general context, and therefore, not all can be interpreted as regarding faith in its strict sense. This is evident especially in his list quoted above, where the terms are associated more with trust and hope in God, rather than on having faith in a particular doctrine. Trust and hope, in this context, relate more to the exclusive relationship between Yahweh (God) and Israel or the Jewish people. As already noted in Chapter One, there is no inclusive verse of the Old Testament which contains a comprehensive injunction to believe or which offers a comprehensive formal article of faith. One reason for this is the fact that faith in itself is neither the central theme of the Old Testament, nor of Judaism, but rather they both place a greater emphasis on faith in God being manifested in the practical aspect of religion exemplified by the concept of good deeds (e.g., right living and observance of the Law: Avot 1:17). This trend is more evident in the rabbinical writings, where there is a slight shift in the connotation of the idea of faith from the exclusive relationship between God and Israel, to that of obedience before the Law.

The notion of faith or belief in Judaism was developed by some later scholars, such as Maimonides, who systematised formal articles of faith. He says:

[B]y “faith” we do not understand merely that which is uttered with the lips, but also that which is apprehended by the soul, the conviction that the object [of belief] is exactly as it is apprehended.¹⁹

This definition marks another transition of the concept of faith in Judaism, which had previously been understood in relation to the exclusive relationship between God and Israel (as exemplified in the Old Testament), to that of obedience to God (as demonstrated by rabbinical writings), and finally to that *cognitive* sense of the term (as illustrated by the scholastic philosophers). It is only at this last stage that the notion of faith in Judaism finally found its systematic characteristics, similar to the notion of faith common to other religions. This, however, did not contradict the essential, Biblical, and rabbinical notions of practical faith—especially the performance of good deeds—found in Judaism.

In spite of the relatively few occurrences of the term “faith” in the Old Testament, and the fact that there are no comprehensive verses of the Old Testament dealing with an inclusive injunction to believe in an article of faith, it nevertheless has its

¹⁹ Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. M. Friedlander, 2nd ed. (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1910), 1:50, 67.

place in the Old Testament, as well as in Judaism. Pickar contends that in the Old Testament, “faith plays a very important preparatory role in the salvation history of mankind.”²⁰ However, this contention cannot be accepted as such, but needs further examination as it applies to Judaism. This is because, as alluded to above, the primary meaning of faith of the Old Testament refers more to the exclusive relationship of trust between Yahweh and Israel rather than faith *per se*. In addition, as aforementioned, Judaism places more emphasis on action or good deeds, rather than faith in a particular doctrine. In its early centuries, Judaism did not have formal articles of faith or dogma. The creed and formal doctrines were only formulated when Judaism faced external pressure. This contention will be evident in the following section where the characteristics of faith in the Old Testament are discussed. Before attempting this, however, it is necessary to examine the terminology and concept of faith in the New Testament.

3.2.2 Faith in the New Testament

The term “faith” appears in the New Testament much more often than in the Old Testament. By contrast, the term *pistis* and *pisteuō* (the Greek word for faith) occur more than 240 times in the New Testament (the Revised Standard Version), whereas its adjectival form, *pistos*, appears 67 times.²¹ Although some may propose that this difference does not represent the degree of importance of faith either in the Old or New Testament (e.g., that the rarity of the appearance of the term “faith” in the Old Testament does not render faith as less important),²² as already argued I suggest that it does signify the different degrees of emphasis attached to faith by both the Old and New Testaments. This does not mean that faith is not important in the Old Testament. Indeed, faith is always important in both Testaments. My contention however, is that the Old Testament places more emphasis on manifesting the practical aspect of religion (i.e., observance of the law, and performance of good deeds), whereas faith itself is very much celebrated in the New Testament. For that reason, it is not surprising to see that the Old Testament focuses less on the concept of the Hereafter when compared with the New Testament.

The term “faith” primarily applies to two quite different contexts in Christianity, namely, objective and subjective faith. The former concerns “the body of truth of the

²⁰ Pickar and Jonsen, “Faith,” 589.

²¹ Douglas, *The Illustrated Bible*, .496.

²² *Ibid.*

Christian faith,” which can be found in Christian primary sources like the Bible, the Creeds, the accredited Councils, and the teachings of the great Christian scholars (the doctors and the saints). The latter refers to the first elements of the three theological virtues established by St. Paul (the other two elements are hope and love).²³

In the context of the New Testament, to have faith generally means “to believe,” “to rely on,” and “to trust.”²⁴ In addition to its standard feature as intellectual assent, faith is also used in the synoptic Gospels and Acts to signify confidence.²⁵ However, technically, having faith in the New Testament means to have faith in Jesus Christ’s salvific work; his life and death—incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. The need to have faith (i.e., in Christ for salvation) is strongly stressed in the Pauline epistles.²⁶ In Hebrews 11:1, faith is defined as “the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” This indicates that faith includes the acceptance of both the truths revealed by God and His promises.²⁷

The concept of faith in the New Testament is not only confined to passive intellectual assent. In fact, it also involves, and indeed requires, an act of the will. This feature or requirement is stressed by Paul on many occasions. For instance, Paul maintains the necessity of obedience to the Gospel;²⁸ the need to guard and protect faith;²⁹ the need to make faith be a living one;³⁰ the need to remain firm in faith; and the need to preserve in faith.³¹ In addition, Paul also maintains that faith is not static, but it can be developed and perfected.³²

²³ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 595.

²⁴ E.g., Mark 13:21; John 4:21; Acts 27:25; Rom. 4:17. For the noun faith which means loyalty, trust or belief, see 1 Thess. 1:8; Philem. 6; Heb. 6:1; and for the adjective πιστός (faithful) which means loyal or trustworthy or believing, see Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 16:10–11; 1 Tim. 3:2; Rev. 2:10, 13, etc. See further Pickar and Jonsen, “Faith,” 591.

²⁵ For instance, Mark 5:24, 26 and 9:23–24 states that Christ demanded people to believe in his power and to have confidence in his goodness before performing a miracle. See Pickar and Jonsen, “Faith,” 591ff.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 592.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Rom. 1:5, 10:16; 2 Cor. 10:5; 2 Thess. 1:8.

²⁹ Rom. 12:3, 11:20–22; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 6:14–15; 1 Tim. 1:19; 6:10.

³⁰ Gal. 2:20; 1 Tim. 5:8.

³¹ Rom. 11:20; 1 Cor. 15:2, 16:13; 2 Cor. 1:23–24, 13:5; Col. 1:23, 2:7; 1 Tim. 2:15.

³² Rom. 10:10, 11:20–22; 2 Cor. 10:15; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 1:25; 2 Thess. 1:3.

3.2.3 Good Deeds in the Bible (The Old and New Testaments)

The above analysis suggests that in both the Old and the New Testaments, good deeds—either directly or indirectly—have their place in the realm of faith. The common English term used in the Hebrew Bible and in Christianity to denote good deeds is good works. As with the term “faith,” the term “work” also appears many times in different forms in the Bible.³³ Compared with the definitions of faith examined above which represent the Old and New Testaments’ respective outlooks on faith, the meaning of the term “works” here—and its various forms—is somewhat more complex. This is because these terms are rather general and used in different contexts, many of which have no connection with the concept of good deeds (i.e., good works). Perhaps the most characteristic usage of the term is found in the epistles of Paul and James.³⁴ Yet, as I will discuss later, this term and concept of good deeds are addressed in different contexts by these two primary figures of the New Testament, namely, in the *positive* or *active* and the *passive* contexts.³⁵

The great importance attached to good deeds in the Old Testament—such as the observance of the Law and right living—cannot be questioned, for these features characterise the central theme of Jewish scriptures and teachings. The observance of the covenant and the Law, rather than relying on faith alone, is the prerequisite for salvation in Judaism. Even though there are some negative attitudes shown towards the Jewish concept of good deeds found in the New Testament, especially as illustrated in the Pauline epistles, the New Testament does not abandon good deeds altogether. This is because in most cases, the term “works” or “good works” referred to in that context is associated with the Mosaic Law as distinguished from faith in Christ. Thus, the importance of good works or good deeds in the context of right moral conduct is never questioned, and they are always connected with true faith. Therefore, it is wrong to assert, based on some critical attitudes towards Jewish concepts of good deeds (i.e., the Mosaic Law), that good

³³ For instance, the term “work” appears around 395 times, the term “worker” one time, the term “workers” 28 times, the term “worketh” 37 times, the term “workfellow” one time, the term “working” 20 times, the term “workman” 10 times, the term “workmanship” 7 times, the term “workmen” 11 times, the term “workmen’s” one time, the term “work’s” one time, the term “works” 233 times, and one time the term “works’.” See Strong, *The New Strong’s*, 1233-1236.

³⁴ The epistle of James is traditionally attributed to James the Just (d. 62 or 69 CE), ‘brother of the Lord’ and first bishop of the Jerusalem Church.

³⁵ See especially the next section entitled *The Characteristics and Relative Importance of Faith and Good Deeds in the Bible*. By the positive or active context, I mean, the context whereby good deeds are treated positively (e.g., encouraged to do them or admonished for not doing them) and the passive context refers to any passive, negative, or critical attitude to good deeds (e.g., denial of the necessity of observing certain religious laws and practices, or denial of the efficacy of good deeds etc., as exemplified in some of the Pauline epistles).

deeds are unimportant in the New Testament. Indeed, there are many instances in the New Testament that either implicitly or explicitly suggest that good deeds are very essential and that they have their own role in this life and in the Hereafter. The seemingly different approaches within the New Testament on good deeds, however, do reflect the doctrinal disagreements between some groups on the role of good deeds in justification or salvation.³⁶ In either case, this does not diminish the role of good deeds as emphasised by the New Testament.

3.2.4 The Positive Stance of the New Testament on Good Deeds

A brief examination of some verses of the New Testament, especially Jesus' sayings, which illustrate the importance of man's deeds, is helpful in order to appreciate the necessity and significance of good deeds in Christianity. As I will elaborate further in the next discussion,³⁷ the three great figures of the New Testament—Jesus, Paul, and James—while each addressing the issue differently, all agree on the importance of good deeds. As I will discuss further below, Jesus himself—although he is quite critical towards the contemporary Jewish literal-legalistic concepts of good deeds—insists on the need and importance of good deeds in his perspective. In several places in the New Testament he affirms the accountability of man's deeds.³⁸ Likewise, Paul—perhaps the most controversial figure of the New Testament on this issue—in spite of being associated with the view of the justification or salvation by faith, also acknowledges the necessity and significance of good deeds. For instance, in Romans 2:6, while repudiating the Jews' claim of having moral supremacy and privilege, Paul asserts that the real judgment is not based on privilege, but on performance:³⁹

[O]f just judgment of God, who will repay everyone according to his works: eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in good works, but wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness.

Elsewhere, Paul even admits the role of good deeds in justification. He states:

³⁶ These apparently different approaches of the New Testament on good deeds in relation to salvation are exemplified in the different views of Paul and James. This issue will be discussed further in the next section. And as is widely known, they also have been employed by both parties in the Catholic-Protestant conflict etc.

³⁷ See *The Characteristics and Relative Importance of Faith and Good Deeds in the Bible*.

³⁸ E.g., Matt. 12:36-37, 16:27.

³⁹ Elsewhere, Paul also affirms that everyone will receive their recompense based on their deeds (2 Cor. 5:10, 11:15), and that man should work out their own salvation (Phil. 2:12).

For it is not those who hear the law who are just in the sight of God; rather, those who observe the law will be justified.⁴⁰

If Paul's assertions are not direct, or still open to different interpretations and contexts, as I will examine in the next section, James is bolder in asserting the need and efficacy of good deeds.⁴¹ Perhaps, one quotation from James suffices for this section. James asserts:

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.⁴²

James argues clearly that good deeds are very important and that they have a significant role. Faith without good deeds is not complete and it alone cannot save man. Indeed, as clearly indicated, James claims that without good deeds, faith is dead.

In addition to the above instances, there are several verses of the New Testament which affirm the accountability of man's deeds and encourage man to do good deeds, indicating that man's deeds do have merits, and thus they are important. Among them is 1 Peter 1:17:

Now if you invoke as Father him who judges impartially according to each one's works, conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning...

In Hebrews 10:24, the encouragement to do good deeds is highlighted. It states:

We must consider how to rouse one another to love and good works.

Apart from some verses above, perhaps Jesus' positive attitude towards good deeds as recorded by the Gospels—particularly Matthew—serves as a good illustration for this purpose. To begin with, on many occasions, the Gospels record that Jesus stresses that both faith and good deeds are important. In several places, he admonishes those who lack faith or those who have doubt.⁴³ Jesus' positive view on the importance and efficacy of faith is illustrated in his assertion that by true faith nothing is impossible—even the mountain can be moved.⁴⁴ As regards good deeds, unlike the scribes and Pharisees of his

⁴⁰ Rom. 2:13.

⁴¹ For instance, see James 2:14, 17, 21-25. There are already many attempts proposed to reconcile the views of Paul and James. Some of them suggest different interpretations, some others propose different contexts, and there are also those who combine them both. A further comparison between Paul and James, particularly on the relationship and role of faith and good deeds, will be attempted in the next section.

⁴² James 2:14.

⁴³ E.g., Matt. 14:31, 16:8, 17:17.

⁴⁴ Matt. 21:21-22. See also Matt. 17:20, etc.

time, Jesus introduces a new approach and he teaches the right way to perform them. His main concern is to emphasise the need to observe the inner dimension or inner preconditions of good deeds. This new approach seems to be quite *radical*, where not only does he dive deep into the root of the issues he raises, but he even demands something beyond the normal requirements. These seemingly *radical* teachings of Jesus, however, are not always meant to be taken literally. This is because Jesus is known to use parables and allegorical methods frequently. Nevertheless, they do show his emphasis and seriousness on the issues he deals with. As will be discussed below, the right way of performing good deeds that Jesus commands has several characteristics. Among them are sincerity of intention, doing them secretly, hope in and dependence only on God, and the inclusion of the element of love.

The earliest teaching of Jesus as recorded by the Gospel of Matthew is on worshipping and serving God alone. When tempted by the devil to worship him, Jesus replies “[t]he Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.”⁴⁵ This basic injunction embraces both faith and deeds, namely, to believe in God and to worship or serve Him through certain deeds. Next is his emphasis on repentance and the proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of heaven. He says “[r]epent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”⁴⁶ This second characteristic of Jesus’ teachings also illustrates his concern with good deeds. This is because repentance requires an active action and commitment, namely, to discontinue from bad deeds and not repeat them again. Indeed, it also serves as the foundation towards the performance of good deeds. Jesus’ prohibition from following the bad example of the scribes and the Pharisees who did not practice what they preached also indicates the great emphasis attached by Jesus on good deeds.⁴⁷ He declares that such persons—whose deeds are not in accordance with their speeches—as committing hypocrisy.⁴⁸

The emphasis attached by Jesus to good deeds is more clearly expressed in his following teachings known as *The Sermon on the Mount*, especially in its first section which is known as *the Beatitudes*. The *Beatitudes* have been regarded as the core ethical teachings of Jesus, or as “the standard of Christian conduct,”⁴⁹ or as “the timeless rules

⁴⁵ Ibid., 4:10.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 4:17.

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, 23:3-6.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29, etc. For Jesus’ charge of some practices as hypocrisy, see for instance, Matt. 6.

⁴⁹ NAB, 1114.

for the good life.”⁵⁰ Augustine regards it as “the highest morals, a perfect standard of the Christian life,” and he has devoted a commentary on it.⁵¹ In this sermon Jesus says:

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.⁵²

The above sayings of Jesus deal with different aspects of good deeds. The term “righteousness” used by Matthew in this verse simply means “the right conduct that God requires,”⁵³ or “holy living” which is associated with the obedience to God’s will.⁵⁴ In other words, it refers to any conduct, act, or deed that is in conformity with God’s will. It is not intended to be used in an eschatological sense to refer to the doctrine of justification as it has been commonly used within and after the 16th century of the Catholic-Protestant debate. Commenting on the passage of “the clean [or “pure” in *the Jerusalem Bible*] of heart”, John Barton and John Muddiman write:

To be ‘pure in heart’...means harmony between inward thought and outward deed; it involves a singleness of intention, that intention being the doing of God’s will.⁵⁵

Here cleanness or purity of heart is associated with the conformity and unity between the inward and outward, or inner and outer deed. It signifies that one’s faith—which has its locus in the heart—should be reflected with good deeds. This again confirms that good deeds are among the central focus of Jesus’ preaching. Likewise, the passage about being a “peacemaker” also is associated with good deeds. Commenting on this verse, Laymon argues:

[T]o be peacemakers...is God’s own work in the world. To be called sons of God means that one has sought to do what God is doing; in this case it is God’s reconciling work in the world in which man is called to participate.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Laymon, *The Interpreter’s*, 615.

⁵¹ See Augustine, *Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount*, in *NPNF I.6*.

⁵² Matt. 5:6-10. See also Luke 6:20-49.

⁵³ Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 853.

⁵⁴ Laymon, *The Interpreter’s*, 615; NAB, 1065.

⁵⁵ Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 853.

⁵⁶ Laymon, *The Interpreter’s*, 615.

Regardless of whether “God’s reconciling work” is used here in an ethical or theological sense, it is clear that man is called to partake in maintaining peace and harmony which indicates that deeds, or rather good deeds, are required. In this context, therefore, good deeds in the form of maintaining peace and harmony are made the requirement for the precious designation of “sons of God.”

Jesus’ emphasis on good deeds in the form of religious law is also evident. In the *Teaching about the Law* of the same sermon, he argues that he does not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfil it.⁵⁷ Part of this fulfilment is that he breathes spirituality into the Law. This position rebuts those who wrongly suppose that Jesus rejects the teachings of the Old Testament and the Law *in toto*,⁵⁸ or that Jesus only concerns himself with faith. Indeed, he openly declares that whoever disobeys the commandments will be relegated to “least,” and whoever obeys them will be elevated as “greatest” in the kingdom of heaven.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, he does not accept the Jewish Law plainly. Indeed he is critical of the legalistic attitude of the Jews of his time. His concern is with the inner dimension or inner meaning and the real purpose of the Law, introducing *radical* interpretations of its underlying purpose.

In the following sermon, Jesus emphasises the righteousness which differs from that belonging to the scribes and the Pharisees.⁶⁰ These two groups were accused of being literalists and legalists, namely, of only emphasising the strict outward obedience or performance to the literal Laws. For Jesus, this kind of outer righteousness is inadequate.⁶¹ In contrast, Jesus emphasises the inner or spiritual commitment, and the right intention. The above saying also indicates that Jesus requires more than what has been required by the law of Torah.⁶²

The additional requirements of Jesus are illustrated in his following teachings, where he introduces a somewhat *radical* or spiritual view on some issues. These issues can be broadly divided into two categories, namely, the reminder and the instruction. As regards the former for instance, in dealing on anger, Matthew 5:21-26 records that Jesus

⁵⁷ Matt. 5:17-19.

⁵⁸ According to *A Bible Commentary for Today*, “the prophets” here refers to all the books of the Old testament apart from the law. See G. C. D. Howley, F. F. Bruce & H. L. Ellison, eds., *A Bible Commentary For Today: Based on the Revised Standard Version* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1979), 1190.

⁵⁹ Matt. 5:17-19.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 5:20.

⁶¹ G. C. D. Howley, *A Bible Commentary*, 1190.

⁶² Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 854; G. C. D. Howley, *A Bible Commentary*, 1190.

goes further than the prohibition of killing by the law, by reminding people that not only killing, but even anger is also liable to judgement. He even reminds people to overcome any conflict with one's brother before offering a gift to the altar. This shows that, instead of prohibiting killing as demanded by the Law, Jesus goes deeper by prohibiting anger, which is the root of killing.

On adultery, Matthew 5:27-30 states that Jesus reminds people that even the action of looking at a woman with lust is already regarded as adultery in the heart. He even goes further by claiming that it is better to tear out an eye which causes sin rather than have the whole body thrown into Hell because of that sin. All of these elaborations indicate that Jesus is concerned with the deeper and inner dimensions of the issues he deals with. He goes beyond what is normally required by the Law. He delves deep into the root of those issues and suggests a rather spiritual way—which is often appeared to be radical—of approaching those issues. Indeed, this *radical* or spiritual approach is also found in his other subsequent sermons.

As regards his *radical* instruction, his subsequent sermons on almsgiving, prayer, and fasting (Matt. 6:1-18) exemplify this approach. As in the previous approach, here Jesus also requires more commitment. He teaches the right way of performing those deeds. He repeatedly instructs people to be sincere in performing good deeds and reminds them to avoid the way of hypocrites that tend to show off their good deeds to other people. For instance, on almsgiving he says:

[But] take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.

When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.⁶³

This sermon exemplifies Jesus' concern with the right intention and the right way of performing good deeds. The right intention should only be directed to God, specifically to please Him and hope for a reward only from Him. Among the right ways of performing good deeds is performing them secretly until even "the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing." Likewise, on prayer he also urges people to perform it sincerely and

⁶³ Matt. 6:1-4.

secretly.⁶⁴ On fasting, he urges people to remove the sign of fasting by anointing their heads and washing their faces.⁶⁵ In all these sermons, Jesus repeatedly reminds people to only hope and depend on God alone, for, he argues, “your Father who sees in secret (and sees what is hidden) will repay you.”⁶⁶ Indeed, his following sermons demonstrate his teachings of total dependence on God.⁶⁷

With regards to good deeds in the form of ethical practices, Jesus teaches the Golden Rule. He says “[d]o to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.”⁶⁸ This command of Jesus, indeed, demands love, which is another characteristic of performing good deeds proposed by Jesus.⁶⁹

Concerning the characteristics of a good or righteous believer in relation to good deeds, Jesus’ subsequent sermons on *The True Disciple* (Matt. 7:21-23) and *The Two Foundations* (Matt. 7:24-27) offer their basic criteria. Those criteria are to do with the will of God and to act upon Jesus’ words. Indeed, Jesus lucidly proclaims that in the kingdom of heaven, he will deny those who do not obey God’s will.⁷⁰ He also asserts that those who listen and act on his words “will be like a wise man who built his house on rock,”⁷¹ whereas, those who do not “will be like a fool who built his house on sand.”⁷²

In fact, there are numerous sayings of Jesus recorded by the Gospels which illustrate his positive position towards good deeds. As discussed above, Jesus addresses the issue of good deeds in his own way. Perhaps, because of the widespread strict and literal observance of the Law among the Jews on the one hand, and the lack of realisation of the inner spiritual dimension of the deeds performed on the other hand, Jesus advocates approaches which are seemingly radical, but indeed, practical and relevant to his time and situation. All of these evidently suggest that the right performance of good deeds is among the central concerns of Jesus.

This brief examination of some verses of the New Testament affirms the accountability, necessity, and importance of good deeds in this life and in the Hereafter. It suggests that besides faith, the Bible also places a great emphasis on issues related to

⁶⁴ Ibid., 6:5-8.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 6:16-18.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 6:4 & 18.

⁶⁷ E.g., *ibid.*, 6:25-34.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7:12.

⁶⁹ Barton and Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 856.

⁷⁰ E.g., see Matt. 7: 21-23.

⁷¹ Ibid., 7:24.

⁷² Ibid., 7:26.

man's deeds. Therefore, I argue that the concept of faith in the Bible—both the New and Old Testaments—is not devoid of the concept of good deeds. Although they vary in their relative emphasis on faith and good deeds, they do establish the relationship between them. As already established above, the concept of faith in the Old Testament is manifested in the practical aspect of religion. As regards the New Testament concept of faith, it is also not a passive concept. Indeed, it requires an act of the will. In addition, some views from Western Christianity already referred to above also affirm this position. Thus, the Biblical concept of faith is dynamic, in which the relationship between faith and good deeds is established, and therefore, the performance of good deeds is strongly demanded.

3.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS AND RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS IN THE BIBLE

3.3.1 The Old Testament and Early Judaism

The primary characteristic of faith in the Old Testament centres on the exclusive relationship that existed between Yahweh and Israel as the chosen people. It is strengthened in the form of a covenant (*berit*) that contains special commandments or laws binding them.⁷³ This kind of faith requires not a mere assent or belief but also commitment between both parties where Yahweh is recognised as God, and where He will actively respond to His chosen people.⁷⁴ Jews, on their part, have to fulfil the commandments prescribed in the covenant.⁷⁵ Therefore, in rabbinical writing, faith is usually associated with obedience to the Law rather than just a loyalty to God or a mere intellectual assent to specific dogmas.⁷⁶ Consequently, this kind of faith is “principally juridical” where both Yahweh and Jews have to adhere faithfully to the covenant. Thus, in the Old Testament, faith means “the acknowledgement of God’s commands and implies obedience on the part of man” and “expresses the acknowledgement of God’s promises and His power to fulfil them.”⁷⁷ Hence, in the Old Testament, faith is connected not with a mere belief but with an active commitment of the chosen people in fulfilling the commandments. In this case, the practical dimension of faith is emphasised more than its theoretical aspect.

As mentioned above, early Judaism did not include the formal articles of faith and the idea of dogma. These were largely formulated in the medieval period and found a standard formulation in Maimonides’ “Thirteen Principles” of faith.⁷⁸ The central

⁷³ It is because of this concept of the chosen people that Jews regard themselves as a special people of God who are given special tasks and deserve special attention from Yahweh (God). However, the negative side of this concept is that it can lead to racism or the concept of a ‘race apart.’ For a critical and historical analysis of this concept see Ismā‘il Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Christian Ethics: A Historical and Systematic Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas*, Malaysian ed., (Kuala Lumpur: A. S. Noordeen, 1999), 23ff.

⁷⁴ E.g., fulfilling His promises when due.

⁷⁵ For a brief analysis of the Jewish people and their task, see David J. Goldberg and John D. Rayner, *The Jewish People: Their History and Their Religion* (Viking, 1987; London: Penguin Books, 1989), esp. chap. 4, 273-290. Citations refer to the Penguin edition.

⁷⁶ Pickar and Jonsen, “Faith,” 590.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ In brief, the fundamentals of Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles of faith are as follows: 1. The existence of God; 2. God’s unity; 3. God’s spirituality and incorporeality; 4. God’s eternity; 5. God alone is to be worshipped and obeyed; 6. Prophecy; 7. The preeminence of Moses among other prophets; 8. The entire Torah was given to Moses; 9. The immutability of the Torah; 10. God’s foreknowledge of man’s actions; 11. Reward of good and punishment of evil; 12. The coming of the Messiah and; 13. The resurrection of the dead.

emphasis of Jewish scriptures and Judaism is rather on ethics conduct, and fulfilling the commandments. Accordingly, good deeds—such as fulfilling religious obligations or observance of the Law—are obligatory to Jews, and they are considered as an indispensable part of faith. It is in this sense that Pickar’s contention that “faith plays a very important role”⁷⁹ in the Old Testament can be appreciated. It does not refer to faith as such or to mere acts of belief, but rather to the commitment associated with that faith. In fact, it is to the latter, which is the commitment or practical aspect, that the Old Testament gives the greater emphasis.

In early Judaism, the attitude of emphasising action—such as strict observance of legal Law—over faith was exemplified in the attitude attributed by the writers of the Gospels to the Pharisees. This attitude turned Judaism (in the eyes of its critics) into a legalistic religion.⁸⁰ One such critic is al-Fārūqī who argues that observance of the Law has become Jewish identity, and the fulfilment of the Law “became with them an obsession.”⁸¹ This can be seen, for instance, in the observance of circumcision and the Sabbath day. The practice of circumcision has been regarded not only as a religious observance but also as an indispensable part of the identity of being a Jew. The latter practice, namely, the observance of the Sabbath, has also developed into a legalistic practice, especially for those Orthodox groups who are zealous in keeping the literal law. Therefore, faith in Judaism tends to be practical and legalistic, whereby its practical dimension prevails over its theoretical aspect. In fact in early Judaism, particularly in the interpretation attributed to the Pharisees, faith was principally juridical, practical, and legal.

The direct consequence of this concept of faith in Judaism is that it strengthens the practical aspect of religion.⁸² Salvation does not really depend on faith or confession of faith but it relies on man’s good deeds, such as by observing religious Law. This explains why Judaism has many rules and regulations, and why observant or religious

⁷⁹ Pickar and Jonsen, “Faith,” 589.

⁸⁰ Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Christian Ethics* (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Hayati, 1999), 33-36. In early Judaism, the literalist and legalistic stance characterised the general attitude of the Pharisees. They were literalists in many matters, especially in legal observance.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 35-36. For a discussion on the historical development of the Jewish attitudes towards the Law, see *ibid.*, 30ff.; David Novak, “Law and Religion in Judaism,” in *Christianity and Law: An Introduction*, ed. John White, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1: 34-52.

⁸² E.g., the performance of good deeds.

Jews strictly adhere to the Law.⁸³ All of these show that good deeds are very important in Judaism.

3.3.2 The New Testament and Early Christianity

The concept of faith underwent a radical shift in the New Testament. Faith associated with the exclusive relationship between Yahweh and Israel as the chosen people, symbolised in the form of the Covenant, now found a new interpretation in Jesus Christ's salvific work, presented in a series of events of Christ as the Son of God, that is, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. This new focus on a set of beliefs in Christ's salvific work is among the distinctive characteristics of the New Testament faith.

Therefore, Christianity has its own distinctive articles of faith.⁸⁴ Believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Messiah or Saviour is the central tenet of the New Testament faith. The concept of sin as bad deeds, understood in the Old Testament as a breach of God's commandment, was traced back by Paul to Adam's transgression of eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.⁸⁵ For Paul, humanity is shared in Adam's sin, but the faithful can be redeemed in Christ. Augustine would develop these ideas into his doctrine of Original or Inherited Sin, washed away by Christ in baptism, but still leaving its mark on human nature. Humanity thus continues to need divine grace to be healed.

The term Original Sin, introduced by Augustine—which was generally accepted by Western Christianity, especially within pre-Reformation Christianity—has nothing to do with individual actual sins or the infringement of God's commandment, but it traces its origin solely to the consequences of Adam's transgression. His descendants and therefore all infants are born with the taint of Original Sin.⁸⁶ Adam's sin is believed to have many grave implications—such as the fall, death, condemnation, the loss of natural holiness—which ruins the relationship between man and God.⁸⁷ Therefore all men are in

⁸³ There are various etiquettes, rules, regulations, and laws in Judaism which cover daily activities from morning till night, and from individual to social level. For instance, see George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (New York: Pocket Books, 2000), and Hayim Halevy Donin, *To be a Jew: A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life* (New York: BasicBooks, 1991). See also Goldberg and Rayner, *The Jewish People*, 293-382.

⁸⁴ However, the term "article of faith" was not really widely employed in the early Christianity. It was St. Thomas Aquinas who was first to give the precise meaning to the term.

⁸⁵ For the Biblical account of Adam, see Gen. 2-3.

⁸⁶ Rom. 5:12; *Forgiveness & Baptism*, III.7, 208; 12, 211-212; 15, 214.

⁸⁷ *Forgiveness & Baptism*, I.13, 111-112; 25-28, 120-123.

great need of divine salvation and this has been fulfilled through Christ.⁸⁸ In order to attain salvation, man needs to believe and have confidence in, as well as obedience to, Christ.⁸⁹ Accordingly, faith in the New Testament is “intimately connected with salvation history.”⁹⁰

Therefore, in the New Testament faith is connected more to belief in Christ and his sufficiency and efficacy in man’s salvation. Hence, the great emphasis placed on the Old Testament on action or good deeds in the sense of fulfilling the commandments or the Law seems absent in the New Testament. In contrast, many instances in the New Testament, especially the Pauline epistles, tend to go against this idea, where relying on the Law is not only refuted as the prerequisite for salvation, but is regarded as an instrument which exposes more evils and bad deeds and even brings a curse.⁹¹ But this does not mean that the New Testament and Christianity totally reject the Law of the Old Testament and/or of Judaism. Some laws were discontinued.⁹² Some others were retained albeit in a new interpretation, and others were replaced with the new *laws* (i.e., principles).⁹³ In addition, the New Testament and Christianity do have their own injunctions or principles that require commitment from all Christians, for instance the twofold commandment to love God and neighbour,⁹⁴ and this injunction has been regarded as the primary religious principle.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, apart from normal ethical conduct, good deeds in a religious sense also include the observance of religious rites (i.e., the Seven Sacraments) and compliance with Church traditions, as directed under the guidance of the Pope. Catholic teaching is that the sacraments have been instituted by Christ.⁹⁵ Indeed, these sacraments aim at appreciating and celebrating Christ’s salvific work. Therefore, every Catholic Christian is expected to participate in the sacraments as well as other actions prescribed or encouraged by the Church. This affirms Alder’s contention that in

⁸⁸ Ibid., I.33, 127; 55-56, 143-145; 62, 150; II.47, 194-195; *Grace & Original Sin*, II.34, 506-507; *Enchiridion*, 48-52, 386-388

⁸⁹ Rom. 5:18-19; 6:8-10, etc.

⁹⁰ Pickar and Jonsen, “Faith,” 591.

⁹¹ Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10-12, etc.

⁹² E.g., a greater degree of intermarriage, which was strictly forbidden by Judaism.

⁹³ E.g., the Sabbath observance from Saturday to Sunday and circumcision is replaced with baptism. For the historical separation between Judaism and Christianity, see Marianne Josephine Dacy NDS, “The Separation of Early Christianity from Judaism” (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2000).

⁹⁴ For the development of early Christian law, see Luke Timothy Johnson, “Law in Early Christianity,” in *Christianity and Law*, 2: 53-69.

⁹⁵ Catholic Church. *Catechism*, 311. For the description of the Seven Sacraments, see *ibid.*, 311-415.

Christianity, good deeds cover a wide aspect of actions. They should not be limited to the acts of charity, but it includes any good actions that are done in obedience to God, covering both religious and moral actions.⁹⁶

The above discussion shows that there are different characteristics of faith and good deeds between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament focuses more on the exclusive relationship between Yahweh and Israel. The New Testament, with a radical shift, introduces Christ's salvific work as the core of its faith. These different characteristics of faith have further shaped the general characteristics of good deeds in Judaism and Christianity. In the Old Testament, the concept of good deeds aims at maintaining the exclusive relationship between Israel and Yahweh. This is achieved by the observance of the Law (i.e., the Mosaic Law) as the way of fulfilment of their covenant. Likewise, the Christian concept of good deeds is also connected with its faith. However, in Christianity, there is no such religious law as found in Judaism and Islam. Different Christian denominations, therefore, have their own interpretations regarding religious principles. For instance, although the Roman Catholic tradition does not have the particular set of laws as in Judaism, it does speak about "the Seven Sacraments" and the primary twofold commandment to love God and neighbour. In addition, the authority of the Church and priesthood is also regarded as another religious principle that regulates religious life. Therefore, in the Catholic tradition, good deeds are not only limited to ethical actions, but also include those deeds that conform to these religious principles. Here, however, the notion of religious principles is still subtly different from that of a divinely given law in the manner of orthodox Jewish tradition (or Islam), in which law is seen as coming directly from God.

3.3.3 The Relationship between Faith and Good Deeds in the New Testament

The discussion, so far has aimed at examining the general characteristics, and establishing the importance and necessity of faith and good deeds as demonstrated in the Bible. Although addressed by different approaches, good deeds are always demanded by both the Old and New Testaments. In addition, Jesus himself is very positive towards the right performance of good deeds, allowing this aspect to be among the central themes of the Bible. This section will further examine the issue of faith and good deeds in the New

⁹⁶ Alder "The Relationship," 22. See also Moo, *James*, 101-102.

Testament in relation to righteousness—as understood in the doctrine of justification—and/or salvation.

Primarily, there are two distinct positions on this issue. The first position places more emphasis on faith as the only prerequisite for righteousness and/or salvation, whereas the second position argues that righteousness and/or salvation cannot be attained by faith alone, and that faith is useless without good deeds.⁹⁷ In the New Testament, these two distinct positions are epitomised in the stances of Paul and James respectively. A brief analysis of their views on the issue is useful, not only to appreciate the different approaches employed in the New Testament, but also to understand Augustine's position on the issue and on these approaches. But it is worth mentioning at the outset that both Paul and James address the issue from different approaches and contexts. Paul was mainly concerned with cosmopolitan society, in which the majority of them were non-Jews or new Christian converts who were not familiar with the Law. The concept of good deeds in his mind is associated more with the literal observance of religious Law as proposed by Judaizing Christians.⁹⁸ On the other hand, James addressed the issue to Christians who neglected good deeds.⁹⁹ Therefore, his conception of good deeds relates to those actions which follow faith.¹⁰⁰

To begin with, throughout the 13 epistles attributed to him, Paul generally advocates the efficacy and sufficiency of faith. For instance, in Romans 1:16-17—which is his first epistle recorded in the New Testament—Paul declares:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then Greek. For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous by faith will live.

Indeed there are many instances in Romans which show Paul's positive attitude towards faith as the sufficient and efficacious requirement for righteousness and salvation, as well

⁹⁷ Among the verses which appear to support the first stance are Mark 16:16; John 3:18, 36; Acts 16:30-31; Rom. 1:16-17, 3:20, 28, 4:2-3, 13. 5:1; Gal. 2:16, 3:11-12; Eph. 2:8-9, and Titus 3:5. Among the verses which appear to uphold the second position that salvation is not by faith alone are Ps. 62:12; Prov. 10:16; Jer. 17:10; Matt. 12:37, 16:27, 19:17, 25:41-46; Luke 10:26-28; John 5:29; Rom. 2:6, 13; 2 Cor. 5:10, 11:15, Phil. 2:12; James 2:14, 17, 21-25; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23, 20:12-13, etc.

⁹⁸ Those early Jewish Christians who still observed and urged others to observe Jewish Law as a necessary requirement for salvation.

⁹⁹ For an analysis of these different contexts, missions, and conflicts between Paul and James, see John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition*. 2nd ed. (1997; repr., Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), esp. Chap. 2-4.

¹⁰⁰ See *Faith and Works*, note 121, 87.

as his negative position on relying on good deeds, or rather on a mere observance of the Law. For instance, he proclaims:

[S]ince no human being will be justified in his sight by observing the law; for through the law comes consciousness of sin...; ¹⁰¹ the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe; ¹⁰² They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus; ¹⁰³ What occasion is there then for boasting? It is ruled out. On what principle, that of works? No, rather on the principle of faith. For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works the law; ¹⁰⁴ for God is one and will justify the circumcised on the basis of faith and the uncircumcised through faith; ¹⁰⁵ But when one does not work, yet believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness. ¹⁰⁶

Paul also argues that it is because of emphasising works and ignoring faith that the Israelites have not obtained righteousness. In other words, to some extent a meticulous performance of good deeds has been regarded as the barrier for obtaining righteousness. ¹⁰⁷ Discussing the righteousness of Abraham, Paul asserts that he was justified by faith and Paul denies those who argue that he was justified by works. For Paul, the contention that justification is by works will only make people boastful. ¹⁰⁸ Thus, Paul states “[t]herefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” ¹⁰⁹ Paul’s positive attitude towards faith and his passive or negative stance towards relying on works or deeds can also be found in his later epistles. For example, in Ephesians 2:8 he reiterates:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from your; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast.

Again in Galatians 2:15-16 Paul reaffirms that man is justified by faith and not by works of the Law. Indeed, he maintains that relying on the Law not only hinders man from attaining righteousness but it also brings a curse. ¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ Rom. 3:20.

¹⁰² Ibid., 22.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 3:24.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 27-28.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 3:30.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 4:5.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 9:30-32.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 4:13.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 5:1-2.

¹¹⁰ Gal. 3:10-12.

Addressing the issue from a different context, James boldly upholds that righteousness and salvation is not by faith alone, rather each needs to be accompanied by good deeds. He advocates the insufficiency of faith alone, claiming that without good deeds faith is useless and even dead.¹¹¹ Unlike Paul, James claims that Abraham was considered righteous not by faith alone, but by his good deeds, and therefore, he concludes that both faith and good deeds are required and they work together. In addition, he also contends that one's faith is perfected by good deeds.¹¹² Having this view of Abraham's righteousness by good deeds, he concludes his stance "[s]ee how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."¹¹³ He ends his contention on this issue by stating that even Rahab who was a prostitute was considered righteous by her good deeds.¹¹⁴ Lastly he gives his final conclusion that, "[a]s a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."¹¹⁵

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that Paul and James may seem to have different stances on the relationship and roles of faith and good deeds. While Paul may appear to advocate the sufficiency and efficacy of faith alone, or righteousness and salvation by faith alone, James, on the other hand, contends the opposite, arguing that without good deeds faith is incomplete, useless, and dead. Some solutions have been proposed to reconcile these two different positions and thus to resolve the problem. Augustine himself believes that both Paul and James do not contradict each other.¹¹⁶ While it is not the purpose of this research to get into the details of this noble endeavour, it is not out of place to examine briefly other Biblical passages (particularly Paul's own assertions) which seem to uphold a different position from Paul's basic position as explored above. This is important because it explains the different contexts and approaches employed by Paul.

Some of Paul's statements from the same epistle to the Romans seem to maintain a different position to his basic stance on the issue. In Romans 1:5, Paul hints at the need for obedience "that comes from faith," indicating that in his thought faith was not plainly and merely a belief or an intellectual ascent, but it is a faith which produces obedience. Likewise, in his final words of the same epistle, he wishes that people may not only

¹¹¹ James 2:14.

¹¹² Ibid., 20-22.

¹¹³ Ibid., 24.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 25.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 26.

¹¹⁶ See *Faith & Works*, 14, 28ff.

believe but also obey God.¹¹⁷ In Romans 2:6-8 he supports the idea of moral retribution, namely, rewards and punishment which signifies that good deeds are necessary. Likewise, in Corinthians (2 Cor. 5:10, 11:15), he reaffirms this view by declaring that man will receive his recompense according to his deeds, and that his end will also depend on his deeds. Still more perplexing is Paul's affirmation in Romans 2:13 that those who will be declared righteous are those who observe the Law. On another occasion, Paul even asks other Christians to work out their own salvation which seems to indicate that good deeds still have place in his soteriology.¹¹⁸

Thus, I argue that Paul does not totally reject the notion of good deeds. He still affirms the necessity of good deeds in life. The real issue is the position and the role of good deeds in relation to righteousness and salvation. According to Paul's general stance discussed above, even though he acknowledges the need for good deeds, he maintains that in relation to righteousness and salvation, it is only faith that matters. Perhaps among the reasons for Paul's emphasis on faith is because he was addressing cosmopolitan society and new converts. In order to attract their hearts and minds, he had to focus on faith rather than the Law or good deeds. However, Paul realises that in order to please God, faith still demands good deeds—which is sometimes perceived to be the fruit of faith—that conform to it (faith) and to the teachings of the Gospels.¹¹⁹ In addition, his contentions that carry negative attitude to good deeds are indeed addressed to the literalist Jews and Judaizers, and therefore should be read in their own contexts.

Based on the above discussion, I conclude that although some parts of the New Testament (i.e., Jesus and Paul) are critical towards the Jewish Law or Jewish concept of good deeds, yet, the need and importance of good deeds have never been denied. Indeed as indicated above, Jesus, Paul, and James—three great figures of the New Testament—address the issue in different contexts. Jesus is more concerned with calling people to observe the inner dimensions of good deeds rather than the strict, literal, and scrupulous observance of the Law. In contrast, Paul and James address the issue in relation to the doctrine of justification exemplified in the concept of righteousness. In Paul's mind, the works are chiefly of the Law which precede faith. For Paul, the observance of the Law and other kinds of good deeds prior to having the right faith, are not intrinsically

¹¹⁷ Rom. 16:26.

¹¹⁸ Phil. 2:12-13.

¹¹⁹ Titus 2: 11-14, 3:8; Heb. 11:6, 13:21; 1 Thess. 1:3, etc.

significant in attaining righteousness and/or salvation. This is the core disagreement between him and the Judaizers of his time. Although James' conception of works is those which follow faith, he admonishes those Christians who, despite professing their faith, are indifferent towards the performance of good deeds. Regardless of the different approaches and contexts employed by these important figures of the New Testament, it is evident that all of them agree on the necessity and importance of good deeds.

3.4 ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION

While both faith and good deeds play an important role in the Christian scriptures, there were still many alternative interpretations of their relationship which arose in the first centuries of the Christian era, some of which developed into a series of controversies and accusations of heresy. In the time of Augustine, these alternative interpretations were labelled by their critics as Manichaeans, Donatists, and Pelagians, or as having certain views in common with Pelagius.

Manichaeism¹²⁰ was a Gnostic religious movement founded by Mani¹²¹ in the 3rd century, lasting for some twelve centuries.¹²² The fundamental teaching of the Manichaeans was the belief in dualism, namely, the existence of two opposite divine powers, that is, the Light and the Darkness, Good and Evil, or God and Matter.¹²³ The Manichaeans held a negative concept of man's nature as evil.¹²⁴ Mani asserted that man had been despoiled and imprisoned with the evil nature of devils. Therefore, man's nature, including the body or *flesh*, was considered to be evil.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Also known as Manicheanism or Manichaeism.

¹²¹ According to Ibn Ishāq al-Nadīm, his full name was Mānī Ibn Futuq Babak Ibn Abū Barzām. See Ibn Ishāq al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 773. There are other opinions on his father's name, namely Fātik and Patek. This difference is perhaps due to the lack of consonant marks in the original manuscripts. Mani was born into an aristocratic family on 14 April 216 in Babylonia. He was probably influenced by a Gnostic sect joined by his father, Patek; see Bonner, *St Augustine*, 157-159. It was believed that Mani received revelations twice (at 12 and 13 years of age) which disclosed "the mystery of light and of darkness" from "Twin", a spiritual being. The Twin elected him as the last prophet of God and revealed to him the evil of the darkness; see Bonner, *St Augustine*, 159; Elton L. Daniel, "Manicheanism," In *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, ed. Richard C. Martin, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 428.

¹²² In organizing his church, Mani copied Marcion, a Gnostic religious leader of the second century of Christianity. See Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 15.

¹²³ In his introductory essay on the Manichean heresy, Newman argues that dualism was existant and manifested everywhere long before Manicheanism. For instance, it can be traced in pre-Babylonian (Accadian) religion, in Zoroastrianism, in Babylonian religion of the Semitic time, etc. See Newman, introductory essay, 9ff.

¹²⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm narrates that Mani claimed that man was the creature of devils, born out of copulation between demons. This view shaped the Manichaeian passive attitude towards good deeds. See Ibn Ishāq al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 783ff.

¹²⁵ Mani claimed that even though man is 'the product' of devils, he still has a light which find its source from the God of Light. This is because the God of Light is originally the source of creatures. For a brief yet comprehensive elaboration of Manichaeian's history and system, see Newman, introductory essay, 5ff. For other accounts of Manichaeism and Augustine's involvement, see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 46ff; Possidius, *The Life*, 49-51, Bonner, *St Augustine*, 157ff.; Warren Thomas Smith, *Augustine: His Life and Thought*, 22-26; O'Donnell, *Augustine*, 47-54; Chadwick, *Augustine*, 11-15, 23-25, 38ff; Stanley Romaine Hopper, "The Anti-Manichean Writings," in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. Roy W. Battenhouse (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 148-174.

Following his idea of the evil nature of man's flesh—passion or lust, avarice, and sexual intercourse—Mani presented strict ways of salvation, namely, through rigorous asceticism and a strict performance of certain ritual ceremonies.¹²⁶ These rigorous ways—such as suppressing lust and avarice, abstaining from marital intercourse, avoidance from eating meat and from drinking wine, etc.—were meant to suppress the evil of the flesh, avarice, and lust. They were also intended to illuminate the light—which has been imprisoned in the darkness of the flesh—and thus, to enable man to attain liberation and salvation. They believed that salvation could only be achieved through rigorous asceticism.

This Gnostic soteriology within Manichaeism goes beyond the normal observance of good deeds. Indeed, Manichaeans advocated a radical belief and proposed extreme practices. Since they placed great emphasis to radical faith which propagated the evilness of man, they did not appreciate a normative way of performing good deeds, and a normative way of right living. The Elect—who were regarded as the true Manichaeans—thinking that they had become the Light, tried to maintain their state by detaching themselves from accepted ways of living, namely, marriage or holding property. They also could not work, but had to live a wandering life.¹²⁷

The Manichaean negative concept of man also led to a rigorous interpretation of bad deeds especially for the Elect. For instance, connubial intercourse was regarded as an improper practice, and even marriage was not allowed for the Elect. They could not work and were not allowed to have possessions. They were only allowed to have food for the day and clothes for the year.¹²⁸ The Manichaeans considered those who were enslaved by lust as sinful, and severe punishments awaited the sinful person after his life. Thus, the stance of the Manichaeans on faith and good deeds was that they placed a great emphasis on radical faith and rigorous asceticism. Therefore, good deeds and right living were not really their concern.

Donatism was an early Christian movement considered as heretical or schismatic, especially in the North African church.¹²⁹ The Donatist controversy arose

¹²⁶ Newman introductory essay, 18.

¹²⁷ But, the Manichaeans did not altogether disregard good deeds. Basic observance of good deeds and avoidance of bad deeds were still required and this was embodied in Mani's Ten Commandments. See Ibn Ishāq al-Nadīm *Fihrist*, 789ff.

¹²⁸ Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, 15.

¹²⁹ For an account of the Donatist controversy and Augustine's involvement, see Hartranft, introductory essay, 509-551; Bonner, *St Augustine*, 237ff.; Possidius, *The Life*, 55ff.; O'Donnell, *Augustine*, 221ff.;

from a rigorous persistence in maintaining the need for the holiness and purity of the priest in administering the sacramental rites.¹³⁰ In their earnest attempt to maintain the purist views and practices of North Africa, the Donatists held fast that the church must be the church of the saints, which was pure and cleansed of sinners. Therefore, they regarded the *traditores* (traitors) as sinners or apostates, and invalidated their sacramental administrations. Thus, the main dispute between the Donatists and other members of the Christian Church was over the status of those who had renounced their faith in order to be saved during the persecution.

The issue of man's deeds underpinned this debate. Bad deeds were perceived as bringing negative consequences for faith.¹³¹ Surrendering the scriptures to the imperial authorities was regarded by the Donatists as a bad deed which jeopardised the faith of the doer. Therefore, the outward action of surrendering the scriptures to the civil authorities was considered to be a grave sin or a serious bad deed, which in turn defiled the perpetrator's faith and invalidated his sacramental administration.¹³² Because of their extreme position in maintaining the purity and cleanliness of the Church, the Donatists practised rebaptism on Christians who converted to their sect, who were once considered as the *traditores*. They believed that such action of submitting to the imperial authorities was a severely detrimental action (a grievous bad deed), which was harmful to one's faith.

Chadwick, *Augustine*, 75-86; Frederick W. Dillistone, "The anti-Donatist writings," in Battenhouse, *A Companion*, 175-202.

¹³⁰ In particular, this controversy was a reaction against the appointment of Caecilianus by Bishop Felix of Apthunga (in c. 309/310 or 311/312 CE), the latter was regarded as a *traditor* (traitor) for surrendering the scriptures and relics to Roman imperial authorities during the Diocletian persecution (303-305 CE). In addition, Caecilianus was also accused of having persecuted confessors in prison by preventing them from having food supplied.

¹³¹ This view is quite similar to the view of the Khārijites, a sect which is considered as heretic in early Islam. Some of them declared those who submit to the authority other than their leaders as sinners or unbelievers.

¹³² This was because the Donatists held that the validity of the sacraments strictly depended upon the saintliness and merit of the ministers, the position known in Latin as *ex opere operantis* (from the work of the one doing the working). Hence, the focus was on the holiness and merit of the person (i.e., bishop or minister) celebrating the sacraments. As I will discuss later, this position is refuted by Augustine who maintains the opposite position.

Pelagianism, named after Pelagius,¹³³ was perhaps the most controversial movement with which Augustine engaged.¹³⁴ This movement, which at first appeared as an attempt to reform the ethical and spiritual condition of the Christians of the day, was later declared to be heretical by those who favoured an Augustinian theology.¹³⁵ The controversy began in 412 CE with the condemnation of Caelestius by a council in Carthage in North Africa.¹³⁶ He was a Roman aristocrat who enthusiastically propagated some unorthodox views later associated with Pelagius,¹³⁷ who in turn was eventually forced to defend himself at the synod of Diopolis in Palestine in 415 CE.¹³⁸ Grace and free will, central in this debate, are interconnected with the issue of good deeds. As Bishop Hefele publicly declared, the primary Pelagian doctrine was on the absolute ability and efficacy of man's merit in attaining virtue independent of grace.¹³⁹ The Pelagians have been alleged to argue that man can attain righteousness and salvation through his own good deeds, and not through the gift of God's grace.

Pelagius was concerned with the moral and spiritual state of man. His concern was with faith in practical life rather than theoretical teachings. His main concern was for the right conduct, and therefore, he was distressed with the pessimistic view of human nature. He was trying to reform Christians who were indifferent to the observance of good

¹³³ He was a British theologian and monk, who was never a priest. However, because of his spiritual and ascetic life, he was first regarded as a spiritual director who lived an exemplary life before later being condemned as a heretic. For a historical account on Pelagianism and Augustine involvement, see Warfield, introductory essay, 8-86; Chadwick, *Augustine*, 108ff.; Paul Lehmann, "The anti-Pelagian writings," in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. Roy W. Battenhouse, 203-234 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955); Brown, *Augustine*, 340-352; Bonner, *St Augustine*, 312ff; Possidius, *The Life*, 79-81; Smith, *Augustine*, 127-137,.

¹³⁴ In addition to Pelagius, there were some other important figures associated with this movement who were contemporary with Augustine. They were Caelestius, Julian of Eclanum, and John Cassian. John Cassian was also associated with so-called Semi-Pelagianism, alleged to be a later development of Pelagianism.

¹³⁵ First, Pelagius's disciple, Caelestius, was condemned by a council in Carthage in 412. Later, Pelagius was brought to trial at councils in Jerusalem and Lydda in 415, but he was acquitted. However, eventually Pelagius was declared a heretic by the Council of Carthage in 418.

¹³⁶ See Denzinger, *The Source*, 44-48.

¹³⁷ These allegedly unorthodox views are as follows: 1) Adam was created mortal and therefore death is a natural phenomenon and not the result of his sin. In other words, he maintained that Adam would certainly have died regardless of whether he committed sin or not; 2) Adam's sin neither injured nor was it inherited by others except himself alone. Therefore the human race was saved from the effect of his sin; 3) Infants were innocent and clean from any sin; 3) It was not on account of Adam that the human race died nor on account of the resurrection of Christ that they rise again; 5) A person could enter the kingdom of heaven through observance of the law and the gospel; 6) It was possible for man to live without sin and to keep the divine commandments; and 7) There were sinless men living sinlessly before Christ. See Warfield, introductory essay, 14-16.

¹³⁸ Even though he was successfully acquitted, through Augustine's relentless campaign and his influence against him, Pelagius was finally condemned in the following years and banished by the Roman emperors.

¹³⁹ Warfield, introductory essay, 10.

deeds. For Pelagius, true Christians are not only Christians in name but they must also be Christians in deeds.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, he tried to combat the negative and passive attitudes of the Manichaeans which attributed evil to man and his nature. In opposition, Pelagius maintained that man's nature was good. Thus, he advocated a positive view of man and believed that man, by his own effort, was capable of doing good deeds and attaining righteousness. He also did not accept the notion of the ruined state of the human race having been caused by Adam's sin, as advocated by Augustine. In his mind, this view seemed to be another form of negative and passive attitude towards man. He worried that these attitudes would undermine man's moral and spiritual dimensions, making man a mere puppet, incapable of doing and achieving anything on his own. However, in his effort to refute the negative view of the Manichaeans and what he believed as passive stance of Augustine on man, he was eventually perceived—notably by Augustine—as fallen prey to the other extreme stance, of totally rejecting the doctrine of Original Sin, and of maintaining the absolute ability and efficacy of man's merit in attaining righteousness through good deeds independent of God's grace.¹⁴¹

The above brief analysis touches on the many different interpretations concerning good deeds that were current in the time of Augustine. He was living during the formative period of Latin Christianity, when there were still not many established doctrines or standard interpretation of the relevant issues. Augustine perceived all these other interpretations as inaccurate, or rather as dangerous threats, and therefore, he devoted a great portion of his later life to engage actively in dismantling their arguments, defending what he believed to be the orthodox teachings of Christianity. Although his interpretations of the issues involved are not the only accepted views and certainly not the last word, they have shaped the way Western Christianity has understood them. Augustine's stance towards these interpretations and his views of good deeds as well as some other relevant issues are discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁴⁰ B. R. Rees, *The Letters*, 2, 8; Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 357.

¹⁴¹ For Augustine's recapitulation of Pelagius' teachings that he considered as heretical, see *Proceedings of Pelagius*, 65, 442-443.

CHAPTER FOUR: AUGUSTINE ON GOOD DEEDS

PART 1:

4.1 THE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF AUGUSTINE

Augustine's thought on good deeds would evolve significantly over time, in response to what he saw as many inaccurate interpretations as well as challenges to Christian orthodoxy. Scholars analyse his life into different categories.¹ In relation to good deeds, Augustine's life can be divided into four phases, namely, before conversion, early conversion, during the Manichaean and the Donatist controversies, and during the Pelagian controversy. Each phase marks an evolution in his thinking about good deeds. In the first phase he was a Manichaean who did not really appreciate Christian religious observance. The old Augustine was replaced by his becoming a Christian Neo-Platonist in the second phase. In the third phase he was a public bishop, theologian, and philosopher. In the last phase, however, Augustine combined mystical concern for the spiritual life with awareness of his pastoral responsibilities as a bishop.² Each of the above four phases has left a considerable influence and inspiration towards his mystical or spiritual insight into good deeds. His most mature thought on the subject is characterised by a profound emphasis on inner dimension and above all in human dependence on God's grace.

¹ For instance, Bonner in *St Augustine*, divides it into two parts (from Augustine's birth to his mother's death, and his later life and activities). Row W. Battenhouse in "The Life of St. Augustine," analyses it into twelve contexts, and Pope Benedict XVI divides it into three stages of conversion ("progressive drawing near to Christ," "giving up his 'beautiful dream' of dedicating his life to prayer and study by being ordained to the priesthood and assigned to pastoral work," and "realizing that each day he must ask God's forgiveness for his sins and renew his commitment to following Christ"). See Bonner, *St Augustine*; Battenhouse, "The Life of St. Augustine," in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 15-56; and "Pope Benedict Points to St. Augustine's Conversion, Influence on His Life," *American Catholic*, accessed 22 Aug. 2012, <http://www.americancatholic.org/News/Lent2008/augustine.asp>. For other sources of Augustine's biography, see Chapter 2 on *Biographical Studies, Publications, and Scholarly Research on Augustine*.

² It is important to note that the term "mystic" here is applied in a positive sense which is almost equivalent to Sufism in Islam. It refers to spiritual thought, life, and experience which are not contradictory to social engagement, and therefore not to be understood in a narrowly understanding as reactionist or otherworldly attitude to religion and social engagement.

A brief understanding of socio-religious conditions in the time of Augustine serves as an important background in appreciating his stance on various issues. He was living in the formative period of Latin Christianity, when there was still a wide range of interpretations as to what constituted orthodox belief. In his early life, he engaged either directly or indirectly with the Academics or sceptics, the Manichaeans, and philosophers, and later with the Donatists and the Pelagians. Throughout his treatises, Augustine offers critical analyses of their approaches, which he saw as tending either to pure spiritualism, rationalism, or to pure ritualism and legalism in relation to faith and good deeds.³ He believed that the majority of these interpretations were inaccurate, misleading, or even dangerous, and therefore, was constantly reacting against them.

Augustine attempts to find a balance between these interpretations. Against those who tended to be pure spiritualists and pure rationalists, he maintains a positive view of the human person and the importance of religious observance and a moral life. Against those he considers as moving towards pure ritualism and legalism, he emphasises the spiritual dimension of faith and good deeds, and above all, the necessity and efficacy of grace. A brief examination of the different phases of his life will further offer some insights into this evolution.

4.1.1 The First Phase: Before Conversion

Augustine describes his early years as full of faults, lustful pleasure, sin, and ignorance. For instance, he relates in the *Confessions* that in his early youth he sought out a life of delusion and empty riches;⁴ he was at fault and had sinned for not doing what was asked by his parents and teachers;⁵ he hated reading and study,⁶ he used to love public shows;⁷ and he used to steal and cheat.⁸ He admits that he was at fault and was not able to grasp the inner dimension of the Bible;⁹ he proudly considered himself a mature adult above the scripture;¹⁰ he was

³ For an analysis of Augustine's polemical strategies against some of these groups, see Humfress, "Controversialist: Augustine in Combat."

⁴ *Confessions*, I.ix.14, 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I.x.16, 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I.xi.17, 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I.x.16, 12-13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I.xix.30, 22; II.iv.9-vi.12, 29-31.

⁹ *Ibid.*, III.v.9, 40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

deceived by Manichaeism;¹¹ he was overcome by greed;¹² and he took a concubine with whom he fathered a son,¹³ and some others. Although it can be argued that (like al-Ghazālī in *Munqidh*.) Augustine was excessively critical of his life at the time he wrote the *Confessions*, his account implies that in this phase he did not really appreciate religious observance or the performance of good deeds and righteous living. Moreover, the fact that he was a Manichean for almost nine years indicates that he did not appreciate Christianity as a whole, but looked down at its scriptures and beliefs. In addition, because of pride he admitted that he was unable to grasp the inner dimension of the Bible and of other things.¹⁴ In this phase there was no indication that he practised or held a positive view of Christian religious observance and other kinds of good deeds. During this period, he was concerned with worldly pleasures and achievements, was seduced into following Manichaeism, and did not devote proper time to religious contemplation and observance.

4.1.2 The Second Phase: Early Conversion

Augustine's conversion towards Christianity began when he read Neo-Platonist writings and met Ambrose and listened to his sermons.¹⁵ Through Ambrose's skilful interpretation of the Bible in the light of Neo-Platonism, Augustine began to see the wisdom of the Biblical teachings which previously to his mind seemed absurd.¹⁶ He began to realise that the truth taught by Neo-Platonism was already stated in the Bible, and thus he moved closer to the Bible and Christianity.¹⁷ He later maintained, however, he found something lacking in Neo-Platonism, namely, spirituality, the salvific grace of God through Christ, devotion, humility of spirit, and other spiritual qualities.¹⁸ John Peter Kenney has observed that Augustine realised that despite their many benefits, the Platonic books "represent danger," contending that this is because "they offer a vain path to salvation and exacerbate the original fall of the human soul through spiritual pride."¹⁹ Augustine on the other hand started to believe that

¹¹ Ibid., IV.i.1, 52.

¹² Ibid., IV.ii.2, 53.

¹³ Ibid. His son was named Adeodatus, who died at the age of sixteen or seventeen.

¹⁴ Ibid., III.v.9, 40; vii.13, 44.

¹⁵ Ibid., III.iv.7, 38-39; V.xiii.23, 87-88.

¹⁶ Ibid., VI.iv.6, 94.

¹⁷ Ibid., VII.xxi.27, 130-131.

¹⁸ Ibid., VII.xxi.27, 130-132.

¹⁹ Kenney, "Mystic and Monk," 22:292.

there was a need to adopt humility and to admit the need of God's grace.²⁰ Later, he fell into a spiritual crisis of "two wills, one old, the other new, one carnal, the other spiritual,"²¹ and it became serious and troublesome.²² Eventually, upon hearing a voice which he believed to be a divine command at the garden of Milan (in 386 CE), asking him to pick up and read, he randomly opened and read the Bible. Upon reading the passage (Rom. 13:13-14), he became *enlightened*, and resolved to embrace Christianity. He first retreated to the Villa of Cassiciacum²³ where, among other activities, he devoted some time to contemplation and writing,²⁴ before eventually receiving baptism (in 387 CE), and subsequently becoming a practising Christian.²⁵

With the help of Neo-Platonism, Augustine was earnest in seeking after truth, investigating several disciplines, eventually finding it within Christianity. The Manichaean had been replaced by the Christian Neo-Platonist. The new Augustine began to realise certain inner dimensions of religious teachings, harmonising the mind (reason) and the heart (spirituality). Thus, at this phase he had already moved to search for a spiritual dimension of religious life, not limiting himself to a mere superficial outward observance. He writes:

My hunger was internal, deprived of inward food, that is you yourself, my God....So my soul was in rotten health.²⁶

Augustine's quest was of the inner self, being the journey of the soul towards God, the lasting happiness.²⁷ Within this phase too, he devoted some time to contemplation and improving his personal spiritual development. He also began to write on defending Christianity against Manichaeism. He spent some time learning from several monastic communities, before returning to Tagaste and establishing his own monastery, where he led a contemplative and devotional life.²⁸ Thus, within this phase, he focused on improving his own soul and re-establishing his personal relationship with God. Although he was not yet ready to express his

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *Confessions*, VIII.v.10, 139-140.

²² Ibid., VIII.xi.25xii, 28, 150-152.

²³ Perhaps in the Brianza district, north of Milan.

²⁴ For a brief analysis of Augustine's activities at Cassiciacum, see Bonner, *St Augustine of Hippo*, 92-95; Wills, *St Augustine*, 49-56; Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 115-129.

²⁵ *Confessions*, VIII.xii.29-30, 152-154.

²⁶ Ibid., III.i.1, 35.

²⁷ E. I. Watkin, "The Mysticism of St. Augustine," in M. C. D'arcy et al., *A Monument to Saint Augustine*, 105-106; Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy*, 3-24.

²⁸ Bonner, *St Augustine*, 105-106.

spiritual enlightenment in the public life, he had already begun to defend his new religion and to share his spiritual enlightenment with his close friends and community.

4.1.3 The Third Phase: The Manichaeism and the Donatist Controversies

In his third phase as a Christian bishop, theologian and philosopher, Augustine developed his mystical or spiritual interpretation and addressed the issues involved mainly in the theological and philosophical context, with some synthesis of his spiritual insights on certain issues. The beginning of the phase of the Manichaeism controversy overlaps with the end of his early conversion phase. This is because Augustine had already begun to write some anti-Manichaeism treatises at the end of his early conversion period,²⁹ developing them further after his ordination. In this phase, Augustine became actively engaged with the public and productive in writings. As I will analyse further in the following discussion, Augustine presented positive views of God, man and creation, free will and evil, and some others, which he thought he had misinterpreted in his Manichaeism period. These concepts contributed to developing his positive view of good deeds.

Augustine considered Manichaeism as a branch of Christian heresy, teaching various misleading and dangerous doctrines.³⁰ In his anti-Manichaeism writings, Augustine maintains that man consists of body and soul, and that man is good and can produce or do something good, but the chief good of man lies in his soul.³¹ His view of God also changed, from regarding God as a corporeal entity which is vulnerable to evil to an incorporeal entity with absolute power, the chief good and the source of goodness.³² Augustine comes to perceive that all things are good as long as they act in accordance with God's will, or as long as they come closer to God.³³ If in his Manichaeism phase Augustine was indifferent to good deeds, now he believes that it is through the performance of good deeds that man arrives at the knowledge of the truth.³⁴ He also realises that evil, which also includes sin, has no

²⁹ They are *On Free Will*, *On Genesis*, *Against the Manichaeism*, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, *On the Morals of the Manichaeism*, and *On True Religion*.

³⁰ Oort, "Augustine and the Books of the Manichaeism," 15:189.

³¹ *Morals of the Catholic*, 4.6-5.7, 48-49.

³² See Roland J. Teske, "Spirituality: A Key Concept in Augustine's Thought," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 64, Fasc. 1, *Filosofia e Espiritualidade: O Contributo da Idade Média / Philosophy and Spirituality in the Middle Ages* (2008), 53-71; Stanislaus J. Grabowski, "St. Augustine and the Presence of God," *Theological Studies* 13 (1952), 336-358.

³³ *Morals of the Catholic*, 6.9, 49-50; 8.13, 51; 11.18, 54-55; *Nature of Good*, 1, 483; 12-13, 487.

³⁴ *Morals of the Catholic*, 28.55-58, 72-73

substance,³⁵ and in fact is privation of good.³⁶ Therefore, sin is not to be attributed to God or other forces but to the will of man.³⁷ Thus, against the fatalistic view of Manichaeism, Augustine maintains that man is given free will. He argues that if man is not free to choose and act, it would have been impossible to have merit. Moreover, God commands man to obey Him also proves that man has free will.³⁸ Augustine also believes that deeds are to be judged from their motive and not from an external aspect.³⁹ He is already emphasising the inner dimension of good deeds.

As a bishop, Augustine took an active part in the Donatist controversy, in which the central issue was baptism, one of the most fundamental religious observances in Christianity. In his anti-Donatist writings, Augustine fully grasps and emphasises the inner or spiritual dimension of baptism as well as some aspects of other religious observances and beliefs. His spiritual insight into baptism follows closely Christian fundamental teaching about the soul returning to God through Christ. Augustine emphasises belief in God as the path to returning to God. He considers unbelief to be based on unsound reasoning, and therefore to be inexcusable.⁴⁰

The question of whether Augustine's thought should be described as Theocentric, as claimed by Basil Studer, or Christocentric is difficult. John Drury reminds readers that although rarely mentioned explicitly, Jesus may be mentioned implicitly in the formula of the *Christus totus* (the whole Christ) which states that Christ and the Church are united together. This formula suggests that on certain occasions whenever Augustine mentions of the Church, Christ is automatically present.⁴¹ He speaks much more about divine grace than about the Holy Spirit, a term more present in Greek theological tradition as leading to *theosis*,

³⁵ *Morals of the Manichaeans*, 8.11, 90.

³⁶ *Against Manichaeus*, 35:39, 185; *Confessions*, VII.xii 18, 125.

³⁷ *Two Souls*, 10.13-14, 128-131; *Nature of Good*, 28, 494.

³⁸ *Against Fortunatus*, 15, 144.

³⁹ *Morals of the Manichaeans*, 13.27-30, 96-98.

⁴⁰ See Owen Anderson, "Augustine's Ethics of Belief and Avoiding Violence in Religious Disputes," *New Blackfriars* 91, no. 1031 (2010), 83-101.

⁴¹ For further discussion of Christocentrism and Theocentrism in Augustine's thought, see Basil Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?*, trans. M. J. O'Connell (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997); John Drury, "Christus Totus and the Confessions: Augustine's Ecclesiology and the Puzzle of the Presence of Christ in His Confessions," <http://www.drurywriting.com/john/Christus%20Totus%20and%20the%20Confessions.htm>, (accessed 21 Oct. 2013).

becoming one with God.⁴² Augustine's theology can therefore be described as both Christocentric and centred around the primacy of God.

Taking baptism as an example, Augustine offers his deep analysis of its real essence, purpose, and significance. He does not regard it as a mere outward immersion into water, but he relates it to the spiritual realm, the realm of divinity. He believes that baptism belongs to Christ, and therefore, one should not invalidate one's baptism based merely on outward merit of certain persons.⁴³

In the Manichaean and Donatist controversies Augustine started to actively engage with the public, especially through writing, defending what he believed to be orthodox teaching. Not only did he already emphasise and share openly his view of the inner dimension of religious observance, but he was also able to synthesise some of his spiritual insights with the orthodox teachings, offering his fresh spiritual interpretation of certain concepts and religious observances. Being a bishop, however, he was cautious about interpreting his mystical views in a traditional way. To maintain unity and to safeguard Catholicity, Augustine the bishop tried to avoid giving controversial interpretations, but this did not prevent him from sharing his mystical insights with the public. In addition to defending orthodoxy against interpretations that he regards as erroneous, he implicitly asks readers to ponder upon the inner dimension which is the essence of good deeds or religious observance, thus, breathing spirituality into Christianity. He believes that by understanding the reality and real essence of good deeds, unity can be achieved, and Catholicity can be sustained.

4.1.4 The Fourth Phase: The Pelagian Controversy

This phase marks a final deepening of Augustine's thought during a period when he actively offered his spiritual insight to the public. While addressing a wide audience as a preacher, he placed great emphasis on the interiority of the issues addressed. In the Pelagian controversy, the debate became more personal, leading him to modify some of his views. An important evolution in his thought was a shift to focus primarily on the interiority, the inner or spiritual dimension of man and of religious life, and above all in man's dependence on God's grace.

⁴² The Greek Fathers are fundamentally shaped by the Logos theology of John, that Christ is the incarnation of the eternal Logos of creation—a very Platonic idea—that John inherits from a Jewish thinker, Philo.

⁴³ *Answer to Petilian*, II.6.7, 735; II.7.14, 752.

At this stage, his treatment and focus were psychological and highly mystical, and he reacted against interpretations that he perceived as pure ritualism and legalism. His aim was mystical, namely, to attain spiritual union with God, the Supreme Good, in accord with Neo-Platonic tradition.⁴⁴

Disagreeing with the Pelagian views—such as the efficacy of freewill and good deeds—which he understood to be at the expense of God’s grace, Augustine had to internalise relevant issues by addressing them in a mystical or spiritual context, as well as developing further his views of man’s condition, free will, and God’s grace. It was in this phase that he formulated and systematised his interconnected doctrines of Original Sin, the deformed free will, and man’s absolute dependence on God’s grace as the bases of his thought. He maintains that Original Sin has corrupted free will, and that its effect still remains in man after baptism.⁴⁵ Consequently, man is in continuing need of God’s grace, without which no man is able to will good things.⁴⁶ On the other hand, man still has the capacity to will what is bad. Accordingly, man needs God’s grace at all stages of his life in order to enable him to will and do good things.⁴⁷ Because of these conceptions, Augustine was moved to address the inner self and inner dimension of good deeds, which he believed to be their real essence, which in turn he regarded as the core factors in achieving his spiritual goal.

Augustine’s forceful defence of grace particularly as demonstrated in his debate with the Pelagians, has led him to be known as “the Doctor of Grace.” It was not until this time that the subject of divine grace in relation to man’s freedom and salvation became a controversial issue.⁴⁸ Although it is often argued that the necessity of divine grace was only

⁴⁴ See Andres G. Nino, “Spiritual Exercises in Augustine’s Confessions,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 47, no. 1 (2008), 89; Chadwick, introduction to *Confessions*, xxi; John Peter Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Rereading the Confessions* (New York & London: Routledge, 2005), esp. Part I, no. 2.

⁴⁵ *Answer to Julian*, VI:16.49, 508-510; 17.51, 510-512.

⁴⁶ There are various references from Augustine’s works on different aspects of the above issues, namely, on the existence of Original Sin in every man except for Jesus, the corruption of the will, the necessity of God’s grace. For instance see, *Rebuke & Grace*, 2, 869 [CTHP: 1.2, 185-186]; 31, 892-893 [CTHP: 11.31, 212]; *Forgiveness & Baptism*, I.19.XV-20, 116-117 [WSA: I.15.19-20, 104]-105; 33, 127 [WSA: 18.23, 107-108]; 55.XXVIII-56, 143-145 [WSA: 28.55-56, 131-133]; II.5.V, 160-161 [WSA: II.5.5, 150]; 34.XX, 184-185 [WSA: 20.34, 174-175]; 37.XXIII, 187 [WSA: 23.37, 178]; 45.XXVIII, 193 [WSA: 28.45, 184-185]; *Grace & Original Sin*, II.34.XXIX, 506-507; *Nature & Grace*, 3.III, 290-291 [WSA: 3.3, 321]; 22.XX, 301-02 [WSA: 20.22, 332]; *Enchiridion*, 33, 377-378; 41, 382; 50, 387; 61-62, 393-394, etc.

⁴⁷ E.g., *Grace & Free Will*, 8, 829ff. [CTHP: 4.8, 147ff.]; *Spirit & Letter*, 16.X, 235ff. [WSA: 10.16, 241-242]; *Nature & Grace*, 4.IV-5.V, 291-292 [WSA: 4.4, 321]; 29.XXVI, 307-308 [WSA: 26.29, 338]; *Enchiridion*, 106, 420; *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.5.V, 160-161 [WSA: II.5.5, 150], etc.

⁴⁸ Cunliffe-Jones, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, 155.

realised by Augustine in his later years, some scholars such as Holte and Vernon J. Bourke argue that Augustine was already aware of the importance of grace since his early days as a bishop. However, it was only in the Pelagian debate that Augustine advanced his mystical doctrine of grace to its highest level, triggering a long series of controversies.⁴⁹

In his anti-Manichaean period, the issue of grace was addressed rather briefly in general sense or in undeveloped view. Lenka Karfikova has observed some developments in Augustine's theory of the efficacy of grace, contending that in the early period it was Christological-pneumatological. In his new doctrine of grace, however, this view gave way to greater focus on the absolute power of Christ.⁵⁰ Alister E. McGrath argues that Augustine has his own unique view of grace. He understands it to be "a liberating force" which sets man free from "the captive free will" (*liberum arbitrium captivatum*), to be replaced with "liberated free will" (*liberum arbitrium liberatum*).⁵¹ He also understands it to be "the healer of human nature," which heals the unhealthy state of man's free will.⁵² Augustine develops three main notions of grace, namely, prevenient, operative, and cooperative. Prevenient grace (*preveniens*: "going ahead") is always active before and after conversion. It is this grace which prepares a person towards conversion. Operative grace he sees as fully operated by God, not relying on human cooperation or his merit, whereas cooperative grace involves collaboration between God and the converted Christian in achieving regeneration and holiness.⁵³ In another context, Gordon Leff argues that Augustine regards grace as the bridge between the created being and God, "the means by which man may enter into association with God."⁵⁴ All of the above conceptions further justify the necessity of divine grace in Augustine's mystical conception of salvation as "the renewal of man in the image of God."⁵⁵ With this comprehensive conception of grace in his mind, therefore, Augustine is earnest in

⁴⁹ See Vernon J. Bourke, *Joy in Augustine's Ethics* (Villanova, Pa.: Villanova University Press, 1979), 111-114.

⁵⁰ Lenka Karfikova, *Grace and the Will according to Augustine* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), esp. Part Two, 107-108.

⁵¹ McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 450.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 450-451. References to Augustine's works on grace are too extensive to mention here. The topic is mainly addressed in *Grace & Original Sin*, *Grace & Free Will*, and *Spirit & Letter*. See also *Nature & Grace and Rebuke & Grace*.

⁵⁴ Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought: St Augustine to Ockham* (1958; repr., Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1962), 37.

⁵⁵ Cunliffe-Jones, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, 154.

defending the necessity of grace at all stages in man's life as exhibited in his anti-Pelagian writings.

Although Augustine's formulation of grace as well as his other doctrine has been widely celebrated, this does not prevent some subsequent scholars from differing with him. For instance, although generally Aquinas admires Augustine, he also has his own views on certain issues which are either slightly different or even contradict Augustine's views. Unlike Augustine, Aquinas does not emphasise the continuing effects of Original Sin after baptism. He also offers a more positive view of man and free will, as well as having some different views of grace from Augustine.⁵⁶ In addition to the doctrines of Original Sin and absolute need for grace, Augustine's concept of free will has also generated a series of debates since his time up to modern period.⁵⁷ His views of certain issues would capture the interests—and criticism—of many subsequent generations.

The Pelagians as well as other subsequent critics of his thought have suggested that Augustine held a pessimistic stance towards man, in that man was seen to be totally dependent on God, and therefore, man's will and good deeds have no use.⁵⁸ However, as I will discuss further in relation to his stance towards the Pelagians, Augustine already realised and rejected this allegation. He also clarified his context, in that without destroying free will, he was concerned to preach God's grace against those who depended wholly on good deeds (e.g., religious law or pious actions) or man's merit, otherwise known as pure ritualism or legalism.⁵⁹ Augustine addressed the issue from a mystical or spiritual perspective, and therefore, should be understood in a mystical context. Indeed, his views will be perceived as passive, and consequently, cannot be really appreciated if they are read in a normal context, particularly in a secular context.

⁵⁶ For Aquinas discussion of Original Sin and its effects, see his *Summa Theologica*, esp. First Part of the Second Part, "Treatise on Habits," Question 82-87, 1415-1451. For discussion of free will and human acts, see the First Part, "Treatise on Man" and "Treatise on Human Acts," Question 82-83, 606-620; First Part of the Second Part, Question 6-21, 909-1020, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.html>. For a brief analysis of Aquinas' conception of grace that differs from that of Augustine, see McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 451-452. For other comparative analysis, see Weithman, "Augustine and Aquinas," 353-376.

⁵⁷ For instance, see Rowe, "Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will," 356-363; Hopkins, "Augustine on Foreknowledge and Free Will," 111-126; Pratt, "The Ethics of St. Augustine," 222-235; Hundert, "Augustine and the Sources of the Divided Self," 86-104; and John M. Rist, "Augustine on Free Will and Predestination," *Journal of Theological Studies* 20, no. 2 (1969): 420-447.

⁵⁸ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 357. For other critics, see Keech, *The Anti-Pelagian Christology*.

⁵⁹ For instance, see "Extract from Augustin's 'Retractions,'" (II.37), in *Spirit & Letter*, 222 [WSA: 229]; *Nature & Grace*, 36.XXXII, 313 [WSA: 32.36, 343].

In short, in this final phase Augustine's focus was mostly on interiority, psychology, or mystical spirituality. The nature of the debate (e.g., on free will and God's grace) had forced him to contemplate man's religious psychology and relationship with God. As Roland J. Teske has observed, spirituality is a key concept in Augustine's thought.⁶⁰ Augustine maintains that since man's condition is weak—in that his power and free will has been corrupted by Original Sin, and the effect of Original Sin still remains—man is in constant need of God's grace. To *return* to man's original nature which is good, as well as to re-establish a personal relationship with God leading to spiritual union with Him, are stressed by Augustine. Therefore, man needs to purify and improve his soul by observing the spiritual dimension and/or certain inner preconditions of good deeds, which is internal. With this goal in mind, Augustine advanced his personal mystical views in the Pelagian controversy. His spiritual vision against pure ritualism and legalism moved him to address the inner dimension of good deeds.

In summary, there was a drastic evolution in Augustine's thought on good deeds. Some of his views which may appear pessimistic or contradictory on the surface will become clear and reasonable in their respective contexts. Frederick Sontag is accurate in maintaining the need to examine the context and metaphysics of Augustine first before analysing his particular doctrines or concepts.⁶¹ It is only by examining them in their particular contexts that one is able to appreciate the evolution and shift of focus in Augustine's thought. Augustine had already acknowledged the importance of good deeds and their spiritual dimensions in his early conversion, but gradually emphasised them as he engaged in the debates with the Manichaeans and the Donatists. Nevertheless, his spiritual insight reached its maturity in the Pelagian debate, where he devoted great effort to addressing interiority, the inner dimension of man and of religious life.

Since Augustine was overburdened with controversy and had only limited opportunity to systematise his thought, his views of good deeds are scattered in different treatises. Thus, being an active bishop in defending what he believes to be the orthodox stance including reacting against various criticisms towards his personal views, Augustine tends to

⁶⁰ Teske, "Spirituality: A Key Concept in Augustine's Thought."

⁶¹ Frederick Sontag, "Augustine's Metaphysics and Free Will," *The Harvard Theological Review* 60, no. 3 (1967), 297-306.

confine his reflection to a limited set of doctrines.⁶² For these reasons, the majority of his writings are apologetic and polemical in nature. But these circumstances did not prevent him from being a prolific writer. Although he did not compose an organised *system* of his thought in the fashion of Thomas Aquinas or John Calvin, it has rightly been said that he “gave to Western civilization the formative ideas which have guided it for centuries.”⁶³ Thus, it is through debates or polemical writings that he found as the best and practical way—for his context—to express the uniqueness of his thought.

Augustine’s contributions and influence on the Western Christian tradition are remarkable. Whereas Greek Fathers emphasised a Johannine theology of *logos*, Augustine was able to *rediscover* a spiritual dimension in Christianity through fresh awareness of the theology of Paul about sin and grace, synthesising this with his own version of Neo-Platonism. He is known as an inventor who helped “to constitute a newly regnant Christian orthodoxy.”⁶⁴ Augustine was the first Christian thinker to write an autobiography which addresses the inner self and focuses on the man’s will.⁶⁵ His thought still remains among “the dominant peaks in the range of Christian thought,” and it has influenced many great scholars.⁶⁶ This unique achievement leads him to stand out from other great Christian Fathers and thinkers. His spiritual insight furnishes his theology. His interpretation and formulation of certain doctrines (e.g., Original Sin, deformed free will, and grace) although controversial, have established themselves as the standard doctrines. Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that Augustine’s theology is at the heart of the Western Christian tradition.

⁶² For instance, he did offer a systematic treatment of the doctrine of Trinity. But for other doctrines including Original sin and grace, he mixes up his analyses with polemical arguments. In addition, he did have a chance to offer a general revision of his works through his *Retractions* or *Retractations*.

⁶³ Daniel D. Williams, “The significance of St. Augustine Today,” in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. Roy W. Battenhouse, 3-5. See also T. Kermit Scott, *Augustine: His Thought in Context* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 230.

⁶⁴ Kenney, “Mystic and monk,” 22:284.

⁶⁵ Even the early philosophers only focused on reason, and not on the will.

⁶⁶ See Williams, “The significance of St. Augustine Today,” 4; Denzinger, *The Source of Catholic Dogma*, 52.

4.2 AUGUSTINE'S STANCE ON DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF GOOD DEEDS

Augustine was directly involved in the Manichaean, Donatist, and Pelagian controversies, being very critical of their fundamental views and teachings. In fact, he was the primary figure in refuting the views and teachings of these sects that he regarded as heretical. Because of his relentless endeavour, eventually all of these three movements have been regarded as heresies. His stance on their varying interpretations of good deeds and other related issues deserves close analysis.

4.2.1 Augustine on the Manichaeans

Leaving Manichaeism, Augustine found that among various philosophies, Neo-Platonism came nearest to Christianity⁶⁷ for there were some commonalities between them.⁶⁸ He adapted Neo-Platonism in the light of Christian teachings and used it as a *mighty weapon* in combating the erroneous views of the Manichaeans.⁶⁹ However, he was careful in resorting to Neo-Platonism, for he realised that some of its teachings were absent in Christianity,⁷⁰ and some others were erroneous.⁷¹ Since Augustine considered Manichaeism as “a very dangerous heretical cast” among Christian heresies,⁷² he vigorously repudiated their fundamental beliefs through several treatises, seven of which, preserved in *NPNF I*, are my main reference. They are *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*; *On the Morals of the Manichaeans*; *On Two Souls, Against the Manichaeans*; *Acts or Disputation Against Fortunatus the Manichaean*; *Against the Epistle of Manichæus, Called Fundamental*; *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*; and *Concerning the Nature of Good, Against the Manichaeans*.

Among the fundamental beliefs of the Manichaeans that Augustine earnestly refutes through these treatises are the concepts of God, creation, and evil, as well as the problems of predestination and free will. Central to the Manichaean concept of God is the doctrine of Dualism, namely, that there are two forces or kingdoms, the Light and the Darkness.

⁶⁷ *City of God*, VIII.9, 245.

⁶⁸ For instance, see *Confessions*, VII.ix.13-x.16, 121-123.

⁶⁹ Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 16-18; Newman, introductory essay, 32-33.

⁷⁰ *Confessions*, VII.xxi.27, 131-132.

⁷¹ For instance, see *City of God*, X.3, 293-294; 28-29, 320-323; 31-32, 325-330.

⁷² Oort, “Augustine and the Books of the Manicheans,” 15:188-199.

Examining his stance on these concepts is important in order to understand the foundations of his thought on good deeds.

Augustine's concept of God as the chief good and origin of all good things serves as the foundation for understanding his spiritual insight into good deeds. Disagreeing with the Manichaean concept of God as complex and mutable (e.g., could be assailed by evil, could suffer, and needs to struggle for freedom, etc.), Augustine argues that God is absolutely simple and immutable,⁷³ charging that the Manichaean concept of God was the height of error and blasphemy.⁷⁴ Agreeing with Platonism, he maintains that God is incorporeal. Teske argues that Augustine was among the earliest scholar from the Latin West to offer this view clearly. In fact, this concept of spiritual substance helped Augustine to extricate himself from the clutches of the Manichaean and Stoic corporeal views of God.⁷⁵

Augustine also maintains that God is "inviolable, incorruptible, and impenetrable, and incontaminable, who also could be corrupted in no part and to whom no injury can be done in any part."⁷⁶ Adopting a Platonic perspective, Augustine advocates that God is the most beautiful and the most perfect being,⁷⁷ and He is the real and the highest good.⁷⁸ God alone is perfectly good,⁷⁹ and everything that comes from Him is therefore also good.⁸⁰ In other words, God is the source of all good things, no matter how small they are,⁸¹ and therefore, "no good things whether great or small, through whatever gradations of things, can exist except from God."⁸² Augustine also maintains that God is the real object of love and man's chief good.⁸³ Because of this, he believes that whatever is in accordance, or comes near to God is good, and whatever is in conflict, or falls away from Him is bad. This view is also applied to man's deeds and laws. Thus, any voluntary deed done in accordance with

⁷³ Newman, introductory essay, 33-34; *Nature of Good*, 1, 483.

⁷⁴ *Against Fortunatus*, 1, 139; *Nature of Good*, 42, 501-503.

⁷⁵ Teske, "Spirituality," Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine*, esp. Part II, no. 4. Although Augustine is often thought to be in disagreement with the Stoics, some scholars such as Byers has observed that he often developed Stoic tenets in several areas, such as ethics, psychology, and the soul. See further Byers, "Augustine and the Philosophers."

⁷⁶ *Against Fortunatus*, 11, 142; *Nature of Good*, 11, 487.

⁷⁷ Newman, introductory essay, 34.

⁷⁸ *Two Souls*, 8, 127.

⁷⁹ *Against Manichaeus*, 37.42, 186-187.

⁸⁰ *Nature of Good*, 19, 490.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12-13, 487; 30, 495.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1, 483.

⁸³ *Morals of the Catholic*, 11.18-19, 54-55.

God's beautiful nature and His will—which is recapitulated in the concept of obedience to God—is good, and any voluntary deed that opposes them—which signifies the disobedience to God—is considered as bad, hence “they shall be corrupted in punishment.”⁸⁴ As Chroust has observed, since God is regarded as the real source of all good things, He is considered by Augustine as the *lex aeterna* (the eternal law), the foundation of the *lex naturalis*, (the natural [moral] law).⁸⁵

Augustine also criticises the Manichaean negative concept of creation. For the Manichaeans, creation was either divine activity shaped by an evil force, or a result of God's endeavour in liberating Himself from evil elements. They believed that the world and other creatures were made up of both good and evil natures.⁸⁶ Accordingly, in opposition to the Manichaean negative concept of nature and creation as something evil, Augustine argues that nature and all creation—as far as it finds its existence in God—is fully good.⁸⁷ Therefore, while the Manichaeans believed that man's nature was evil, and that man came from evil force (i.e., demons), Augustine views man as good and created directly by God. He even claims that both man's elements, namely, body and soul, are good, but it is the soul that Augustine considers as the chief good.⁸⁸ Since God is the chief good of all, the soul can be perfected, and can obtain virtue as well as happiness by following God.⁸⁹ If the soul falls away from God, then it will be rendered to the lower grades of creation.⁹⁰ Augustine argues that although the soul is immortal, yet if it lacks or dislikes the knowledge of God then it will be rendered as dead.⁹¹ Thus, in this context Augustine is optimistic in that he considers that

⁸⁴ *Nature of Good*, 7, 485.

⁸⁵ Chroust, “The Philosophy of Law,” 197. For a discussion of Augustine's view of God in the context of anti-Manichaean

⁸⁶ *Morals of the Manichaeans*, 15.36, 101.

⁸⁷ Newman, introductory essay, 35; Augustine, *Against Manichaeus*, 33.36, 183-184. Augustine even states that nature, as far as it is nature, is not an evil. See *Nature of Good*, 17, 489.

⁸⁸ *Morals of the Catholic*, 4.6-5.8, 48-49.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.9-10, 49-50; 8.13, 51.

⁹⁰ *Morals of the Manichaeans*, 7.9, 89.

⁹¹ *Two Souls*, 8, 127. Regarding the soul, Augustine rejects the Manichaean concept of two kinds of souls, namely, good and evil souls. The Manichaeans assigned distinct natures and properties to these two souls. They believed that the good soul proceeded from the very substance of God, whereas, they were reluctant to regard God as the Creator of the other. Although these two souls were distinct, the Manichaeans maintained that they were comingled. Augustine argues that the Manichaean concept of soul, which they called evil, was not soul, but was lifeless, could not will and act anything, and therefore, was regarded as “a non-entity.” See *Two Souls*, 1.1, 118; 12.16-17, 132-133. Thus, Augustine denies that the soul is of the substance of God, however, he affirms that it was created by God, see *Against Fortunatus*, 12, 143. For other explanation of the soul, see *Meaning of Genesis*, II.10.1-26, 96-132.

with the help of God, man is capable of becoming good and is capable of doing and producing good things.

Augustine also bitterly refutes the Manichaeian concept of evil and their belief in fatalism, important foundations of their theology. Although they believed that evil was that which was contrary to nature, they maintained that evil was “a certain nature and substance,”⁹² and therefore, evil was a real thing, active, and even powerful. Augustine, on the other hand, agrees with the Platonic view of evil as referring only to privation or negation of good, or as corruption.⁹³ Hence, evil is only a corruption of nature.⁹⁴ Accordingly, evil is not, and does not have, a substance, but on the contrary, is “a disagreement that is hostile to substance.”⁹⁵ Because evil is a mere privation of good, therefore, Augustine contends that evil cannot be referred to God. In other words, God is not the author of evil, and as Rowan Williams rightly argues, the two can never be placed together in Augustine’s thought.⁹⁶ Not only does Augustine deny that God can be the Creator of evil, but he also denies sin as God’s creation, for he regards sin as identical to evil.⁹⁷ Believing that nature, which is made by God, is good he argues that evil is not part of nature, but is that which is against nature.⁹⁸ Augustine also censures the Manichaeian belief that evil was powerful enough to bring effects, changes, and even corruption to God.⁹⁹ In fact, he argues that the Manichaeian concept of evil as “certain nature” was contradictory to their own assertion that evil was contrary to nature.¹⁰⁰

Disagreeing with Manichaeian fatalism, Augustine argues that human beings have been endowed with free will, and therefore, are free to act as they wish.¹⁰¹ Indeed, in his earnest desire to refute fatalism and to safeguard free will, he advocated the doctrine of absolute freedom of the will.¹⁰² Perhaps in this context, he believes that a great emphasis on

⁹² *Morals of the Manichaeians*, 2.2, 85-86.

⁹³ *Against Manichaeus*, 35.39, 185; *Confessions*, VII.xii.18, 125.

⁹⁴ *Nature of Good*, 4, 484

⁹⁵ *Morals of the Manichaeians*, 8.11, 90.

⁹⁶ Rowan Williams, “Insubstantial Evil,” in *Augustine and His Critics*, eds., Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London: Routledge, 2002), 120.

⁹⁷ *Against Fortunatus*, 15, 144. Augustine argues that there are two kinds of evil, namely, sin and the penalty of sin.

⁹⁸ *Morals of the Manichaeians*, 2.2, 85-86.

⁹⁹ *Two Souls*, 12.16, 132.

¹⁰⁰ *Morals of the Manichaeians*, 2.2, 85-86.

¹⁰¹ *Nature of Good*, 7, 485. See also *Against Fortunatus*, 15, 144; *Two Souls*, 10.13-14, 128-131; *Nature of Good*, 28, 494.

¹⁰² See footnote 210 by Newman in *Two Souls*, 10, 129.

freedom of the will was a practical instrument in refuting Manichaean fatalism. To distance himself from what he saw as the so-called Pelagian emphasis on absolute freedom in his following anti-Pelagian writings, Augustine addresses the issue in a more mystical context, defending the absolute need for God's grace to the extent of approaching fatalism—the position attributed to the Manichaeans that he himself once seriously refuted.¹⁰³ However, as I will argue further later, this is due to different contexts and approaches to the issue addressed. Therefore, against the Manichaean doctrine of fatalism and evil, Augustine ardently maintains that sin is impossible apart from the will.¹⁰⁴ Defining sin, he argues that “[s]in therefore is the will to retain and follow after what justice forbids, and from which it is free to abstain.”¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, he maintains that “[s]inning therefore takes place only by exercise of will.”¹⁰⁶ He makes a free will or voluntary act as the central key in defining sin, and in justifying reward or punishment for an act. Thus, anyone who commits sin involuntarily does not sin at all, and consequently, will not be liable for any punishment.¹⁰⁷

Augustine is earnest in refuting the primary beliefs of the Manichaeans, from their concept of God to the concept of Man, and from the beginning of creation to the final destination. Unlike the Manichaeans, Augustine maintains that God is absolutely simple, immutable, and therefore, God is impenetrable, incorruptible and inviolable.¹⁰⁸ He is the omnipotent God, the most beautiful and the most perfect being, who is also regarded as the highest good, and thus the source of all that is good and the determining factor of good deeds. With respect to creation and creatures, Augustine maintains that the creation is a direct activity of God, and the creatures were created good. Hence, all nature—as long as they find their existence in God—is all good. Whereas, evil—as well as sin or bad deeds—is a mere privation of good which has no substance, and therefore, cannot be attributed to God at all. Thus, the origin of creatures including human beings—far from mixing with evil nature and considered as the creations of demons—are instead good and are the direct creations of God. Augustine also refutes the Manichaean doctrine of fatalism by proposing the concept of free will in its place. In this phase and context, he advocated the freedom of the will almost to its

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *Two Souls*, 10-11, 128-131; *Nature of Good*, 28, 494.

¹⁰⁵ *Two Souls*, 11, 131.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 10, 130.

¹⁰⁷ *Against Fortunatus*, 20, 147; 21, 149.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 11, 142; *Nature of Good*, 11, 487.

absolute form, and accordingly, man's actions are accountable and to be referred to man himself as the actor, but would later modify the approach to the issue into the mystical or spiritual context in his next anti-Pelagian period.

In his controversy with the Manichaeans, Augustine mainly focused on refuting their central concept of evil. At this stage, his aim was to defend the good nature of God and of man, maintaining that only good things are to be attributed to God, and that bad deeds or sins are the result of misusing free will or acting in opposition to God's will. As he maintains that God is the chief good and the source of all goodness, he argues that God is the central determining factor of good and bad of one's deed. If a deed is done according to God's will or is getting closer to God's good nature, then it is good. However, if a deed that is done opposes God's will, or getting away from the good nature of God, then it is bad. Accordingly, a person's goodness will increase as he comes closer to God through his good deeds. In contrast, the more a deed or a person moves away from God, the more sin or evil will develop in that person.

4.2.2 Augustine on the Donatists

The next important controversy that Augustine engaged in was with the Donatists. This began with his ordination to the presbytership, and became more serious when he was ordained as bishop.¹⁰⁹ I will explore three primary anti-Donatist writings of Augustine, namely, *Baptism, Against the Donatists* (written in c. 400 CE); *Answer to the Letters of Petilian, the Donatist* (written in c. 400–402 CE); and *The Correction of the Donatists* (written in c. 417 CE).

The Donatists made saintliness or righteousness and merit of ministers indispensable requirements for the validity of their sacraments. In this respect, the character and deeds of the ministers were of paramount importance. The validity and worthiness of their ordinations and ministrations depended directly on their works, the position known in Latin as *ex opere operantis* (from the work of the one doing the working). Throughout his anti-Donatist writings, however, Augustine refutes this view by maintaining the opposite

¹⁰⁹ Hartranft, introductory essay, 514. Augustine first published a pamphlet, in which he presented the historical aspect and erroneous belief and practices of the Donatists in a simple and popular way. It was targeted to the less educated, and therefore, was not meant for any controversial purpose. Later, Augustine *officially* engaged in debate, refuting Donatist views and defending the cause of the Church in the forms of sermons, letters, treatises, and books, some of which were lost. See *ibid.*, 552-553. For the historical and chronological writings of Augustine, see *ibid.*, esp. Chap. II, 514-551.

position of *ex opere operato* (from the work having been worked) which places great emphasis on the holiness of Christ or God. Accordingly, he maintains that the sacraments conferred by ministers who were considered as *traditores* (traitors) by the Donatists as valid.

In *Baptism*, which consists of seven books, Augustine utterly condemns the Donatist separation from the Church. He rejects the Donatist practice of rebaptism by showing the worthlessness of their arguments, and their errors in misusing as well as misinterpreting Cyprian, who to Augustine was indeed against them.¹¹⁰ He begins his argument by stating that “baptism can be conferred outside the Catholic communion, just as it can be also there retained.”¹¹¹ He observes that the Donatists did not deny that everyone, even the apostates, retain the grace of baptism, and therefore, no repeat of grace of baptism is given to those who repent or return to the Church.¹¹² He argues that this obviously shows that the grace of baptism could have never been lost.¹¹³ He employs this common view to justify his argument that the sacrament of conferring baptism could never be missing, for, although performed in different ways, it always concerned with the same thing, namely, baptism.¹¹⁴

Augustine employs the above argument in order to overthrow the Donatists who had excluded those they considered as *traditores* from the sacraments. They had declared Bishop Felix of Aphthunga to be a *traditor*, and therefore, his consecration of Caecilianus was claimed as invalid. Augustine disproves this extreme view by stating that since the grace of baptism could never have been lost, and since those who return to the Church do not need to be rebaptised, therefore, those who have been ordained before their succession need not be ordained again when they return to the Church. They certainly can exercise their former ministry if required.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ See J. R. King, preface to *Baptism*, 551-554. See also Edwards, “Augustine and His Christian Predecessors,” 17:219-220.

¹¹¹ *Baptism*, I.1.2, 556.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Augustine states “[f]or the sacrament of baptism is what the person possesses who is baptized; and the sacrament of conferring baptism is what he possesses who is ordained. And as the baptized person, if he depart from the unity of the Church, does not thereby lose the sacrament of baptism, so also he who is ordained, if he depart from the unity of the Church, does not lose the sacrament of conferring baptism. For neither sacrament may be wronged. If a sacrament necessarily becomes void in the case of the wicked, both must become void; if it remain valid with the wicked, this must be so with both.” See *Baptism*, I.1.2, 557.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Since Augustine admits no rebaptism, he regards any such practice as a sin.¹¹⁶ For him, there is only one baptism, as there was only one circumcision.¹¹⁷ Although Augustine censures the Donatist practice of rebaptism, he does not altogether invalidate the baptism given by them, but reminds them it generated schism.¹¹⁸ This is because Augustine was initially more concerned with overcoming schism rather than totally banishing the Donatists from the communion of the Church. The unity and Catholicity were his foremost aim,¹¹⁹ and he shows that scriptures also forbid schism.¹²⁰ He argues that the baptism conferred by the Donatists saved some people from “the wound of idolatry or unbelief,” but by doing so the Donatists injured those people “more seriously with the wound of schism.”¹²¹ In emphasising the centrality and unity of the Church in later discussion, Augustine admits that he does not acknowledge the baptism of the Donatists because “it is not the baptism of schismatics or heretics, but of God and of the Church”¹²² that is considered as the authentic or legitimate one. He also shows the error of the Donatists in claiming that they were supported by Cyprian, arguing that far from supporting the Donatist view, Cyprian indeed held more the opposite position to theirs.¹²³

Augustine’s polemical treatise against the Donatist theologian is reflected in his *Answer to the Letters of Petilian, the Donatist*, written not long after his *Baptism*.¹²⁴ In this treatise, which consists of three books,¹²⁵ he bitterly refutes the views of Petilian (or Petilianus), bishop of Cirta or Constantina, whom he describes as “the most eminent

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I.1.2.3, 558; 3.4, 558-560; 5.6, 561. See also Hartranft, introductory essay, 515. Hartranft argues if rebaptism is applied to apostatizing Catholics, however, it is an *immanissimum scelus* (most monstrous or frightful crime).

¹¹⁷ Hartranft, introductory essay, 515.

¹¹⁸ *Baptism*, I.2.3, 558.

¹¹⁹ Dillistone, “The Anti-Donatist Writings,” 186-187.

¹²⁰ For instance, see Num. 16:1; Cor. 13:2, etc.

¹²¹ *Baptism*, I.8.10, 564.

¹²² *Ibid.*, I.14.22, 571.

¹²³ Augustine treats this issue at length—almost all parts of the rest of the six books (book II–VII) are devoted to this issue—by examining it in different contexts, such as by analysing Cyprian’s ideas, letters, and relevant events or councils. See *Baptism*, II–VI, 577ff.

¹²⁴ *Answer to Petilian*, in *NPNF I.4*. This work is not the only personal polemical treatise between Augustine and the Donatists. For a brief review of the other works, see Hartranft, introductory essay, esp. Chap. II, 514-551.

¹²⁵ The first book is Augustine’s answer to a small part of Petilianus’ letter addressed to his followers. After having received the whole document of Petilianus, Augustine started to prepare his answers as exemplified in the second book, which was written in c. 401. The third book, which was written in c. 402 CE, on the other hand, is Augustine’s answers to Petilianus’ abusive reaction to Augustine’s first book.

theologian among the Donatist divines.”¹²⁶ As in other anti-Donatist writings, the central issues debated throughout this work surround baptism and the status of ministers who have been regarded as *traditores* for collaborating with pagan authorities. In this treatise, however, Augustine starts to focus more on the inner dimension of the issues as his main argument. Evers has observed that unlike Petilianus who employed literal reading of the Scriptures, Augustine on certain cases “favoured a more allegorical understanding.”¹²⁷ Augustine overthrows the views of Petilian—in which he (Petilian) maintained that the validity of baptism depended on the merit and works of the ministers which might characterise a legalistic view¹²⁸—by simply making Christ the central determining factor in baptism. Augustine maintains that it is Christ who determines the validity of baptism, and therefore, the true baptism belongs to Christ.¹²⁹ Not only does Augustine refuse to invalidate the sacrament of baptism given by the one (like Caecilianus) who has been consecrated by *traditor*, he even maintains the validity of the sacraments given by the faithless minister.¹³⁰ This conception indicates that in addressing the essence of baptism, Augustine makes Christ the foundation.

Augustine believes that man receives faith from Christ and not from the ministers. He develops this view in book II, which he presents in the form of dialogue between Petilianus and himself. Responding to Petilianus’ statement “[f]or he who receives faith from the faithless, receives not faith but guilt,” Augustine cites “Christ is not faithless, from whom the faithful man receives not guilt but faith.”¹³¹ He also reproaches Petilianus for misinterpreting some of Paul’s accounts and statements.¹³² In addition, he also proves that Petilianus’ resort to Paul was irrelevant.¹³³

The debate between Augustine and Petilianus becomes more serious and personal in the third book. His objective is to show the deficiency of Petilianus’ arguments. In this

¹²⁶ J. R. King, preface to *Baptism*.

¹²⁷ Evers, “Augustine on the Church,” 380.

¹²⁸ Indeed, this view of Petilianus was also the primary view of the Donatists.

¹²⁹ *Answer to Petilian*, II.7.14, 752.

¹³⁰ Augustine states “whether a man receive the sacrament of baptism from a faithful or a faithless minister, his whole hope is in Christ...whilst, when the baptizer is faithless without its being known, then the baptized person receives faith from Christ, then he derives his origin from Christ, then he is rooted in Christ, then he boasts in Christ as his head.” *Ibid.*, I.6.7, 735.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, II.4.8-9, 750. See also Rom. 4:5.

¹³² *Answer to Petilian*, II.20.44-46, 766-767.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, II.21.48, 768.

book, he reiterates the centrality of God in sacrament by explaining several Biblical passages. He scorns those who depend on man either in sacrament, salvation, or justification, among other issues, arguing:

As regards the question of baptism, that our being born again, cleansed, justified by the grace of God, should not be ascribed to the man who administered the sacrament, I quoted these: “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man;”¹³⁴ and “Cursed be every one that trusteth in man;”¹³⁵ and that, “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord;”¹³⁶ and that, “Vain is the help of man;”¹³⁷ and that, “Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase;”¹³⁸ and that He in whom men believe justifieth the ungodly, that his faith may be counted to him for righteousness.¹³⁹

This contention again indicates Augustine’s concern is with its essence—the inner dimension of baptism. By addressing this, he can relate the issue of baptism to the doctrine of justification and salvation, where he can apply the role of God’s grace which is central in justification and salvation to baptism. By understanding its essence, Augustine regards baptism as another important doctrine and practice, in which its validity should not be dependent on man, but on the grace of God.

In around 417 CE, Augustine wrote another treatise on the Donatists, devoted to correcting their errors.¹⁴⁰ The subject of this work is rather general, and the central concerns of Augustine are to demonstrate that the Donatist controversy did not resemble the heresy of Arius, and to propose moderation as the way to invite the Donatists to return to the communion of the Church. This indicates that although Augustine started to address the inner dimension of religious observance in this phase, he still limits it by refraining from indulging in a very controversial view that could cause serious conflict or separation in society.

From the above analysis, it is clear that Augustine disagrees with the Donatists who maintained that the righteousness, merits, and works of ministers played direct roles in determining the validity of the sacraments performed. On the other hand, he argues that the

¹³⁴ Ps. 118:8.

¹³⁵ Jer. 17:5.

¹³⁶ Ps. 3:8.

¹³⁷ Ps. 60:11.

¹³⁸ 1 Cor. 3:7.

¹³⁹ Rom. 4:5; *Answer to Petilian*, III.50.62, 901.

¹⁴⁰ *Correction of the Donatists*, NPNF 1.4.

real sacraments belong to God or Christ, and therefore, it is to the grace of God through Christ that the validity of any sacrament belongs. Thus, far from regarding the works of ministers as the determining factor, Augustine resorts to the holiness of God. Indeed, the holiness of God (e.g., His grace and mercy especially through Christ) is the primary factor which underpins his theology. This indicates that rather than judging a person or a deed based on the outer appearance, Augustine invites Donatists and other readers to observe its inner dimension. He believes that man can only relate to God through inward observance of religious law, and it is through this inward observance that man can experience the presence of God (or Christ) in their deeds. This feature was further developed in his following engagement with the Pelagians.

4.2.3 Augustine on the Pelagians

The last but most important debate relevant to this research is that with the Pelagians. Since a great part of Augustine's doctrines and views developed radically, and indeed attained their maturity in this debate, his engagement, reaction, and position towards the Pelagians will be given a more detailed examination.¹⁴¹ There is still a debate over their real status and beliefs.¹⁴² However, in order to understand Augustine's engagement and position, I will analyse Pelagianism in the light of Augustine's view. While Augustine was already engaged in debate through sermons, his formal engagement started only with his first anti-Pelagian treatise entitled *On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants*, written in 412 CE.¹⁴³ In addition, he wrote a series of treatises—based on different responses—until his death, of which some were incomplete.¹⁴⁴

The theology of Pelagius was more human-centred than that of Augustine, giving emphasis to man's ability and merit in attaining righteousness. By contrast, Augustine's

¹⁴¹ All Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings as collected by the Benedictine editors (in the 10th volume)—with the exception of two long works, namely, *Answer to Julian* (or *Against Julian*) and *The Unfinished Work*—have been preserved in the NPNF collection (Series I, volume 5), which are my main sources.

¹⁴² For a more positive analyses of the Pelagians, see Rees, *Pelagius*; Bonner "How Pelagianism was Pelagius?;" "Augustine and Pelagianism;" "Pelagianism and Augustine;" "Pelagianism Reconsidered."

¹⁴³ This treatise, which consists of two books, was the result of Augustine's reply to Flavius Marcellinus' request concerning some issues involved in the controversial teachings advocated by Caelestius—a disciple of Pelagius condemned in 412 CE—which marked the starting point of the Pelagian controversy. Marcellinus was attributed as a "tribune and notary." He was a devoted Christian who established an intimate friendship with Augustine.

¹⁴⁴ For a chronological account of Augustine's writings, see Warfield, introductory essay, esp. part III "Augustine's Part in the Controversy."

theology evolves towards being grace-centred, with the grace of God as the source of everything. Everything (including man's righteousness, faith, free will, and good deeds) is fully dependent on God's grace given through Christ. Because of this, Pelagius detested Augustine's prayer; "[g]ive what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt," which illustrates Augustine's theology of absolute dependence on God's grace or mercy.¹⁴⁵ For Pelagius this was a pessimistic stance towards man's nature which seemed to suggest that men were mere puppets, wholly subjected to divine grace.¹⁴⁶ Augustine, on the other hand, was disturbed by the perception that Pelagius seemed to believe in the unaided ability of man to maintain God's commandments. In Augustine's mind, this was a purely legalistic stance which would amount to rejection of God's grace.

Augustine's views of man's psychology in relation to divinity which includes his mystical views of man's condition, Original Sin, free will, and grace serve as the most important foundations in understanding his stance on man's nature, free will, and the nature of man's deeds. There are certain radical developments in some of his views—particularly on man's nature, free will, and grace—throughout this Pelagian debate from his earlier writings against the Manichaeans. I argue that this is due to the radical shift of his focus and context as he was responding to a new and different nature of interpretation. Where previously he had engaged in debates particularly with the Manichaeans in theological and philosophical contexts, in this new debate with the Pelagians, he addressed the issue mainly from a mystical context, filled with spiritual insight. There are many other primary issues debated in this controversy which serve as important foundations in understanding Augustine's thought on good deeds, but I will only examine briefly some of those primary issues.

To begin with, agreeing with Paul and firmly believing in the doctrine of the Fall and Original Sin, Augustine emphasises the grievous effects of Adam's sin in his first anti-Pelagian treatise.¹⁴⁷ He maintains that all men "were once by nature children of

¹⁴⁵ *Confessions*, X.xxiv.40, 202.

¹⁴⁶ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 357.

¹⁴⁷ The doctrine of Original Sin is mysterious and this is affirmed by Augustine himself, where in his debate with Vincentius Victor, he admits that he has not yet been able to solve the question concerning "how the soul can contract sin from Adam and yet not itself be contracted from Adam." T. D. J. Chappel argues that there are also some mysteries, or rather conflicting arguments suggested by Augustine on the Fall. See T. D. J. Chappell, "Explaining the Inexplicable: Augustine on the Fall," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62, no. 3 (1994): 869-884. Nevertheless, it has been acknowledged that the doctrine of the Fall is Biblical and not based

wrath/anger,”¹⁴⁸ and “nothing set us free except the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.”¹⁴⁹ Developing Paul’s account, Augustine places great emphasis on the weakness of man’s nature, that it now has been fundamentally corrupted or deformed by what he called Original Sin,¹⁵⁰ and this condition has left negative effects on the efficacy of free will and good deeds.¹⁵¹ He believes that among the grievous effects of Original Sin, man’s original nature which was good now has been replaced with the new one which is deformed, and this new nature of man only prompts man to do bad things.¹⁵² Weithman argues that it is because of these interrelated doctrines of the Fall, Original Sin, and the deformed free will that Augustine justifies the need for political authority.¹⁵³

Augustine’s conception of Original Sin as inherited sin led the Pelagians to accuse him of condemning marriage. Augustine refutes this accusation by maintaining that marriage is good although now no one is born without sin. He maintains that conjugal chastity is the gift of God, and the union between male and female with the objective of procreation is “the natural good of marriage.”¹⁵⁴ He also gives a detailed explanation of the difference between marriage and the evil of carnal concupiscence. He argues that sin is not the direct result of marriage, but indeed is caused by the evil of concupiscence or lust.¹⁵⁵

Augustine holds rather pessimistic views on some aspects of this issue as compared to Aquinas.¹⁵⁶ From his mystical context, Augustine emphasises man’s weaknesses through his deformed nature in order to justify the absolute need for God’s grace. This is the heart of

on mere rational considerations. See T. Kermit Scott, *Augustine: His Thought in Context*. New York: Paulist Press, 1995, 216.

¹⁴⁸ Eph. 2:3.

¹⁴⁹ *Forgiveness & Baptism*, I.29.XXI, 123 [WSA: I.21.29, 111].

¹⁵⁰ Augustine was the one who formulated the doctrine of Original Sin based on Paul’s theology. However, Paul Rigby suggests that it is based on Augustine’s personal experience of sin and salvation. See Paul Rigby, *Original Sin in Augustine’s Confessions* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987). In order to justify this doctrine, however, Augustine argues that it has been accepted by Catholics since the ancient era, and therefore, the doctrine is not his invention. See *Marriage & Concupiscence*, II.9, 562-563; 25.XII, 575.

¹⁵¹ *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.37.XXIII, 187 [WSA: II.23.37, 178].

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, II.5.V, 160-161. The centrality of the doctrine of Original Sin is further emphasised and justified in the third book of the treatise. Augustine fervently tries to prove that all men, including infants, contracted Original Sin, and that union with Christ is the only way to attain salvation. See *ibid.*, III.7.IV-8, 208-209. Original Sin, he argues, not only has been accepted by Cyprian, but has also been admitted since the ancients, and respected by universal consensus. See *ibid.*, III.10.V-12.VI, 209-212

¹⁵³ Weithman, “Augustine and Aquinas,” 353-376.

¹⁵⁴ See *Marriage & Concupiscence*, I.3.III, 524-525; I.5.IV, 526.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, I.8.VII, 529; 23.XXI-24, 542-543. See also his *Good of Marriage*.

¹⁵⁶ For further comparative analysis between Augustine and Aquinas on this issue, see *ibid.*

Augustine's theology and spiritual insight. He reiterates this view throughout his debates especially with those whom he considered as the Pelagians.

Augustine further develops this view in his subsequent writings, such as *A Treatise on Nature and Grace*, written in 415 CE, where he explains that man's nature as it exists now is different from its original state when it was first created, namely, flawless and sound.¹⁵⁷ This is because, as in his previous argument he reaffirms that man's nature has been deformed by Adam's sin, which he formulated as Original Sin and therefore, the entire humanity is regarded as "a *massa damnata*" (a mass of perdition or a condemned crowd), or the children of wrath which deserved punishment from the just God.¹⁵⁸ Augustine believes that the effect of Original Sin still remains after baptism, especially in the form of concupiscence, which is among the sources of man's evil or bad deeds.¹⁵⁹ In his following debate with Julian, he insists that it is the concupiscence with which men are born that is the real cause of evil.¹⁶⁰ He maintains that although baptism frees Christians from all sins, this evil of concupiscence—together with other evils, such as the evil of ignorance—still persists.¹⁶¹ Timo Nisula observes that there was development in Augustine's thought concerning concupiscence, contending that concupiscence which was once thought as irresistible was later (especially in anti-Pelagian period) affirmed as fully resistible by God's grace.¹⁶² Elsewhere, Augustine argues that man can only be healed from concupiscence "by the advancing renewal of our inner man, day by day..."¹⁶³ These contentions indicate that Augustine emphasises spirituality and divine grace as the medicine to man's inner defect.

¹⁵⁷ *Nature & Grace*, 3.III, 290 [WSA: 3.3, 321]. See also the note to the book, 286-287; Warfield, introductory essay, III, 34-38.

¹⁵⁸ *Enchiridion*, 33, 377-378; 51, 387; *Nature & Grace*, 5.V, 291 [WSA: 5.5, 321-322]. See also Warfield, introductory essay, III, 60. Augustine's theory of a "*massa damnata*" which states that there are the *unchosen* group who deserve punishment, however, is criticised by Lenka Karfikova who perceives it as entirely unacceptable. See Karfikova, *Grace and the Will according to Augustine*.

¹⁵⁹ For an analysis of Augustine's view of concupiscence, see Timo Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012).

¹⁶⁰ *Answer to Julian*, IV:4.34, 401. The personal debate between Julian and Augustine was further continued, in which Julian wrote eight books (*To Florus*) as a reaction to Augustine's second book of *On Marriage and Concupiscence*. Augustine, on his part, only had the opportunity to write six books in reply, and thus the work is known as the *Unfinished Work*. In this work, he quotes and replies to Julian's writings paragraph by paragraph. Most of the issues addressed in this work still revolve around the issues discussed in the previous polemical works between them, such as on status of marriage, evil, concupiscence, Original Sin, free will, and grace. The issues are discussed at length, and the debates are filled with a considerable bitterness between the two. See also *Meaning of Genesis*, II.11.32, 164-165.

¹⁶¹ *Answer to Julian*, VI.16.49, 508-510; 17.51, 510-512.

¹⁶² Timo Nisula, *Augustine and the Functions of Concupiscence*, esp. Chap. 6.

¹⁶³ *Marriage & Concupiscence*, I.28.XXV, 546.

As such, Augustine earnestly refutes the Pelagian view which maintains that man could be absolutely free from sin in this present life. Although Augustine allows the possibility of such a man, he makes the grace of God and man's free will as the condition for his existence.¹⁶⁴ Thus, in his debate with Caelestius through his treatise *Concerning Man's Perfection and Righteousness*, written in 415 CE, Augustine reaffirms the possibility of avoiding sin if man's deformed nature is healed by God's grace through Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁵ However, he maintains that in this corrupted situation man "has too little determination of will to avoid sin, unless assisted and healed by God's grace through Jesus Christ..."¹⁶⁶ Augustine's real concern is to show that there is nothing impossible for God and to maintain the need for God's intervention, safeguarding the sovereignty of God and the necessity of His help. Having explained these conditions, and resorting to several Biblical passages,¹⁶⁷ however, he believes that there is no such person as a sinless man in this world¹⁶⁸—not even Job¹⁶⁹ and Paul¹⁷⁰—except Christ.¹⁷¹ He believes that no one is righteous in all things,¹⁷² and that so-called perfect righteous man is indeed imperfect.¹⁷³ In fact, Augustine believes that all righteous men are "by no means without sin."¹⁷⁴

Indeed, Augustine had already developed his doctrine of grace as the foundation of his theology since his earlier anti-Pelagian treatise, such as *A Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter*, written in 412. In other treatises, he maintains that grace is given gratuitously and not because of man's merit, and this forms the gist of his doctrine of prevenient grace.¹⁷⁵ He

¹⁶⁴ *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.7.VI, 162-163 [WSA: II.6.7, 152].

¹⁶⁵ *Man's Perfection*, II.1.I, 352.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, II.3.III, 352.

¹⁶⁷ E.g., 1 John 1:8.

¹⁶⁸ *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.8.VII, 163-164 [WSA: II.7.8, 153].

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, II.14, 168-169.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, II.20, 173-174.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, II.34.XX, 184-185.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, II.17.XII, 171-172.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, II.18.XIII, 172.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, II.21.XIV, 175. The debate over the possibility and impossibility of man to live in this world without sin, discussed by Augustine since his earlier anti-Pelagian treatises, was further ignited at the end of 415 CE. This time the debate was between Augustine and Caelestius, in which the former wrote *A Treatise Concerning Man's Perfection in Righteousness* in order to refute the latter's contentions—as recorded in the paper received by Augustine entitled *Definitions Ascribed to Caelestius*. Among Caelestius' contentions that Augustine earnestly refutes is that man by his power was able to live here without sin. See *Man's Perfection*, VIII.19, 362-363.

¹⁷⁵ See *Grace & Free Will*; Warfield, introductory essay, III, 69. Augustine rejects both the Pelagian view which maintained that grace was given according to human merits, and the view which contended that "a man is not

reaffirms this position in *On the Gift of Perseverance*, written in 428 or 429 CE, where he insists that not only the beginning of faith, but the perseverance which always keeps man remaining in Christ to the end is also God’s gift.¹⁷⁶ Even in his earlier anti-Pelagian treatise mentioned above, he already tried to prove that with God’s help many things are possible—even to live without sin.¹⁷⁷ His central arguments are based on 2 Corinthians 3:6 “[t]he letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”¹⁷⁸ Based on this Biblical passage, he reaffirms the necessity of God’s grace and the uselessness of the teaching of the Law which is devoid of God’s grace, for such a Law is attributed to “the letter that killeth.”¹⁷⁹ This position is used to refute the so-called Pelagian attitude in emphasising the efficacy of Law and moral life independent of grace.¹⁸⁰

In addressing the inner dimension of the Law, Augustine observes that without “the life-giving spirit” the letter of the Law which forbids man from sin only “causes sin to be known rather than avoided.”¹⁸¹ Based on Romans 5:20, he argues that through the Law sin has abounded, but “...where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”¹⁸² However, Augustine does not allow man to use the increase of grace as exemplified in the above-mentioned passage as an excuse to commit more sins. Instead, he reminds that Paul himself forbids such an attitude.¹⁸³ He explains that it is not because of the merit of the sinner that grace abounds, but “by the intervention of his Helper.”¹⁸⁴

judged according to his works who has been able to use throughout his life free choice of will.” See Letter II.1, in *Grace & Free Will*, 818.

¹⁷⁶ *Perseverance*, 1.I, 949-950 [WSA: 1.1, 465].

¹⁷⁷ *Spirit & Letter*, 1.I, 223-224 [WSA: 1.1, 229]; 62, 279. However, as mentioned above, Augustine argues that in reality, there is no such sinless person in this present life.

¹⁷⁸ On another occasion Augustine insists that without the assistance of grace, the Law only brings many bad consequences. To support his argument, he frequently resorts to various of Paul’s sayings (e.g., Rom. 4:15; 7:7; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:21, 22, 24, etc.); see *Grace & Original Sin*, I.9.VIII, 452.

¹⁷⁹ *Spirit & Letter*, 6.IV, 226-227 [WSA: 4.6, 231-232].

¹⁸⁰ See the note to *Spirit & Letter*, 223; Warfield, introductory essay, III, 26-29. With regard to Pelagius’ conception of grace, Augustine observes that initially Pelagius did not deny grace altogether. Indeed, he affirms that Pelagius acknowledged grace in a subtle way. Augustine himself admits that at first, he was pleased to know that Pelagius did not deny grace. It was only soon after that, that he started to have suspicions about Pelagius’ stance on grace, which he eventually started to disagree with and reject (see *Nature & Grace*, 11.X-12.XI, 294-295 [WSA: 1.11, 325]). Augustine accuses Pelagius of corrupting a passage of James (James 3:8) (*ibid.*, 16.XV, 297-298); of denying that human nature had been corrupted or depraved by sin, and of opposing the truth of the Scripture (*ibid.*, 21.XIX, 300-301; 23.XXI, 302).

¹⁸¹ *Spirit & Letter*, 8, 228 [WSA: 5.8, 234].

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 9.VI, 228-229.

¹⁸³ Rom. 6:2.

¹⁸⁴ *Spirit & Letter*, 9.VI, 228-229 [WSA: 6.9, 234-235].

Having this conception of the Law in his mind, therefore, Augustine censures the Jewish attitude of preaching the Law without practising it, or practising the Law only outwardly or literally without observing its inner or spiritual dimension.¹⁸⁵ The former characterise a hypocritical attitude, the latter a purely ritualistic or legalistic. Augustine is concerned with the realisation of the inward observance of the Law. For him, the Law should be observed out of love of righteousness (of God) and not because of fear of punishment which is devoid of grace.¹⁸⁶ For that reason, it is not surprising to observe that Augustine totally agrees with Paul in giving a new interpretation to circumcision—the practice which has been identified with Jewish identity—from “that circumcision which is outward in the flesh” to that “circumcision is that of the heart.”¹⁸⁷ Accordingly, Augustine endorses Paul’s contention that “he is not a Jew who is one outwardly...but he is a Jew who is inwardly.”¹⁸⁸ Although Augustine maintains the necessity of observing the inner dimension of religious observance or Law, he was still cautious to allow people to depend on their deeds, arguing that it is the grace of God that matters. This is particularly true when they are examined in the doctrine of righteousness, justification, and salvation, where without grace good deeds are useless. Consequently, in his ardent desire to maintain the centrality of God’s grace, Augustine resorts to Paul’s contention that no man is justified by works, but by grace.¹⁸⁹

Since the Law without grace is “the letter that killeth,”¹⁹⁰ Augustine contends that no man can achieve righteousness through a mere observance of the Law, for to achieve such a state divine aid is necessary.¹⁹¹ Agreeing with Paul, he argues that the real righteousness is not that which is in the Law, but it is in the spirit of grace, namely, the righteousness that is endowed by God through faith.¹⁹² Thus, Augustine does not only agree with Paul in maintaining the existence of the inner dimension of the (religious) prescribed deeds and other forms of good deeds, but he also affirms Paul’s position in emphasising and making the inner

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 13.VIII, 232-233.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 232.

¹⁸⁷ Rom. 2:28-29; *Spirit & Letter*, 13.VIII, 232 [WSA: 8.13, 237-238].

¹⁸⁸ Ibid..

¹⁸⁹ See Rom, 3:24, 28; *Spirit & Letter*, 45, 260 [WSA: 26.45, 267]. He concludes “we conclude that a man is not justified by the precepts of a holy life, but by faith in Jesus Christ,—in a word, not by the law of works, but by the law of faith; not by the letter, but by the spirit; not by the merits of good deeds, but by free grace.” See *Spirit & Letter*, 22, 242 [WSA: 13.22, 247-248].

¹⁹⁰ 2 Cor. 3:6.

¹⁹¹ *Spirit & Letter*, 20, 239 [WSA: 12.20, 245].

¹⁹² *Against Pelagians*, III.21, 773; 23, 775-776.

dimension of any good deed as the substance, which is regarded as the real element that truly exhibits oneself and identity. All of these, however, can be achieved only with God's help and grace through Christ.

With respect to the relation between grace, free will, and good deeds, since Augustine believes that free will has been corrupted by Original Sin,¹⁹³ he argues that it is grace which enables man to will and to be able to do good things. Augustine does not deny free will, however, and does not reject rewards for good deeds. Indeed, in *A Treatise on Nature and Grace*, he maintains the coexistence of grace and free will, but he still insists that good deeds require grace.¹⁹⁴ In another treatise, he admits the necessity of man's active participation in performing of good deeds in order to receive God's assistance continuously, which indicates that he does not make the human person a totally passive creature or a mere puppet, to be indifferent in all things.¹⁹⁵ Even in his later treatise *On Grace and Free Will*, written in 426 or 427 CE, he warns readers against denying free will while maintaining grace, and vice versa, contending that the two do not contradict each other, but are simultaneously commended by the scriptures.¹⁹⁶ He also asserts that "[t]he good, indeed, shall receive their reward according to the merits of their own good-will, but then they received this very good-will through the grace of God...."¹⁹⁷ Hence, Augustine establishes the relationship between the three—free will, grace, and judgement—in a manner that is not similar to the previous rejected (Pelagian) views.¹⁹⁸

Nevertheless, throughout his arguments, Augustine's central concern is to justify the absolute necessity of grace, thus safeguarding the sole sovereignty of God over man's merit. Disagreeing with Pelagius who was charged with maintaining the need of God's help only after sin, Augustine insists that God's grace is always needed in all circumstances, particularly not only after sin, but even before sin, thus retaining the absolute need of grace

¹⁹³ Augustine also contends that human will has been weakened, and therefore, in constant needs of God's grace; see *Man's Perfection*, II.3.III, 352; VI.12.XII, 357-358. Augustine's ardent desire in making God's grace as the central focus of his theology can also be seen in his contention that even the doing of good deeds is indeed a proof of receiving God's grace; see *ibid.*, VIII.17, 361.

¹⁹⁴ *Nature & Grace*, 29.XXVI, 307-308 [WSA: 26.29, 338].

¹⁹⁵ See *Man's Perfection*, XX.43, 385

¹⁹⁶ *Grace & Free Will*, 10.V, 831-832 [CTHP: 5.10, 149-150].

¹⁹⁷ Letter II.1, in *Grace & Free Will*, 818.

¹⁹⁸ Among other arguments is that Augustine claims that the Pelagians maintained that grace was given according to human merits. See *Ibid.*

in whatever condition.¹⁹⁹ Hence, he reaffirms that man always needs grace both in order to enable him to do good things and to avoid sin. He justifies his contention through a simile of the eyes, in that they need light in order to see. Likewise, man needs God's grace in order to know and to do good things, as well as to avoid sin.²⁰⁰

Augustine's earnest desire to place grace among the central and fundamental foundations of his theology obliged him to relate almost all things to grace. Consequently, he maintains that faith and free will, including the will to believe, originated from and are dependent on God.²⁰¹ He contends that God not only gives man the ability and assists, but He also works in man to will and to do an act.²⁰² Augustine also argues that righteousness is the gift of God,²⁰³ and that faith is the ground of all righteousness.²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, these views do not indicate that Augustine abhors good deeds or is indifferent to bad deeds, for in other works, such as *On Faith and Works*, he ardently maintains the need for good deeds, rebuking those who believe in the sufficiency of faith alone. In another treatise *On Rebuke and Grace*, he still maintains the necessity and advantage of rebuke to those who do evil or do not obey God.²⁰⁵ What he is concerned with here is to rebut the Jewish and the so-called Pelagian attitude which he regards as either boasting in the Law, or emphasising the Law at the expense of God's grace.

Augustine's theology of absolute dependence on God, however, seems to have entrapped him into appearing to deny free will and to uphold an absolute concept of predestination or fatalism. This has led to accusations that he held a passive attitude towards good deeds. Indeed, the Pelagians, especially Julian of Eclanum, personally accused him of

¹⁹⁹ *Nature & Grace*, 29.XXVI, 307 [WSA: 26.29, 338].

²⁰⁰ Augustine writes "[f]or, just as the eye of the body, even when completely sound, is unable to see unless aided by brightness of light, so also man, even when most fully justified, is unable to lead a holy life, if he be not divinely assisted by the eternal light of righteousness. God therefore, heals us not only that He may blot out the sin which we have committed, but, furthermore, that He may enable us even to avoid sinning." See *Nature & Grace*, 29.XXVI, 308 [WSA: 26.29, 338].

²⁰¹ *Spirit & Letter*, 54, 270; 60.XXXIV, 278 [WSA: 31.54, 277-278].

²⁰² *Grace & Original Sin*, I.26.XXXV, 464-465.

²⁰³ *Spirit & Letter*, 50.XXIX, 265-266 [WSA: 29.50, 272-274].

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 51, 267 [WSA: 29.51, 274-275].

²⁰⁵ *Rebuke & Grace*, 5.III, 871 [CTHP: 3.5, 187-188]; 7.V, 872-873 [CTHP: 5.7, 189]. He rejects the Pelagian claim against him which maintains that rebuke is not necessary if everything comes from and depends on God's grace (*ibid.*, 6.IV, 871; 8, 873-874). Augustine contends that it is men's fault that they do evil (*ibid.*, 7.IV, 872), or deviate from God. Thus, their deviations should be rebuked. But the rebuke should be done with love (*ibid.*, 25, 888; 49, 907), and it varies according to the variety of faults (*ibid.*, 46.XV, 904-905).

being influenced by Manichaeism.²⁰⁶ But as Augustine himself already reminded his readers, he is concerned to refute the extreme views of the efficacy of good deeds alone, or those who oppose God's grace,²⁰⁷ and he ardently tries to bring back the Christian focus to God through Christ. Elsewhere, he states "[n]ow we do not, when we make mention of these things, take away freedom of will, but we preach the grace of God."²⁰⁸ He also argues that what perished is not free will of the human race, but "freedom which was in Paradise," namely, "to have a full righteousness with immortality."²⁰⁹ He reiterates that in the present state free will needs assistance from God's grace, for it is only free in doing evil things, and is not free in doing good things unless aided by the grace of God through Jesus Christ.²¹⁰ This statement makes it clear that without denying free will, Augustine's primary concern in the treatise is to promote the necessity of God's grace. Thus, in this context, Augustine was reacting against what he perceived as pure ritualism and legalism.

It is true that Augustine's conception of free will in his anti-Pelagian phase was not wholly free, or that it is limited because of its deformed nature,²¹¹ and therefore, is a passive idea as compared to his previous Manichaean phase. He has to struggle in order to harmonise his new conception of free will with the previous one. This leads several scholars to argue that Augustine was not consistent, or that his theology is paradoxical, and that he failed to harmonise his different views. But rather than judging him, what is important is to appreciate his context and central emphasis. As I have argued at the outset, he was writing in totally different contexts and was focusing on different aspects of the issues involved. In the Manichaean phase, he was mainly focusing on refuting the Manichaean fatalism which completely denied free will through the theological and philosophical perspectives. The

²⁰⁶ E.g., that Augustine's view of the corruption of nature and his concept of predestination, among others, were nothing else than Manichaeism. See Warfield, introductory essay, III, 62-66.

²⁰⁷ See "Extract from Augustin's 'Retractations'," (II.37), in *Spirit & Letter*, 222.

²⁰⁸ *Nature & Grace*, 36.XXXII, 313 [WSA: 32.36, 343].

²⁰⁹ *Against Pelagians*, I.5, 710.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I.5, 710-711; 7, 712.

²¹¹ Augustine believes that this is among the consequences of the taint of Original Sin, by which free will has been corrupted and weakened. Resorting to several Biblical passages, such as John 15:5 "without me ye can do nothing," Augustine believes that man is only free to do bad or evil, but to do good man absolutely needs God's grace (*Rebuke & Grace*, 2, 869 [CTHP: 1.2, 185-186]). For Augustine, the free will that man has now is "sufficient for evil, but too little for good, unless it is aided by Omnipotent Good (*ibid.*, 31, 892-893). Hence, he argues that man is absolutely in need of God's grace. Only grace can deliver man from evil, and without grace, "they do absolutely no good thing, whether in thought, or will and affection, or in action..." (*ibid.*, 3.II, 870).

issues addressed in this phase have a close relation to the philosophical problem of evil. In particular, he addressed the issue in a Christian Neo-Platonist perspective. Thus, his primary focus was to defend free will, and at this stage, he had not yet completely related it to his mystical or spiritual insight of grace. It was only in the Pelagian debate that he addressed the issue in both a public and a mystical context. Based on the treatises that he wrote in this phase, it is evident that he interprets the Pelagian teachings as another form of the Jewish and Judaizers' pure ritualism and legalism which endangered spirituality, such as denying God's involvement in religious observance and daily life. He finds the same context as well as a practical solution which was addressed by Paul. He believes that Paul does not reject the Law *in toto*, but he is concerned to rebuke the Jewish and the Judaizers' attitudes of over-emphasising the Law, or those who boasted of the Law and man's actions. The central concern of Paul is to link all things to God's grace, or to establish a firm relationship between creatures and God, and this attitude has greatly influenced Augustine's theology. Hence, not only does Augustine develop Paul's mystical theology of grace, but he also discovers the positive side of Paul's attitude towards the Law and some other kinds of good deeds.²¹²

These debates reveal many aspects of Augustine's thoughts on the issue of good deeds, when Latin Christianity was not fully defined.²¹³ Although he himself was once drawn into one of those groups, he later realised their defects and started to rectify his condition as well as his society. As his theology evolved through different phases of his life, he gradually realised the importance of observing the inner or spiritual dimension of religious beliefs and practices. He underwent a radical spiritual transformation from being indifferent to Christian good deeds or devotional acts in his Manichaean phase to gaining spiritual enlightenment of religious life after conversion, soon becoming the champion of Christian spiritual elements.

Augustine's understanding of grace and its necessity in man's life does not undermine the necessity of performing good deeds or negate free will. However, it is true that his conception of free will is passive, in that free will is already corrupted and unless aided with grace it could only will bad things. Therefore, grace is always necessary to enable man to do good things. Augustine is keen to re-establish the spiritual relationship between

²¹² For the examples of Augustine's analysis on this issue, see *Grace & Free Will*, 22.X, 840-841 [CTHP: 10.22, 158-159].

²¹³ E.g., the Manichaeans and the Academics (sceptics).

man and God through the acknowledgement of man's weaknesses and the necessity of God's grace, particularly through Christ. One way of achieving this is through understanding and observing the psychology or inner dimension of religious beliefs and practices. He tries to relate human conduct to God and makes God the real source of human will and actions. Having established this connection, he actively encourages Christians to do good deeds, to lead a holy life, to perform prayer, and other spiritual exercises.²¹⁴ In Augustine's theology, the ability and goodness of human activities depend on, and are evaluated according to, God's grace through Christ. Without the aid from the grace of God, man will be unable to do or even to will good things, and good deeds that are done without or in opposition to God's grace are considered as worthless.

The different debates or controversies that involved Augustine further accelerated the application of his spiritual insight into a wider context. He believed that he needed to defend and inform readers of his spiritual insight that underpins the issues involved as an alternative against different challenges to the Christian orthodoxy. With this goal in mind, therefore, he was very active in reacting to the views of the Manichaeans, the Donatists, and the Pelagians that he considered erroneous. A great amount of his life and works was devoted to such an endeavour. Armed with his rhetorical skill and equipped with his own library and his "bookishness,"²¹⁵ as well as aided by his authority as a bishop and supported by the Catholic Church of the day, he relentlessly waged *war* against those movements that he considered heretical.

While his teachings and stance on several issues have been criticised,²¹⁶ it is important to understand his context and the nature of his reaction to different interpretations.

²¹⁴ For instance he states "[i]f, therefore, 'we wish to rouse and kindle cold sluggish souls by Christian exhortations to lead righteous lives,' we must first of all exhort them to that faith whereby they may become Christians, and be subjects of His name and authority, without whom they cannot be saved. If, however, they are already Christians but neglect to lead holy lives, they must be chastised with alarms and be aroused by the praises of reward,—in such a manner, indeed, that we must not forget to urge them to godly prayer as well as to virtuous actions..." See *Nature & Grace*, 82.LXVIII, 344-345 [WSA: 68.82, 377-378].

²¹⁵ The term of "bookishness" is used by Guy G. Stroumsa who observes that Augustine was heavily preoccupied with books more than anyone else in the ancient world. See Guy. G. Stroumsa, "Augustine and Books," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 12: 151-157. However, Michael Stuart Williams argues that Augustine "was not a great reader of his Christian contemporaries," arguing that he did not keep up with the very latest religious literatures and even was unfamiliar with the fundamentals texts of Christianity. See Michael Stuart Williams, "Augustine as a Reader of His Christian Contemporaries," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 18:228-239.

²¹⁶ Such as on the weakness of human beings, Original Sin, corrupted will or passive conception of free will, total dependent on grace which amounts to fatalism, etc.

It is evident that there is evolution in certain of Augustine's thoughts, moving towards a spiritual level, with a strong focus on the psychology or inner dimension of the related issues. In the Pelagian debates he was addressing the issue involved at a higher spiritual stage as compared to the previous debates. This is in harmony with his mystical goal, namely, to attain spiritual union with God. It is also true that Augustine emphasises the weakness of man, but he does this in order to guard man from the deceptive state of pride and self-sufficiency, and to emphasise the need to be conscious of God's presence and His Sovereignty. As Stanislaus J. Grabowski has observed, Augustine is earnest in correcting "the misconceptions of men and in inculcating the true concept of God" through his writings and pastoral activity, emphasising the true consciousness, inner contemplation, and understanding of the presence of God.²¹⁷ Furthermore, Augustine wanted to inculcate humility, love, and total trust in God through sincere acknowledgement of one's weakness and his state of being in need of God's grace. This is affirmed by Kenney who states that inner contemplation offered Augustine "the certainty of divine transcendence,"²¹⁸ and provides the soul with "a means to restore a mutual consciousness with God, and to deepen that presence."²¹⁹

Even if his views on particular issues are sometimes contested, Augustine still exerts a powerful influence in the Western Christian tradition. Many subsequent scholars, such as Aquinas and Luther, have also been influenced by his theology.²²⁰ His painstaking efforts do bear fruit, where many of his theological formulations and doctrines have been widely accepted especially by the Western Church until today. His doctrines of Original Sin and grace, for instance, have taken their place as standard doctrines in the heart of the Western Christian tradition.

²¹⁷ Grabowski, "St. Augustine and the Presence of God," 338.

²¹⁸ Kenney, "Mystic and monk," 22:290.

²¹⁹ Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine*, 127.

²²⁰ For Augustine's influence on modern philosophy see Johannes Brachtendorf, "The Reception of Augustine in Modern Philosophy," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 36:478-491.

4.3 AUGUSTINE ON THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF FAITH AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOOD DEEDS

Augustine offers a dynamic approach to the concepts of faith and good deeds, arguing that both are essential requirements for salvation. Both faith and good deeds have two main dimensions, namely, theoretical and practical aspects, or outer and inner dimensions. With regard to good deeds, Augustine makes a great contribution by examining and emphasising some of their inner dimensions, such as explaining their inner meaning, purpose, and inner preconditions.

Augustine wrote several books that discuss faith. In 393 CE, he wrote *A Treatise of Faith and Creed*, which originally was a discourse that he delivered at a council held at Hippo-Regius when he was a presbyter. Based on Paul's statement about faith (Rom. 10:10), he asserts that faith requires the duty of both heart and tongue. This indicates that Augustine maintains that faith needs to be embedded in the heart and not as mere verbal confession. This is because, he argues, faith requires man to believe in things which are not seen,²²¹ and to achieve this, a firm belief is required. Livingstone maintains that with this conception of faith which requires an act of the will beyond a mere intellectual concept, the classic understanding of faith was achieved.²²²

Augustine accepts and develops the conception of faith based on the scriptural definition, particularly as found in Hebrews 10:11, namely, faith is "the evidence of things not seen." Since he firmly believes in the authenticity of the Bible, he urges Christians to follow the Scriptural accounts of faith.²²³ For instance, in *The Enchiridion (A Treatise on Faith, Hope, and Love)* which he wrote sometime after the death of Jerome (September 30, 420 CE), he writes "[b]ut it is better that we should use the word "faith" as the Scriptures have taught us, applying it to those things which are not seen."²²⁴ Augustine's emphasis on faith can also be seen in his assertion that one should first believe before understanding. For

²²¹ *Faith of Things Not Seen*, 1, 504.

²²² Cross and Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary*, 595.

²²³ For Augustine's attitudes towards the scripture, see Deems, "Augustine's Use of Scripture," 188-200; Cameron, "Augustine and Scripture," 6:200-214; Sabine MacCormack, "Augustine on Scripture and the Trinity," in *A Companion to Augustine*, 31:398-415.

²²⁴ *Enchiridion*, 8, 361.

Augustine, it is faith which leads someone to understanding, and even if a person does not understand, he still urges him to believe.²²⁵

Augustine does not believe that faith is just an intellectual belief or that it merely pertains to humans' inner conviction, but argues that it requires active commitments exhibited through the performance of good deeds and living a good life. In *On Faith and Works*, he reminds readers that they endanger the salvation of their souls if they believe that faith alone is sufficient.²²⁶ In his sermon to catechumens, he emphasises the need of good deeds including to live a good life, asserting that daily prayers will wash away light sins.²²⁷ He also urges readers to be steadfast in faith and good manners.²²⁸ He argues that those who are steadfast in encountering all tests will receive greater rewards.²²⁹ In addition, he also asserts that faith needs hope and love. These three items—faith, hope, and love—which find their foundation in 1 Corinthians 13:13 are regarded as the theological virtues in Christianity. For Augustine, faith alone is not sufficient, but it should be accompanied and supported. These factors—good deeds,²³⁰ hope, and love—are required in order to make faith a genuine one. Without hope and love, one's faith is no different to that of the devils, for “the devils also believe and tremble,”²³¹ but their belief is without hope and love.²³² Thus, Augustine maintains the need for both faith and good deeds. He also believes that Paul and James are not contradictory, but complementary. He reminds readers from misunderstanding Paul's statements of faith²³³ which are in most cases interpreted as faith alone is sufficient.²³⁴

Augustine emphasises the close relationship between faith, hope, and love. Although he regards faith as the foundation of both hope and love, as mentioned above, he also asserts that without both of these elements, faith will be rendered useless and not genuine.²³⁵ In justifying that faith needs love, he frequently resorts to Paul's contention which

²²⁵ *Creed*, 4, 547.

²²⁶ *Faith & Work*, 14, 28-30.

²²⁷ *Creed*, 15, 555.

²²⁸ *Catechising*, 25.47, 474.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.49, 477.

²³⁰ E.g., religious observance, moral actions, and living a good life.

²³¹ James 2:19.

²³² *Enchiridion*, 8, 361.

²³³ E.g., Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16.

²³⁴ *Faith & Work*, 14, 28-29.

²³⁵ *Enchiridion*, 8, 361.

maintains that the genuine faith, or faith that saves, is “faith that worketh by love.”²³⁶ In illustrating the interrelatedness of faith, hope, and love, Augustine writes:

When, then, we believe that good is about to come, this is nothing else but to hope for it...Now what shall I say of love? Without it, faith profits nothing; and in its absence, hope cannot exist....The Apostle James says: “The devils also believe, and tremble.”²³⁷—that is, they, having neither hope nor love...And the Apostle Paul approves and commends the “faith that worketh by love,”²³⁸ and this certainly cannot exist without hope. Wherefore, there is no love without hope, no hope without love, and neither love nor hope without faith.”²³⁹

Thus, Augustine makes hope and love indispensable parts of faith, without which faith will be rendered as “profits nothing.” As already discussed above, he also makes good deeds the requirement for a genuine faith. Therefore, faith should be firmed inwardly and should be actively practised outwardly. This shows that good deeds play a crucial role in Augustine’s conception of faith. Nevertheless, although he emphasises that faith requires physical commitment, he rebukes faith which is only expressed through outer appearance without inner dimension. He argues “[f]or faith is not a matter of the body which does obeisance, but of the mind which believes.”²⁴⁰ This further supports that Augustine’s conception of faith embraces two dimensions, namely, the theoretical and the practical. To make faith a genuine one, therefore, both of these dimensions need to be fulfilled.

The need to observe both dimensions of faith is further exemplified in Augustine’s categorisation of a believer. In *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, written in 400, Augustine briefly describes the three categories of a believer. The first category is known as the reprobate, namely, those who become Christians insincerely with some other motive. This is referring to those who simply follow the Christian teachings outwardly without real faith and sincerity.²⁴¹ The second category is:

[T]hose who now fear God, and mock not the Christian name, neither enter the church of God with an assumed heart but still look for their felicity in

²³⁶ Gal. 5:6.

²³⁷ James 2:19.

²³⁸ Gal. 5:6.

²³⁹ *Enchiridion*, 8, 361.

²⁴⁰ *Catechising*, 5.9, 439.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 17.26, 459.

this life, expecting to have more felicity in earthly things than those enjoy who refuse to worship God.²⁴²

Although Augustine suggests that this second group is of better hope than the first, he still reproaches this group, contending that they are “nevertheless in no inferior danger,” and regards this as false anticipation.²⁴³ This is because although they do have good hope and a degree of right belief, they do not put it into the actual commitment, namely, upholding the Christian faith which will make them genuine or practising Christians. For that reason Augustine observes “and so they readily fall away from the faith.”²⁴⁴ The third category is what he calls as truly a Christian. He says:

But as the man who has in view that everlasting blessedness and perpetual rest which is promised as the lot destined for the saints after this life, and who desires to become a Christian, in order that he may not pass into eternal fire with the devil, but enter into the eternal kingdom together with Christ, such a one is truly a Christian.²⁴⁵

Augustine does not stop the description of a true Christian at this point, namely, those who merely desire to become a Christian and to enter the eternal kingdom together with Christ, but he continues to describe the criteria of a true Christian as embracing active actions in doing good things, to be steadfast, and to avoid bad things. He states:

([A]nd he [a true Christian] will be on his guard in every temptation, so that he may neither be corrupted by prosperity nor be utterly broken in spirit by adversity, but remain at once modest and temperate when the good things of earth abound with him, and brave and patient when tribulations overtake him.²⁴⁶

Augustine contends that a person with this character will easily advance himself to a higher level “which will make him love God more than he fears hell.”²⁴⁷ Attaining such a state, a person will altogether refrain from sinning even if he were permitted to sin by God. He will

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 460.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 17.27, 460.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. Bracketed mine.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

do this out of pure love, and not because of fear of God's wrath, but "with the wish not to offend Him whom he so greatly loves."²⁴⁸

Therefore, Augustine's conception of faith is dynamic in requiring an active performance of good deeds. Not only should faith be firm in the heart or mind, but it must be accompanied by good deeds, hope, and love. Augustine believes that faith is the first and the completion of a Christian life, contending that "we begin in faith, and are made perfect by sight. This also is the sum of the whole body of doctrine."²⁴⁹ Although he is positive on the necessity of good deeds, he is also critical of mere outward action or outward religious observances which reduce them to pure ritualism or legalism. This can be seen in his critical reaction towards the Jews and Judaizers. Based on different contexts, therefore, Augustine's stance on good deeds can be classified as both positive and critical.

Augustine is optimistic about the performance of good deeds, such as observing religious teachings and practices, leading a good life, and conforming to ethical conduct. In many of his writings, he maintains the necessity of obedience to God and the harm of disobedience, the necessity of performing good deeds and avoiding evil deeds, as well as affirming the reality of judgement (rewards and punishments) based on man's deeds.²⁵⁰ In *Enchiridion*, he insists that there is no ground in Scripture whereby anyone can deny the eternity of future punishment. Elsewhere, he advises readers to be steadfast in faith and good conduct, and to guard themselves against evil.²⁵¹ To steadfastly lead a good life according to God's commandments is stressed in his sermon to the Catechumens.²⁵² He not only addresses the general Christian society, but he even admonishes those monks who only emphasise faith and are indifferent or reluctant to work and to live normally.²⁵³ Thus, although Augustine places great emphasis on faith, he makes it clear that faith without good deeds is not sufficient for salvation.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ *Enchiridion*, 5, 359.

²⁵⁰ *Good of Widowhood*, 27, 666-667; *Nature of Good*, 7, 485; *Enchiridion*, 111, 423; *Catechising*, 18.30, 462; 27.54, 479; *Care for the Dead*, 2, 787-788; *Against Fortunatus*, 15, 144; 21, 149, etc.

²⁵¹ *Catechising*, 25.47, 474; 27.55, 480.

²⁵² *Creed*, 15, 555.

²⁵³ *Works of Monks*, 2-4, 734-737; 4, 736; 20, 751-752.

²⁵⁴ *Grace & Free Will*, 18, 837-838 [CTHP: 7.18, 155-156].

Augustine maintains that some kinds of good deeds, such as daily prayer and almsgiving, have their own positive effects and roles in attaining pardon for certain sins.²⁵⁵ Against Faustus, he regards certain moral precepts of the Old Testament—although no longer binding—as the same in the New Testament, or at least still worth citing.²⁵⁶ However, he admits that the commandments and the moral precepts of the Old and New Testament are observed differently according to their different contexts.²⁵⁷

Augustine’s critical view of good deeds is mainly exhibited in his stance on the Jewish Law. Echoing Paul’s reaction, he rebukes the Jewish attitude—especially among the Pharisees—as well as the Judaizers,²⁵⁸ whom he believes to only emphasise the literal understanding and outward observance of the Law. He reaffirms Paul’s assertion that the teaching of the Law which is devoid of the life-giving spirit is “the Letter that Killeth,” and it only strengthens sin and increases the desire for sin or transgression.²⁵⁹ Believing in the authenticity and seriousness of Paul’s contentions, Augustine depends heavily on Paul in elucidating his critical attitude on this issue.²⁶⁰ He frequently justifies the need of grace, arguing that it is God’s grace which not only assists man in performing good deeds and observing the Law, but also helps man to know and will what is good.²⁶¹ This position of absolute dependence on grace was contested by Pelagius. However, Augustine does not hesitate to refute Pelagius openly, arguing that his own position is supported by Cyprian and Ambrose, and that Pelagius’ conception of grace was misleading.²⁶² He maintains that God’s grace is active, “not [a] dying nature, nor the slaying letter, but the vivifying spirit.”²⁶³ He believes that no man is justified by good deeds but by grace.²⁶⁴ He considers the (Jewish) Law as only for those unrighteous men who are still on their journey, and once they have

²⁵⁵ *Enchiridion*, 70-72, 399-400.

²⁵⁶ *Reply to Faustus*, X.2, 225-226.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; *Enchiridion*, 120, 428.

²⁵⁸ Judaizers refer to early Jewish Christians who still followed some Jewish legalistic view in maintaining that the observance of Jewish Law is a necessary requirement for salvation.

²⁵⁹ 2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 4:15; 7:7; *Spirit & Letter*, 6.IV, 226-227 [WSA: 4.6, 231-232]; 9, VI, 228-229 [WSA: 6.9, 234-235]; *Man’s Perfection*, VI.14.XIV, 359; *Enchiridion*, 117, 426; *Grace & Original Sin*, I.9.VIII, 452.

²⁶⁰ See *Spirit & Letter*, 7.V, 227 [WSA: 5.7, 233-234]; 8, 228 [WSA: 5.8, 234].

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 20, 239; *Grace & Original Sin*, I.13.XII, 455-456; 20.XIX, 460; 26.XXV, 464-465; *Against Pelagians*, II.17.VIII-18, 79-750.

²⁶² *Grace & Original Sin*, I. 3.III, 448; 37.XXXIV-38.XXXV, 472; 40.XXXVII, 473; 48.XLIV, 477-478; 50-51. XLVI, 479-480; *Against Pelagians*, IV.25.IX, 800-802; 30, 807-808, etc.

²⁶³ *Proceedings of Pelagius*, 21.IX, 407.

²⁶⁴ *Spirit & Letter*, 22, 241-242 [WSA: 13.22, 247-248]; 45, 260-261 [WSA: 26.45, 267]; *Grace & Original Sin*, I.9.VIII, 452-453.

become righteous and have arrived at their journey, they must no longer depend on the Law.²⁶⁵ One reason for his emphasis on God's grace and his critical attitude towards depending on the Law and good deeds is to avoid pride or boasting and to inculcate humbleness before God. Another reason is that Augustine sees humble dependence upon God's grace as important means of healing and transforming one's soul in love.²⁶⁶ He believes those who depend on the Law and their deeds are not free from boasting and pride.²⁶⁷ Among the remedies for pride is to have faith, trust, and hope in God's grace. Thus, Augustine argues that the law of deeds is different from the law of faith, while the former does not exclude boasting, the latter is free from it.²⁶⁸

As will be examined further in the next discussion, Augustine also maintains that the real essence of the Jewish Law was revealed and fulfilled by Christ, and hence, it is no longer required for Christians.²⁶⁹ Thus, the law having been fulfilled and been done away by Christ, the sacraments of the Old Testament are substituted with other sacraments which are better in many ways.²⁷⁰ The former is called the Old Law, the latter the New Law.

In contrast to the Old Law, the New Law centres on love rather than fear, and it is encapsulated in two primary commandments to love God and neighbour.²⁷¹ The nature, relationship, and contents of love for God and neighbour in Augustine's theology have already been analysed by Raymond Canning, who argues that there is a development, but also a unity in Augustine's conception of them.²⁷² Agreeing with Paul, Augustine quotes that love "worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law," and is the end of the commandment.²⁷³ Unlike the Old Law, this New Law—which he calls as the law of faith—is written within, namely, within the heart.²⁷⁴ This realisation also explains the reason why Augustine emphasises the inner dimension of man and of religious life.

²⁶⁵ *Spirit & Letter*, 16.X, 235-236 [WSA: 10.16, 241-242].

²⁶⁶ See Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, esp. Chap. 5.

²⁶⁷ *Spirit & Letter*, 21.XIII, 239-240 [WSA: 13.21, 245-247].

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *Reply to Faustus*, XVIII.4, 318-319; XIX. 7, 325; 8, 326; 14, 328; 18, 331-332.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, XIX.14, 328.

²⁷¹ Matt. 22:37, 39; Rom. 13:9.

²⁷² Raymond Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993).

²⁷³ Rom. 13:9, 10; 1 Tim. 1:5; *Spirit & Letter*, 29.XVII, 246-247 [WSA: 17.29, 253-254]; *Reply to Faustus*, XXII.6, 374.

²⁷⁴ *Spirit & Letter*, 30, 247-248 [WSA: 17.30, 254-255]; 36.XXI, 252 [WSA: 21.36, 259]; 41, 256-257 [WSA: 24.41, 262-264].

Augustine's different stances on the Law suggest that he is cautious neither to accept nor to reject it in *toto*.²⁷⁵ He is aware that Paul, although critical, also still praises the Law and acknowledges its holiness and goodness.²⁷⁶ However, both of them agree that without grace, the Law or good deeds will not be useful, instead they are harmful. They also maintain that the Jewish Law was fulfilled, done away with, and replaced with the New Christian Law through Jesus. Nevertheless, as I will analyse further in the next discussion, rather than offering a detailed exposition of the outer way of performing good deeds, Augustine is more concerned with their inner dimension, such as their real meaning, purpose, and inner preconditions that should be observed. Before analysing his view of the inner dimension of good deeds, however, it is important to examine briefly some relevant issues that can serve as the background in understanding his thought and spiritual insight into good deeds.

Augustine believes that man consists of different elements. In his *Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon* and *On the Holy Trinity*, he proposes a distinction between the outer and inner man. The outer man—which is not restricted to the body, but also includes some other senses, such as perception and memorisation—is held in common with the beasts. It is the mind—which he considers as a spiritual substance, the inner part made in the image of God—that distinguishes man from the beast, and therefore, needs to be raised upright by “the dutifulness of righteousness.”²⁷⁷ In *A Treatise on Faith and the Creed*, he argues that man consists of three elements, namely, spirit, soul, and body, which are often summarised as two (the soul and the body).²⁷⁸ The soul is the essence and inner self, being better and greater than the body, and in it lies man's chief good.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ For an analysis of Augustine's view of the philosophy of law, see Chroust, “The Philosophy of Law,” 195-202.

²⁷⁶ Rom. 7:7, 8; 12, 13; *Spirit & Letter*, 21.XIII, 240 [WSA: 13.21, 245-247]; *Proceedings of Pelagius*, 20, 406-407.

²⁷⁷ *Reply to Faustus*, XXIV.2, 441; *Holy Trinity*, XII.1.1, 239. For a critical analysis of Augustine's doctrine of man in relation to his concept of man as the image of God and sinner, see Gerald Bonner, “Augustine's Doctrine of Man: Image of God and Sinner,” in *God's Decree and Man's Destiny: Studies on the Thought of Augustine of Hippo* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), III, 495-514.

²⁷⁸ *Faith & Creed*, 10.23, 501-502; *Morals of the Catholic*, 4.6, 48. In a deeper context, Augustine still distinguishes between the spirit and the soul, contending that the spirit is the privilege of man which does not exist in animal. Unlike the soul which still has desire for carnal pleasure—the cause of carnal concupiscence—the spirit is free from it and it only desire for good things. See *Faith & Creed*, 10.23, 501-502; *Meaning of Genesis*, II.10.12, 110-112.

²⁷⁹ *Morals of the Catholic*, 4.6, 48; 5.7-8, 48-49

Augustine also maintains that there are different qualities in man, some good and others evil. The evil qualities are exhibited in concupiscence, evil desires, or lust for sin.²⁸⁰ He argues that concupiscence—which is sometimes called the law of concupiscence or the law of sin—is born with infants, and although its evil is removed in baptism, it still remains in man.²⁸¹ As long as the flesh serves the law of sin, evil lust seduces, and the perfection of good is not fulfilled.²⁸² Because of this, he believes that no one is free from sin or evil deeds.²⁸³ He develops this stance further in his later polemical treatise against Caelestius.²⁸⁴ Thus, he advises readers to always guard the soul, which is the inner self, so that it is freed from lusts after carnal good things which will only render it to the flesh.²⁸⁵ He reminds readers that the flesh always lusts through soul against spirit, and therefore, both the flesh and the spirit are opposed to each other.²⁸⁶ Nevertheless, he does not allow man to regard one of them as enemy, but “the fault, whereby the flesh lusteth against the spirit: and this, when healed, will itself cease to exist, and either substance will be safe, and no strife between either.”²⁸⁷ This suggests that the flesh is not to be abolished altogether, but to be controlled and healed. Augustine maintains that the flesh is not evil if it is freed from evil, which is the fault whereby man was rendered faulty.²⁸⁸ He argues that the soul can be made perfect and this is achieved when it is “made subject to its own spirit, and when it follows that spirit as the same follows God.”²⁸⁹

Augustine’s conception of the inner self is not without criticism. It is critically examined by Phillip Cary, contending that it originates in Platonist tradition.²⁹⁰ He argues that the inner self is an Augustinian invention which can endanger Christian fundamental

²⁸⁰ *Continence*, 20, 571.

²⁸¹ *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.4.IV, 159 [WSA: II.4, 148]; II.45.XXVIII, 193-194 [WSA: II.28.45, 184-185]; II.46, 194 [WSA: II.46, 185].

²⁸² *Continence*, 20, 571.

²⁸³ *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.8.VII, 163-164 [WSA: II.7.8, 153]; II.21.XIV, 175 [WSA: II.14.21, 165]; II.26.XVII, 179 [WSA: II.17.26, 169]; II.34.XX, 184-185 [WSA: II.20.34, 174-175]; *Holy Virginit*y, 49, 642; *Nature & Grace*, 14.XIII, 296-297 [WSA: 14.15, 327-328]; *Spirit & Letter*, 3, 225 [WSA: 2.3, 230]; *Against Pelagians*, I.28.XIV, 725.

²⁸⁴ See *Man’s Perfection*, 350-387.

²⁸⁵ *Faith & Creed*, 10.23, 502.

²⁸⁶ *Continence*, 19, 570.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 19, 570.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 20, 571.

²⁸⁹ *Faith & Creed*, 10.23, 502.

²⁹⁰ Phillip Cary, *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

doctrine, for while Christian teaches that “God is to be found in something external, the flesh of Christ,” Augustine directs readers towards internal aspect (the inner self) which Cary claims does not exist.²⁹¹ With this conception in mind, Cary gives “a serious warning for Christians who are attracted to an inward turn.”²⁹² However, as I have argued in Chapter Two, Augustinian scholars already acknowledged that Augustine uses some Neo-Platonist concepts which have been modified and harmonised with Christian doctrines. His concept of inner self is in no way formulated as the rejection of Christian fundamental teachings, but in fact, is a spiritual way that he believes is necessary to attain a perfect realisation of Christ and the essence of religious life. Gareth B. Matthews has offered an analysis of Augustine’s conception of the inner man, arguing that Augustine draws its expression from the Bible.²⁹³ He is concerned with the real observance of the spiritual dimension of Christian teachings, and not satisfied with a mere outer belief and practices. He believes that this is achieved through the realisation of inner self, the centre of spirituality.

This examination suggests that Augustine employs the flawed nature of man—as he understood it—as well as the deformed free will as the foundation or justification for the absolute need of grace. He stresses that righteousness and salvation are attained by grace, and indeed are the gifts of God.²⁹⁴ He also places immense emphasis on the inner man—the soul or the spirit—and therefore, advises man to guard the soul and raise it upright. He believes that there are direct effects of man’s deeds to his soul. Based on Paul, he maintains that the soul is corrupted by evil manners, vices, or sins.²⁹⁵ He further argues that sins can darken the soul, pervert his own nature, and it also separates man from God, as well as man from salvation or eternal life.²⁹⁶ Consequently, he stresses the observance of the inner dimension of good deeds, for only through the realisation and observance of their inner dimensions that good deeds can bring good effects to the soul, hence contributes in re-establishing the relationship between man and God. He is concerned with lasting happiness,

²⁹¹ Ibid, preface, vii-xii.

²⁹² Ibid, xi.

²⁹³ Gareth B. Matthews, “The Inner Man,” in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. A. Markus (Gardner City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, 1972), 7, 176-190.

²⁹⁴ *Spirit & Letter*, 22, 241-242 [WSA: 13.22, 247-248]; 45, 260 [WSA: 26.45, 267]; 50.XXIX, 265-267 [WSA: 29.50, 272-274]; 34, 250-251 [WSA: 18.34, 257-258]; *Grace & Free Will*, 19-21, 838-840 [CTHP: 8.19-9.21, 156--158], etc.

²⁹⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 53; *Faith & Creed*, 10.23, 503.

²⁹⁶ *Baptism*, I.16, 568; *Forgiveness & Baptism*, I.25, 120-121 [WSA: I.25, 109]; I.34.XXIV, 127-128 [WSA: I.24.34, 116-117]; *Confessions*, III.viii.16, 47.

the reunion of the soul with God.²⁹⁷ In order to achieve this state, he offers his spiritual insight and inner meaning of some religious observances and ethical manners, mainly based on his interpretation of Jesus and Paul. He believes that there are some inner meanings, purposes, as well as inner preconditions of the Old Jewish Law and the New Christian Law (and some other kinds of good deeds) that need to be realised and observed. Therefore he rebukes those who are boasting of the observance of the outer Law and outer dimension of good deeds, thinking that such an action is insufficient for salvation and journeying back to God. Augustine's view of the inner dimension of good deeds will be analysed in the next discussion.

²⁹⁷ Watkin, "The Mysticism of St. Augustine," 105-106; Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy*, 3-24.

PART 2:

4.4 DEEPER UNDERSTANDING AND THE INTERNALISATION OF THE PERFORMANCE

Since Augustine's views on several issues are scattered in different places, it is not an easy task to construct a comprehensive theory of his thought on good deeds. Notwithstanding, he does offer some of his profound insight into the issue in several writings. For instance, he addresses some aspects of baptism in his debate with the Donatists. Although he focused much on other theological and philosophical issues in the Manichaean debate, he had already offered a brief but significant spiritual insight into certain religious laws and ethical issues that are related to good deeds. It was in the Pelagian debate, however, that he advanced his spiritual insight into several issues involved, yet none of the treatises that he produced in different debates above is exclusively devoted to a systematic treatment of good deeds. In addition, unlike al-Ghazālī who proposes the principles of *al-'ilm* (the right knowledge) and *al-'amal* (the right action) as his unique approach to good deeds,²⁹⁸ Augustine does not offer any specific principle. This is perhaps another challenge in constructing his thought on this issue. Nevertheless, a careful reading of his relevant treatises will disclose his thought and spiritual insight into good deeds. Accordingly, there is no specific writing of Augustine that can be taken as the primary source for this section, rather, the relevant data and analyses are drawn from various relevant sources that either directly or indirectly address the related issues.

For the purpose of the current analysis, Augustine's view of the inner dimension of good deeds can be constructed and examined in two main contexts, namely, the need to have a deeper understanding and the necessity to internalise the performance of good deeds (e.g., religious observances and ethical conduct or moral actions). The first context includes his understanding of factors that are helpful and harmful to good deeds, but what is more important is his view of the real meaning and purpose of good deeds. This is signified by his view of the relationship, or rather his synthesis, between the Old Jewish Law and the New Christian Law, as well as the meaning and purpose of certain religious observances and ethical conduct. The second context focuses more on his spiritual insight into relevant

²⁹⁸ See the next discussion of al-Ghazālī's approach on this in Chapter 6, part 2.

common inner preconditions of good deeds. In both cases, Augustine offers his penetrating insight into the issues, revealing what he believes as their real meaning, purpose, and reality that form their real essence.

4.4.1 Deeper Understanding

Although Augustine does not directly propose a deeper understanding as the necessary condition towards the realisation of the inner dimension of good deeds, on many occasions his emphasis on it is obvious. This can already be seen in his view of some factors that are necessary or helpful to good deeds, as well as those that are harmful. The right understanding of these matters serves as the key towards the realisation of the inner spiritual dimension of good deeds.

Augustine emphasises the acknowledgement of man's weakness, his deformed nature and will as among the consequences of Original Sin. This acknowledgment paves the way towards the realisation of the necessity of God's grace as the most essential factor in the performance of good deeds, without which no man can perform, know, or even will good things.²⁹⁹ He believes that man is always assisted by God, and therefore, there is cooperation between man and God.³⁰⁰ He maintains that it is grace which establishes free will and it is the factor that causes man to act.³⁰¹ Without the gift of grace, no good deed (religious law or moral action) is considered as good, righteous, or effective, for such an action will only augment evil desire or become harmful.³⁰²

Since his anti-Manichaean phase, Augustine had constantly urged readers to acknowledge that God is the chief good, and therefore, actions will only be considered good if they are done according to God's will. Likewise, mind or soul will also be considered good and elevated if it turns to God, and falls to the lowest in ranks or even be considered as dead if it gets away from Him, or if it is averse to the knowledge of God.³⁰³ In addition to God, Augustine sometimes makes justice and the state of goodness or a better state of things as the

²⁹⁹ *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.33, 183-184 [WSA: II.33, 173]; *Grace & Original Sin*, I.13.XII, 455-456; 16.XV, 458; *Nature & Grace*, 29.XXVI, 307-308 [WSA: 26.29, 338].

³⁰⁰ *Man's Perfection*, V.11.XI, 357; XX.43, 385-386; *Grace & Original Sin*, I.20.XIX, 460; 26.XXV, 464-465; 43, 862-863; *Against Pelagians*, II.20-21, 751-752; *Meaning of Genesis*, II.8.12, 50-52

³⁰¹ *Spirit & Letter*, 52.XXX, 268-269 [WSA: 30.52, 275-276]; *Grace & Original Sin*, I.13.XII, 455-456.

³⁰² *Enchiridion*, 117, 426; *Nature & Grace*, 29.XXVI, 308 [WSA: 26.29, 338]; *Spirit & Letter*, 6.IV, 226-227 [WSA: 4.6, 231-232].

³⁰³ *Holy Trinity*, VIII.3.4-5, 181-183; *Two Souls*, 8, 127; *The Morals of the Manichaeans*, 7.9-10, 89-90.

central determining factors, and therefore, those things that depart from, or are not in accordance with God and justice, as well as those things that desert their better states are considered as bad, evil, or sin.³⁰⁴ In his early anti-Manichaean phase, he emphasised free will as the other primary determining factor, contending that only bad action done wilfully will be considered as evil or sin.³⁰⁵ In his later period, however, he developed further the spiritual progress or relationship with God as an important determining factor, contending that sin is only those acts that move away from God, or offend Him.³⁰⁶ Therefore, he believes that not all acts which resemble vicious or injurious acts, or those acts disapproved by people, that do not offend God are to be regarded as sin.³⁰⁷ This indicates that Augustine internalises the conception of sin and relates it to the spiritual relationship between man and God, and for this reason sin must be avoided as it will leave a negative effect on this spiritual relationship.³⁰⁸

With regard to the cause of evil or sin, Augustine is consistent in maintaining that no evil, sin, or bad things are to be attributed to God.³⁰⁹ He affirms the standard view that Satan is “the first incentive to sin” and “he is the first author of all sins.”³¹⁰ He believes that the primary cause of evil is the privation of good, and the cause of sin is to oppose God’s will or to move away from Him.³¹¹ He considers ignorance and lust (i.e., ignorance of duty and lust after what is hurtful) as the secondary causes.³¹² On other occasions, he also includes other factors, such as pride, weakness, and foolishness, and therefore he advises readers to guard themselves against these harmful factors.³¹³ In addition, Augustine emphasises the

³⁰⁴ *Two Souls*, 11, 131; *Nature of Good*, 34, 497-498; *Grace & Original Sin*, I.20.XIX, 460. On certain occasions he contends that evil and sin are identical, but on other occasions, he differentiates between them. For instance, see *Against Fortunatus*, 15, 144; *Enchiridion*, 20, 370-371. For an analysis of Augustine’s conception of sin, see Helmi Afizal, “The Concept of Sin,” 53-58, 62-66.

³⁰⁵ *Two Souls*, 10, 129-130; 11, 131; 12.16-18, 132-134; *Nature of Good*, 28, 494; *Against Fortunatus*, 20, 147.

³⁰⁶ *Confessions*, III.ix.17, 48; XII.xi.11, 251.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, III.ix.17, 48.

³⁰⁸ For further analysis of Augustine’s conception of evil, see William E. Mann, “Augustine on Evil and Original Sin,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3, 40-48.

³⁰⁹ *Contenance*, 14, 566-567; 15, 567-568; 28, 578-579; *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.27, 179-180 [WSA: II.27, 170].

³¹⁰ *Nature & Grace*, 32.XXVIII, 309 [WSA: 28.32, 340]

³¹¹ *Enchiridion*, 11, 362-363; 24.372; *Confessions*, XII.xi.11, 251.

³¹² *Enchiridion*, 24, 372.

³¹³ *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.27, 179-180 [WSA: II.27, 170]; *Spirit & Letter*, 18, 237 [WSA: 11.18, 242-243]; *Nature & Grace*, 31, 308 [WSA: 27.31, 339]; 33.XXIX, 310 [WSA: 29.33, 340-341]; *Profit of Believing*, 27, 536-537. See also Helmi Afizal, “The Concept of Sin,” 53-56, 64.

need for perseverance, the gift of God by which Christians are preserved in Christ and in goodness, as well as refraining from evil or sin until the end of life. He maintains that this gift of perseverance was not given to Adam, and this is the cause of Adam's transgression.³¹⁴ Realising its importance, therefore, Augustine advises readers to pray to God for the gift of perseverance.³¹⁵

With regard to understanding the real meaning and purpose, or rather the essence, of the Old and New Law, Augustine argues that the former prefigures the latter, and therefore, the observances contained in the Old Law "are necessarily removed when the things themselves are fully revealed by Christ, that in this very removal the law and the prophets may be fulfilled."³¹⁶ Augustine contends that what is important is not the observance of different types of sacraments contained in the Old Law, but their significance as foretelling and prefiguring the New Law, which was fulfilled by the advent of Christ.³¹⁷ Once fulfilled by Christ, the Old Law was no longer required, but it was replaced with the New Law.³¹⁸ However, Augustine is cautious to claim that the Old Law was not destroyed, but fulfilled, so that it can prove that what has been prefigured is true and not illusory, hence Augustine synthesises the Old Law with the New Law.³¹⁹

Augustine argues that the New Law is "greater in efficacy, more beneficial in its use, easier in performance, and fewer in number."³²⁰ Unlike the Old Law, Augustine contends that the New Law is given inwardly, written within the heart by the Holy Ghost.³²¹ It is the law of love, the end of commandment, exemplified in the command to love God and neighbour.³²² This conception indicates that Augustine believes that the New Law concentrates more on reforming the essence of man, namely, the inner self. He believes that, unlike the Old Law which emphasised the outward observance based on fear of punishment, the New Law focuses on transforming the inner self or spirituality based on love.³²³ This

³¹⁴ *Rebuke & Grace*, 26.X, 888-889 [CTHP: 10.26, 207-208]; 31, 892-893 [CTHP: 11.31, 212].

³¹⁵ *Perseverance*, 10.VI-11, 955-956 [WSA: 6.10-11, 472-473].

³¹⁶ *Reply to Faustus*, XVIII.4, 318.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, XVIII.4, 318-319.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, XIX.14, 328; 18, 331.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, XIX.18, 332.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, XIX.14, 328.

³²¹ *Spirit & Letter*, 30, 247 [WSA: 17.30, 254-255]; 36.XXI, 252 [WSA: 21.36, 259]; 41, 256-257 [WSA: 24.41, 262-264].

³²² *Ibid.*, 29.XVII, 246-247; 36.XXI, 252; *Reply to Faustus*, XXII.6, 374.

³²³ See *Spirit & Letter*, 13.VIII, 232-233 [WSA: 8.13, 237-238].

notion can justify his contention that the New Law is greater than the Old Law, allowing it to be accomplished more fully.

Relying on this view Augustine answers the Manichaean questions of why Christians do not follow the Old Law. He offers his interpretation of real meaning and purpose of certain religious observances and ethical conduct, some of which he reiterates and develops in his later period. For instance, responding to the question posed by Faustus the Manichaean as to why Christians do not observe circumcision, Augustine replies that what was prefigured by it was fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. He contends that the real purpose of circumcision was the removal of fleshly nature, and this purpose was fulfilled in the sacrament of baptism which replaces and improves it. He asserts that this is because baptism teaches Christians to look forward to their resurrection, and this indicates that it involves a process of spiritual renewal.³²⁴ In his anti-Pelagian period, Augustine developed further this view, contending that the real circumcision is that of the heart, which is within.³²⁵ With this conception of circumcision, he reminds his readers:

Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?³²⁶

He continues:

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”³²⁷

This argument indicates that Augustine is concerned with the real meaning and purpose of circumcision as he understood it, which is based on Paul. Its validity does not merely depend on the outward performance, but it is closely connected to the right and inward observance “in the spirit, and not in the letter” of “the righteousness of the law.”

With regard to baptism, the preceding discussion of Augustine’s stance towards the Donatists demonstrates his concern with the inner dimension of baptism, its real essence. His

³²⁴ *Reply to Faustus*, XIX.9, 326.

³²⁵ *Spirit & Letter*, 13.VIII, 232 [WSA: 8.13, 237].

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.VIII, 232.

³²⁷ Rom. 2:17-29; *Spirit & Letter*, 13.VIII, 232 [WSA: 8.13, 237].

understanding of baptism maintains that Christ is the real determining factor of the validity of baptism, and it does not depend on the merit of those who confer it.³²⁸ He believes that this real understanding can eradicate pride or boasting in the Law, or trust in man. The real trust and hope should be put in God's grace through Christ who owns the real sacraments.³²⁹ He also advises Christians to realise and experience the real meaning of baptism, such as that it indicates their "death with Christ to sin" and their "resurrection with him to newness of life."³³⁰ Thus, Augustine reminds Christians to be mindful of the spiritual dimension of baptism, which is its real purpose or essence.

Augustine offers similar answers and interpretations to other questions regarding why Christians do not observe other Jewish religious observances, such as the observance of the Sabbath and the distinction in food, the offering of sacrifices, the observance of the feast of unleavened bread, and some others. In all his answers, it is evident that he focuses more on the real essence and purpose of those observances as he understood them. His central view is that all those observances prefigure the coming of Christ, and that they were fulfilled or replaced by his advent. Indeed, Augustine even does not hesitate to claim that "the very intention of the observances was to prefigure Christ."³³¹ In all his interpretations, he earnestly reaffirms that Christ did not destroy the Law, but fulfilled it through his own way.³³²

Realising that good deeds, especially religious observance, have their own inner spiritual meaning and purpose, Augustine reminds readers not to destroy, but to preserve them through their performance. He realises that those who are not able to grasp their real meaning and purpose are still at risk of demolishing or contradicting them. With this idea in his mind, he thus criticises Pelagius' conception of prayer, which according to Augustine, has asserted that prayers were necessary only "for the purpose of showing men what to desire and love,"³³³ and "to procure for us the explanation of the teaching by a divine revelation, not to procure help for the mind of man to perfect by love and action what it has learned should be done."³³⁴ For Augustine, this conception of prayer has opposed its real purpose,

³²⁸ *Answer to Petilian*, I.6.7, 735; 7.8, 735; II.7.15, 752; 24.57, 774; III.50.62, 901.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, III.50.62, 901.

³³⁰ *Enchiridion*, 42, 383.

³³¹ *Reply to Faustus*, XIX.11, 327.

³³² See *Ibid.*, XIX.10, 326-327; XVIII.4, 318-319.

³³³ *Grace & Original Sin*, I.32, 468.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, I.45.XLI, 476.

which is to seek God's grace and help with humility. It only results in nurturing the deceptive state of pride, self-sufficiency, and the power of free will. He writes:

The general result, then, is the pointing out, as it were, of a road to us by which we are bound to walk, by the powers of our free will, and needing no assistance from anyone else, may suffice to ourselves not to faint or fail on the way. And even as to the discovery of the road itself, he contends that nature alone is competent for it; only the discovery will be *more* easily effected if grace renders assistance.³³⁵

Another example that might be worth mentioning is Augustine's view of almsgiving. It cannot be doubted that Augustine encourages his readers to give alms. However, as Pauline Allen and Edward Morgan have observed, Augustine *reveals* the inner meaning and real purpose of almsgiving, presenting it as a means to attain atonement for sin. This requires some related obligations (e.g., fasting, prayer, and forgiveness), and therefore, involves a process of inner purification.³³⁶ They argue that this is the original contribution of Augustine to the concept of almsgiving.³³⁷ In relation to this, Augustine contends that unless one changes his life, almsgiving will not atone for sin. Thus he admonishes the legalistic or pure ritualistic practices which only emphasises the outward performance of almsgiving while their inner self are not purified. He writes:

We must beware, however, lest anyone should suppose that gross sins, such as are committed by those who shall not inherit the kingdom of God, may be daily perpetrated, and daily atoned for by almsgiving. The life must be changed for the better; and almsgiving must be used to propitiate God for past sins, not to purchase impunity for the commission of such sins in the future. For He has given no man license to sin,³³⁸ although in His mercy He may blot out sins that are already committed, if we do not neglect to make proper satisfaction.³³⁹

Augustine also reminds his readers of Jesus' criticism towards the Pharisees who only emphasised outer cleanliness while leaving their inner selves filled with "ravening and

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ See Pauline Allen and Edward Morgan, "Augustine on Poverty," in *Preaching Poverty in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Realities*, ed. Pauline Allen, Bronwen Neil, and Wendy Mayer (Leipzig, Germany: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2009), 131.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Eccles. 15:20.

³³⁹ *Enchiridion*, 70, 399.

wickedness.”³⁴⁰ This indicates that Augustine maintains that almsgiving is neither to be regarded as a mere propitiation through which one can easily buy atonement of sins, nor should it be performed unmindfully without any spiritual exercise from within. He asserts that there are indeed many kinds of alms which assist in procuring pardon for sins.³⁴¹ The greatest of them all, however, is “to forgive our debtors and to love our enemies.”³⁴² Because of this, he advises readers to start from their heart, for “God does not pardon the sins of those who do not from the heart forgive others.”³⁴³ All of these indicate that Augustine is concerned with the essence of good deeds performed, and therefore, it is essential to understand their real meaning and purpose, especially to those who want to establish an intimate personal relationship with God.

Augustine does not confine his penetrating interpretation to religious observance, but offers similar profound understanding of certain ethical issues. In most cases, he advises readers to contemplate the real meaning and purpose of ethical injunctions, some of which are based upon Jesus’ powerful insight. For instance, Augustine invites readers to grasp the real meaning and purpose of Jesus’ prohibition of certain things which go beyond the requirements of the Law. While the Law only prohibits murder, adultery, and perjury, Jesus even prohibits unjust disposition, looking at women with lustful desire, and swearing.³⁴⁴ Augustine argues that an unjust disposition to a brother is indeed a kind of murder; that the lust here is already regarded as adultery, specifically adultery in the heart; and that swearing is prohibited in order to safeguard man from the danger of perjury.³⁴⁵

Augustine also reveals the real intention of Jesus in commanding man to love enemies, a command that seems awkward or in opposition to the saying of the ancient times that the enemy should be hated.³⁴⁶ By identifying their real context and meaning, Augustine contends that there is no contradiction between these two commands. He maintains that “every wicked man should be hated as far as he is wicked; while he should be loved as a man.”³⁴⁷ He continues “we should hate our enemy for what is evil in him, that is, for his

³⁴⁰ Luke 11:39; *Enchiridion*, 75, 402.

³⁴¹ *Enchiridion*, 72, 400.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 73, 401.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 74, 401.

³⁴⁴ See Matt. 5:21-37.

³⁴⁵ *Reply to Faustus*, XIX.23, 334.

³⁴⁶ See Matt. 43-48; Luke 6:27-36.

³⁴⁷ *Reply to Faustus*, XIX.24, 334-335.

wickedness; while we also love our enemy for that which is good in him, that is, for his nature as a social and rational being.”³⁴⁸ Having explained the contexts of these commands, Augustine explains the intention of Jesus, particularly, that he wants to correct those who have misunderstood the ancient command to hate enemies by hating “their fellow-men instead of only hating their wickedness.” Augustine believes that this is the real reason why Jesus urges man to love enemies.³⁴⁹

In addition to the above examples, Augustine devoted commentaries to particular parts of the Bible, including Jesus’ *Sermon on the Mount* which contains many ethical issues—they are too extensive to be examined in this section. The above analysis is sufficient to demonstrate that Augustine emphasises the understanding of the real essence of good deeds (religious or ethical), as exhibited in his analyses of their real meaning and purpose. Although he did not devote a systematic treatise on good deeds, and his treatment of the issues is rather brief, he does offer a profound understanding and spiritual insight into those relevant issues. To some extent, his view and spiritual insight can enhance readers’ understanding of relevant kinds of good deeds, and improve the qualities of their performances. His grace-centred interpretations enable Christians to relate their religious observance with divinity, and to eradicate a self-centred state (i.e., selfishness, egoism, self-sufficiency, etc.), which is conducive to their spiritual development. Agreeing with Roman moralists such as Cicero and Sallust, Augustine believes that selfishness is the key to vicious actions, such as pride and longing for domination.³⁵⁰ Perhaps among other positive effects of Augustine’s grace-centred interpretation is that it can lessen religious dogmatism and pure ritualism or legalism. This general approach is also proposed by al-Ghazālī, where he earnestly advises readers to understand the significance and grasp the real meaning and purpose of good deeds that they perform, as well as to relate them with the divine realm. This approach suggests that some general parts of Augustine’s views and endeavours—particularly his invitation to understand the real meaning and purpose of good deeds—are applicable to other religious communities, or even humanity at large. The following discussion examines Augustine’s view of some common inner preconditions that need to be

³⁴⁸ Ibid., XIX.24, 335.

³⁴⁹ Ibid..

³⁵⁰ Brian Harding, *Augustine and Roman Virtue* (London: Continuum, 2008), 51-52.

observed when performing good deeds, as exhibited in his effort and invitation to internalise their performance.

4.4.2 The Internalisation of the Performance

The primary foundations of Augustine's spiritual insight into good deeds are his interrelated doctrines of Original Sin which resulted in the deformation of man's nature and free will, and subsequently justifies the absolute necessity of God's grace through Christ. These conceptions lead him to internalise the discussion, such as to focus on the psychological state of man as exemplified by his theory of deformed will, and to emphasise the spiritual relationship between man and Christ or God through the observance of the inner spiritual dimension of good deeds. He believes that this approach can pave the way towards re-establishing the personal journey to God. Augustine believes that God is ever-present, and therefore, the spiritual journey to Him is possible. To quote Grabowski's analysis of Augustine's view of God's presence; "God is near, ever-present, within us and around us... In fact, He is more present to us than we are to ourselves."³⁵¹ Thus, Roger Hazelton is right to assert that Augustine regards this life—particularly the devotional life—as "a journey of the soul toward God."³⁵² This profound spiritual insight into life is also found in some other great Christians before and after Augustine, such as the fourth-century Desert Father John Cassian, and the twelfth-century founder of the Carthusian Order Saint Bruno of Cologne.³⁵³ With these conceptions and objectives in his mind, therefore, Augustine is earnest in inviting readers to internalise their performance of good deeds through the observance of certain relevant inner preconditions.

For Augustine, the right way to re-establish an intimate relationship with God is certainly not by mere diligent outward observance of good deeds and their external preconditions, for such an action characterises legalism and pure ritualism, which he earnestly criticises. Rather, it is by realising and observing their inner dimensions that good

³⁵¹ Grabowski, "St. Augustine and the Presence of God," 356.

³⁵² Roger Hazelton, "The Devotional Life," in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, 401.

³⁵³ In comparing between John Cassian and al-Ghazālī, Brock Bingaman observes that there are many similarities between them in their vision of the spiritual life as a journey to God. Likewise, Minlib Dallh also argues that there are many similarities on several aspects of life and spiritual insights between Saint Bruno and al-Ghazālī. See Brock Bingaman, "A Common Vision: John Cassian and al-Ghazali's Correlative Conceptions of the Spiritual Life," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20, no. 2 (2009), 171-182; Minlib Dallh, "The quest for the Divine: Al-Ghazālī and Saint Bruno of Cologne," *The Muslim World* 102, no. 1 (2012), 60-69.

deeds will be conducive to spiritual growth, and thus will be able to draw a person near to God. Therefore, in practical terms, Augustine invites readers to internalise their performance of good deeds through the observance of certain relevant inner preconditions (e.g., humility, hope, love, etc.), which are conducive to inculcating inner beautiful qualities, and thus enrich the interior self. He tries to combat man-centeredness or a self-centred state³⁵⁴ in man and to replace it with a Christ-centred or grace-centred state, whereby the divine presence which is diminishing in life could be nurtured.³⁵⁵ He is concerned with eradicating the soul dependent on religious law or pious action in attaining righteousness or salvation, for such an act could render “Christ is dead in vain,”³⁵⁶ which he strongly believes is certainly not the case.³⁵⁷

Although Augustine does not offer a systematic analysis of the inner preconditions that should be observed while performing good deeds, his discussion of some of them is profound, wide in scope, and rich with spiritual insight. This section only examines some primary inner preconditions, found in Augustine’s selected writings, which are common and relevant to the general kinds of good deeds in the context of the present research. The analyses below are based on different primary sources that provide different aspects of the issues, and because Augustine only gives limited expositions to some of them, certain analyses in this section are also rather brief. These primary and common inner preconditions can be grouped as follows:

1. Right Motive and Inner Purification
2. Faith, Hope, and Love
3. Humility and Fear

4.4.2.1 Right Motive and Inner Purification

Augustine’s doctrine of deformed free will does not prevent him from proposing the need to have right motive, intention, or will, which in reality, is certainly considered as “the gift of grace.”³⁵⁸ As Spencer has observed, Augustine emphasises the purification of the will, and

³⁵⁴ I.e., self-pride, self-egoism, self-sufficiency, self-existence, etc.

³⁵⁵ For further analysis of Augustine’s view of the presence of God, see Grabowski, “St. Augustine and the Presence of God.”

³⁵⁶ Gal. 2:21. See also Rom. 4:5.

³⁵⁷ *Nature & Grace*, 1.I, 289 [WSA: 1.1, 319-320]; *Spirit & Letter*, 50.XXIX, 265 [WSA: 29.50, 272].

³⁵⁸ *Against Pelagians*, 1.37.XIX, 730-731.

gives less focus to the detailed exposition of the performance of good deeds.³⁵⁹ This further supports the contention that Augustine is concerned more with the inner aspect of the issues that he addresses, such as on the inner religious psychology of man and internal dimension of good deeds. Although his exposition of the right motive is rather brief and occasional, and sometimes is not direct, a careful reading of his relevant treatises will reveal that he offers a quite profound insight into it.

Augustine maintains that actions or good deeds are to be judged from their motive and not from their external aspects.³⁶⁰ This is not only confined to religious observance but also applicable to ethical conduct. The motive or will is the determining factor of one's deeds, which determines either a deed is to be considered as good that deserves a reward, or as a sin that inflicts a punishment. He asserts "I say it is not sin, if it be not committed by one's own will; hence also there is reward, because of our own will we do right."³⁶¹ A good deed or ethical conduct performed with bad intention would be considered as sin or immoral. For instance, he says "the man who says what is true, believing it to be false, is, so far as his own consciousness is concerned, a liar."³⁶² He also maintains that sins vary in degrees depending on motive or intention. For instance, telling a lie—which is never allowed—is less heinous if its motive is to help another, as compared to the motive to injure another.³⁶³ The primary reason for Augustine's emphasis on motive or will is because he believes that God looks into "our very heart and inmost will," and not on a mere outward performance, for the latter still does not exhibit the real state of a person.³⁶⁴ Because of this, Augustine urges readers to purify their heart and motive. Agreeing with Plotinus, he maintains that only the purified soul will be able to achieve a union with God.³⁶⁵ This supports his argument that action is to be judged from within (motive, intention, or will), which is its essence.

Augustine contends that the right motive refers to a state when a person does any good thing for the sake of God. Nevertheless, the highest degree is achieved when it is performed out of pure love and not due to fear of punishment. He argues that God will not

³⁵⁹ Spencer, "St. Augustine and the Influence of Religion on Philosophy," 476.

³⁶⁰ *The Morals of the Manichaeans*, 13.27-30, 96-98; *Enchiridion*, 18, 367.

³⁶¹ *Against Fortunatus*, 21, 149.

³⁶² *Enchiridion*, 18, 367.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ *Spirit & Letter*, 14, 233 [WSA: 8.14, 239].

³⁶⁵ Chadwick, introduction to *Confessions*, xxi. For an analysis of Plotinus' view of this, see Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine*, esp. Part I, no. 2.

consider an action as done willfully if it is performed through fear of punishment and not from love of righteousness. Those who perform such an act are still at risk of being held guilty, for they would have preferred to breach the commandment if they were given the opportunity.³⁶⁶ Thus, Augustine earnestly advises readers to make love as the motive of all their good deeds.³⁶⁷ His view of love together with other inner preconditions will be discussed further below.

Augustine is concerned with lasting happiness, the reunion of the soul with God.³⁶⁸ Agreeing with the Neo-Platonists, he maintains that in order to achieve this state the soul or the inner self needs to be purified, “purged of all physical contact and all images of material things.”³⁶⁹ In this context, to do any good things because of reward or fear of punishment is still not considered as a pure motive. To make worldly achievement and pleasure as the motive is even worse. Because of this Augustine blames himself, for he was making worldly success as his goal.³⁷⁰ He realises that no one can serve God and mammon,³⁷¹ and therefore, no one can retain both the desire for this worldly pleasure and desire for God in one motive.³⁷²

In a general context, Augustine also advises readers to purify themselves from inner pollution such as crimes, vices, and a wicked character, so that they can be born again.³⁷³ He relates Jesus’ encounter with the Pharisees, where Jesus admonishes their rigid and narrow concept of purification which limits it only to the cleanliness of the cup and the platter, while their “inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.”³⁷⁴

The above analysis indicates that rather than explaining the outer rules and methods of performing any particular kind of good deeds, Augustine is concerned more with the right motive and inner purification, which form important inner preconditions of good deeds. He realises that good deeds would be useless, or even harmful, if they are performed with wrong or bad motives. Likewise, mere outward observance of good deeds is also not conducive to the soul and spiritual journey if the inner self is not purified, for such an action only

³⁶⁶ *Spirit & Letter*, 13.VIII, 232-233 [WSA: 8.13, 237--238].

³⁶⁷ *Enchiridion*, 121, 428-429.

³⁶⁸ Watkin, “The Mysticism of St. Augustine,” 105-106; Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy*, 3-24.

³⁶⁹ Chadwick, introduction to *Confessions*, xxi.

³⁷⁰ *Confessions*, I.ix.14, 11.

³⁷¹ Matt. 6:24.

³⁷² See *Works of Monks*, 34, 761.

³⁷³ *Enchiridion*, 75, 402.

³⁷⁴ Luke 11:37-41; *Enchiridion*, 75, 402.

exemplifies pure ritualism or legalism, an attitude that Jesus and Paul—and even Augustine himself—earnestly criticise.

4.4.2.2 Faith, Hope, and Love

Faith, hope, and love—identified by Paul as leading virtues (1 Cor. 13:13)—are Augustine’s favourite subject, relevant to current analysis of the inner preconditions of good deeds. Throughout his discussions, it is evident that Augustine regards these three qualities as integral inner preconditions, perhaps as the primary foundations to other kinds of inner preconditions.³⁷⁵ Faith is regarded as the ground of all righteousness including hope and love.³⁷⁶ However, as mentioned previously, faith must be accompanied by hope and love, without which it will be rendered useless.³⁷⁷ Augustine maintains that although faith and hope are different, they are interconnected, and that their correct state is achieved when they are directed towards the unseen reality (i.e., God and His rewards).³⁷⁸ Accordingly, he earnestly criticises those who put trust in man or in the Law.³⁷⁹ In *Enchiridion*, he reminds readers to ask nothing for rewards from any person other than God, and he quotes various Biblical verses which condemn those who hope or put their trust in man.³⁸⁰ He gives a direct reminder on this in *Grace and Free Will*, where he states:

[T]o our performance of good works, let us not have hope in man, making strong the flesh of our arm; nor let our heart ever depart from the Lord, but let it say to him, “Be Thou my helper; forsake me not, nor despise me, O God of my salvation.”³⁸¹

This clearly indicates that Augustine earnestly advises readers to perform good deeds with faith and hope only in God, for without them, good deeds will only nurture the fleshly self and pride or boasting.³⁸²

³⁷⁵ For instance, see *Enchiridion*, 4, 358.

³⁷⁶ *Spirit & Letter*, 51, 267-268 [WSA: 29.51, 274-275]; *Enchiridion*, 7, 360.

³⁷⁷ See the previous discussion of *Augustine on the Dynamic Nature of Faith and the Significance of Good Deeds*; *Enchiridion*, 8, 361; 67, 397.

³⁷⁸ *Enchiridion*, 8, 360-361.

³⁷⁹ *Grace & Free Will*, 6.IV, 828 [CTHP: 4.6, 146-147]; *Catechising*, 25.49, 476-477; 27.55, 480-481.

³⁸⁰ *Enchiridion*, 114, 424-425. See also *Grace & Free Will*, 6.IV, 828 [CTHP: 4.6, 146-147].

³⁸¹ Ps. 27:9; *Grace & Free Will*, 6.IV, 828 [CTHP: 4.6, 146-147].

³⁸² See *Spirit & Letter*, 17, 236 [WSA: 10.17, 242]; 21.XIII, 239-240 [WSA: 13.21, 245-247].

Augustine maintains that religious law will only be able to confer eternal life to those who have faith (in Christ), which is accompanied by love.³⁸³ He argues that God is the primary object of love,³⁸⁴ and this love is the highest inner precondition of good deeds. In relation to God, love is the driving force to understand God perfectly.³⁸⁵ Love is the completion of faith and hope, without which faith will bring no profits, and hope will not exist.³⁸⁶ He also maintains that love is the great reason for the advent of Christ.³⁸⁷ Hence, he argues that love is greater than faith and hope, and it is the end and fulfilment of all the commandments, and the root of all good things.³⁸⁸ Based on various Biblical quotations—especially Romans—Augustine distinguished between the law of works and the law of faith, contending that the former does not make man righteous and indeed is still at risk. It is the law of faith which “led him to believe that no other resource was possible to his weakness for fulfilling the precepts which ‘the law of works’³⁸⁹ commanded, except to be assisted by the grace of God.”³⁹⁰ Augustine also argues that it is love which distinguishes the faith of those who are under the Law from the faith of others, contending that:

[T]hey who are under the law both attempt to work their own righteousness through fear of punishment, and fail to do God’s righteousness, because this is accomplished by the love to which only what is lawful is pleasing, and never by the fear which is forced to have in its work the thing which is lawful...

Thus, Augustine advises readers to have faith and perform good deeds out of love, and not because of fear of punishment.³⁹¹ Indeed, he questions the usefulness of those good deeds performed not out of love, arguing that “where there is no love, no good work is imputed,

³⁸³ *Against Pelagians*, IV.10, 787.

³⁸⁴ *Morals of the Catholic*, 11.18-19, 54-55. Nevertheless, Augustine acknowledges the need to love others as exemplified in the commandment to love one’s neighbour. For an analysis of the relationships between love for God and love for neighbour in Augustine’s thought, see Canning, *The Unity of Love*, 32-115, 249-330.

³⁸⁵ Stephen R. Yarbrough, “The Love of Invention: Augustine, Davidson, and the Discourse of Unifying Belief,” *Rhetoric society Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2000), 35.

³⁸⁶ *Enchiridion*, 8, 360-361. See *Catechising*, 27.55, 480-481 for Augustine’s exposition how to love God.

³⁸⁷ *Catechising*, 4.7, 436-438. For Augustine, to love one’s neighbour which is the second great commandment of love, is to follow in Christ’s footsteps. See Canning, *The Unity of Love*, 72-78.

³⁸⁸ *Enchiridion*, 117, 426; 121, 428-429; *Grace & Original Sin*, I.10.IX, 453: 21.XX, 460-461; *Spirit & Letter*, 29.XVII, 246-247 [WSA: 17.29, 253-254]; Rom. xiii. 10.

³⁸⁹ Rom. 3:27.

³⁹⁰ *Spirit & Letter*, 16.X, 235-236 [WSA: 10.16, 241-242]. See also 21.XIII, 239-240 [WSA: 13.21, 245-247].

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 56, 272-274.

nor is there any good work, rightly so called; because ‘whatsoever is not of faith is sin,’³⁹² and ‘faith worketh by love’.³⁹³ Elsewhere, he asserts that there will be no good fruit produced from a thing “which does not grow from the root of love.”³⁹⁴ He also realises that God looks into “our very heart and inmost will.”³⁹⁵ Accordingly, he advises readers to avoid performing good deeds through fear of punishments, for he considers such an act as not the right way, and that it carries more harm than benefit.³⁹⁶ He also believes that those who perform good deeds or fulfil religious obligations (including avoiding the prohibited things) out of fear of punishment as still not able to grasp their real essence and purpose, for such people would have preferred to commit any prohibition if they are given freedom to do as such.³⁹⁷ Indeed, he regards anyone who is still entangled in the state of fear of the punishment as still under the Law, particularly who abstains from sins out of compulsion while he has not yet been able to eradicate the desire of sinning. In reality, he regards such a person or action as rather still guilty.³⁹⁸

Realising the great importance of love, therefore, Augustine persistently advises readers to make love of God—or sometimes love of righteousness—as the motive of their good actions.³⁹⁹ However, he is still cautious not to regard love as the quality that originates from man, but as a virtue endowed by God, or in other words, it is a gift from God, and not the work or merit of man himself.⁴⁰⁰ He emphasises that love should come from “a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.”⁴⁰¹ He contends that a person with this character will easily advance himself to a higher level “which will make him love God more than he fears hell.”⁴⁰² Attaining such a state, a person will altogether refrain from sinning even if he were permitted to sin by God. He will do this out of pure love, and not because of

³⁹² Rom. 14:23.

³⁹³ Gal. 5:6; *Grace & Original Sin*, I.27.XXVI, 466.

³⁹⁴ *Spirit & Letter*, 26, 245 [WSA: 14.26, 251-252].

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14, 233 [WSA: 8.14, 239].

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.VIII, 232-233 [WSA: 8.13-237-238].

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ *Nature & Grace*, 67.LVII, 333-334 [WSA: 57.67, 635].

³⁹⁹ *Enchiridion*, 121, 429.

⁴⁰⁰ *Grace & Original Sin*, I.27.XXVI, 466; *Grace & Free Will*, 37, 854-855 [CTHP: 18.37, 172-173]; 38, 855-856 [CTHP: 18.38, 173-174]; *Patience*, 22, 784.

⁴⁰¹ 1 Tim. 1:5; *Reply to Faustus*, XIX.18, 332; *Nature & Grace*, 84.LXX, 346-347 [WSA: 70.84, 379].

⁴⁰² *Catechising*, 17:27, 460.

fear of God's wrath, but "with the wish not to offend Him whom he so greatly loves."⁴⁰³ This is the ideal state that every Christian should strive for.

Explaining the details of love, Augustine relates it to virtue that leads to a happy life, contending that virtue is identical to perfect love of God. This leads him to regard the fourfold division of virtue—temperance, fortitude, justice, and prudence—as originating from four forms of love, infusing definitions based on love to them. He defines them:

[T]emperance is love giving itself entirely to that which is loved; fortitude is love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object; justice is love serving only the loved object, and therefore ruling rightly; prudence is love distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders it and what helps it. The object of this love is not anything, but only God, the chief good, the highest wisdom, the perfect harmony.⁴⁰⁴

He concludes:

So we may express the definition thus: that temperance is love keeping itself entire and incorrupt for God; fortitude is love bearing everything readily for the sake of God; justice is love serving God only, and therefore ruling well all else, as subject to man; prudence is love making a right distinction between what helps it towards God and what might hinder it.⁴⁰⁵

The above assertion demonstrates that Augustine makes love the essence and centre of the primary virtue. Love also occupies the higher state and forms an important theme in Augustine's reading of scripture, described by Michael Cameron as "Augustine's hermeneutics from above."⁴⁰⁶ Newman acknowledges the beautiful description of love by Augustine, asserting that "[i]t would be difficult to find in Christian literature a more beautiful and satisfactory exposition of love to God."⁴⁰⁷ He also admits that there is the Neo-Platonic influence which has been "Christianized."⁴⁰⁸

Augustine makes love the central and highest inner precondition of good deeds. Indeed, he does not limit that love should be only directed to God, but he extends it to humanity as well. This twofold concept of love is Biblical, represented in the commandment

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ *Morals of the Catholic*, 15.25, 58.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid. For detailed discussion of this, see 19.35, 63ff.

⁴⁰⁶ Cameron, "Augustine and Scripture," 16:206.

⁴⁰⁷ See footnote 64 in *Morals of the Catholic*, 15.25, 58.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

to love God “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” and to love one’s neighbour “as yourself.”⁴⁰⁹ As already cited above, Augustine maintains that this is the New Law which is “greater in efficacy, more beneficial in their use, easier in performance, and fewer in number.”⁴¹⁰ It should be the motive of every action, without which an action “is not done as it ought to be done.”⁴¹¹ To conclude, Augustine maintains that Christians should observe all the above three interrelated inner preconditions—faith, hope, and love—when performing good deeds.⁴¹² Thus, they should have a right and firm faith in God and His promise, and hope for rewards from Him alone. At highest degree, they should serve God with pure love, neither for a mere reward nor out of fear of punishment, but out of love, which is “shed abroad in our hearts.”⁴¹³

4.4.2.3 Humility and Fear

Augustine also emphasises the observance of a proper attitude and relationship between man and God. Although he emphasises love of God which signifies an intimate relationship between man and God, he also recognises that there are clear distinctions between them, and therefore, man needs to observe proper states or etiquettes, which form another common inner precondition of good deeds. They can be represented by humility or humbleness and fear.

Humility of one’s self before God which necessitates glorification of God is stressed by Augustine throughout his *Confessions*, where he employs various Biblical expressions of this state.⁴¹⁴ This attitude includes the realisation of one’s weaknesses, fault, and unworthiness before God, as well as the understanding of God’s great nature and His wonderful attributes. This does not suggest that Augustine only realises the need of humility in the later period of his life; indeed, he had already proposed humility in his anti-Manichaean phase. Replying to Faustus the Manichaean, Augustine stresses that Christ is the perfect example of being “meek and lowly in heart,” and in *Enchiridion*, he argues that Christ’s

⁴⁰⁹ Matt. 22:37-39.

⁴¹⁰ *Reply to Faustus*, XIX.14, 328.

⁴¹¹ *Enchiridion*, 121, 428-429.

⁴¹² For other brief analysis of faith, hope, and love according to Augustine, see Canning, *The Unity of Love*, 412-420.

⁴¹³ Rom. 5:5.

⁴¹⁴ E.g., Gen. 18:27; Ps. 2:4, 31:5; 2 Sam. 23:5, etc. In fact, Augustine’s *Confessions* contains various spiritual exercises, see Nino, “Spiritual Exercises,”

humility should be set as a model to Christians.⁴¹⁵ Elsewhere, he asserts that Christ is a teacher of humility.⁴¹⁶ In *Catechising*, he advises the catechisers to *clothe* the grammarians and professional speakers—who master the art of rhetoric—with Christian humility.⁴¹⁷ Indeed, Augustine urges all Christians to guard humility, contending that “for as much as it is from Christ that they are called Christians.”⁴¹⁸

Augustine maintains that humility is indeed among the precepts of Christ, and it is the new way of fulfilment of the New Law as a contrast to the Old Law. He contends that the Old Law imposed penalty or punishment, thus led people to fulfil it through fear of punishment. But through the New Law Christians are set free by grace, and they should receive it in humility.⁴¹⁹ In other words, Christians should obey the religious commandments “by the obedience of the humble, through the saving grace which sets us free.”⁴²⁰

As indicated above, humility entails glorification of God, and indeed, both are complementary. Both of them are conducive to spiritual development and inculcation of good character, which are among the purposes of good deeds or religious law. For instance, Augustine’s inspiration to inculcate humility is seen as a practical cure for pride or boasting, which he believes as among the harmful vices and the root of all other immoralities. He maintains that pride is the cause of man’s fall and all man’s offences, the commencement of all sins, which has deceived many great men.⁴²¹ He claims that the law of works—which is represented by the Old Law, or the outward observance of the Law, or legalism—does not exclude pride or boasting, hence is still at risk.⁴²² Unlike sins which are only committed through evil deeds, he argues that pride normally manifests itself in “things that are rightly done,”⁴²³ hence, in good deeds. But this does not mean that pride does not manifest itself in evil deeds, nevertheless, he argues “not all things which are wrongly done are done

⁴¹⁵ *Reply to Faustus*, XIX.7, 325; *Enchiridion*, 49, 386-387. On Augustine’s brief exposition of the teaching of Christ concerning humility, see *Holy Virginity*, 32, 628-629.

⁴¹⁶ *Holy Virginity*, 33, 629.

⁴¹⁷ *Catechising*, 9.13, 444-445.

⁴¹⁸ *Holy Virginity*, 33, 629.

⁴¹⁹ *Reply to Faustus*, XIX.7, 324-325; 30, 340.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, XIX.30, 340.

⁴²¹ *Meaning of Genesis*, II.11.5, 138; 14-15, 146-148; *Forgiveness & Baptism*, II.27, 179 [WSA: II.27, 170]; *Nature & Grace*, 33.XXIX, 310 [WSA: 29.33, 340-341]; *Spirit & Letter*, 18, 237 [WSA: 11.18, 242-243].

⁴²² *Spirit & Letter*, 17, 236; 21.XIII, 240 [WSA: 10.17, 242].

⁴²³ *Nature & Grace*, 31, 308 [WSA: 27.31, 339-340].

proudly.”⁴²⁴ Thus, Augustine realises the danger of good deeds if it is not freed from pride, which will bring harm rather than goodness to the doer. Such an action only leads to pure ritualistic or legalistic attitude, which is devoid of spiritual element. Realising the danger of pride, the insufficiency of the Law, and the weakness of men, therefore, Augustine advises readers to observe humility in performing religious observance and in daily life.

Augustine also argues that fear, rightly understood not as fear of punishment, but as fear of God and of separation from him, perfects charity.⁴²⁵ Augustine contends that the fear of eternal fire, such as serving God to avoid punishment, is of a lesser degree of fear, and is not yet attaining perfect charity. The fear that perfects charity is the fear of a lover lest he displeases God, the one whom he should love. Therefore, this fear is closely related to love, or rather the fear which is embedded in love of God. He believes that this is the right fear which is meant and encouraged in the Bible.⁴²⁶ Because of this, Augustine advises readers to inculcate this kind of fear, so that they guard themselves from committing anything that displeases God. Augustine writes:

Love thou the goodness of God; fear thou His severity: neither suffers thee to be proud. For by loving you fear, lest you grievously offend One Who is loved and loves. For what more grievous offense, than that by pride thou displease Him, Who for thy sake hath been displeasing to the proud? And where ought there to be more that “chaste fear abiding for ever and ever,”⁴²⁷ than in thee, who hast no thought of the things of this world, how to please a wedded partner; but of the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord?⁴²⁸ That other fear is not in charity, but this chaste fear quitteth not charity. If you love not, fear lest you perish; if you love, fear lest you displease. That fear charity casteth out, with this it runneth within.⁴²⁹

Thus, the fear which Augustine proposes is different from the fear of punishment. While the normal fear comes from outside, the fear of a lover flows from within. This fear is regarded as a companion of charity or love, the fear which should bring a person closer to God,⁴³⁰ and therefore, everyone who loves God should cultivate this fear within their love. Accordingly, Augustine maintains that fear and love are complementary, the former being the guardian of

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ *Holy Virginity*, 39, 633-634.

⁴²⁶ 1 Cor. 2:3; Eccles. 2:1-5; Ps. 19:9; 1 John 4:18; Phil. 2:12, 13; Rom. 8:15; 11:20, etc.

⁴²⁷ Ps. xix. 9.

⁴²⁸ 1 Cor. vii. 32.

⁴²⁹ *Holy Virginity*, 39, 633-634.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 39, 635; 1 Cor. 2:3.

the latter. He argues that fear and love represent the Biblical methods of disciplining the mind through two approaches of restraint and instruction. He writes:

This discipline, then, which is the medicine of the mind, as far as we can gather from the sacred Scriptures, includes two things, restraint and instruction. Restraint implies fear, and instruction love, in the person benefited by the discipline.⁴³¹

The mind is very important in Augustine's theology because he acknowledges its power as the faculty that can be used to comprehend God's existence.⁴³² Cushman has observed that Augustine believes that the mind communes with God.⁴³³ Nevertheless, unlike the philosophers, he maintains that the mind has limitations, in that alone it is insufficient for guidance, and therefore, it should follow and depend on faith.⁴³⁴

Augustine's concept of fear suggests that Christians should be mindful in performing good deeds. They should fear and guard themselves so that their actions do not cause offence to God or separation from Him, but to perform them with humility and love. This concept of fear is mystical in that it relates with the inner spiritual relationship with God. Thus, it does not only improve the quality of good deeds performed, but it also can contribute to the spiritual progress, strengthening a personal intimate relationship with God.

Apart from those that have been analysed above, there are some other qualities which may seem to be relevant in the context of inner preconditions of good deeds that are addressed by Augustine, such as patience, continence, and perseverance. However, the qualities that are selected above are given more attention by Augustine, and thus are taken as representative of his view in the present context. In addition, the other qualities—patience, continence, and perseverance—are more relevant to the context of preventing evil deeds or sins.

In summary, Augustine is concerned with the psychology or inner dimension of good deeds as exemplified in his exposition of their real meaning and purpose, as well as his approach to the internalisation of their performance. He advises his readers, especially Christians, to avoid a pure ritualistic or legalistic attitude, but to ponder upon the real meaning

⁴³¹ *Morals of the Catholic*, 28.55-58, 71-73.

⁴³² Cushman, "Faith and Reason," 274-275, 278-279.

⁴³³ See *Confessions*, esp. book VII. See also Cushman, "Faith and Reason," 278.

⁴³⁴ See Cushman, "Faith and Reason," 279-284; Hundert, "Augustine and the Sources," 90.

and purpose of their good deeds. There are certainly some inner preconditions that they should observe in ensuring that they can attain the desired purpose of their observance. Attention to these inner preconditions can improve the quality of good deeds, contribute towards the spiritual development, and strengthen a personal relationship with God. This is because the qualities contained in their inner precondition are conducive to such purpose. For instance, they inculcate the state of humility and realisation of the greatness of God, and furnish them with sincere love to each other. Hence, some aspects of Augustine's approach—such as to ponder upon the real meaning and purpose of good deeds, and to internalise their performance—are certainly helpful and applicable to other communities outside his tradition, and thus, he has left the world a certain universal and abiding legacy.

CHAPTER FIVE

FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS IN ISLAM

5.1 FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS IN THE QUR'ĀN

As in Christianity, after faith, the issue of good deeds is central in Islam. It could be argued that the concept of good deeds is clearer in Islam, in that many deeds of devotion are already prescribed and explained by the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions. Both of these primary sources stress the necessity of performing good deeds, and delineate certain principles that should be observed. As in Chapter Three, this chapter first scrutinises the terminology and concepts of faith and good deeds according to the Qur'ānic perspective before examining briefly the view of different Muslim schools of law (*fiqh*), around which so much Islamic thought is based. It scrutinises the characteristics and relative importance of faith and good deeds in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions. A brief review of some alternate interpretations which had caused controversies, as addressed by al-Ghazālī, concludes the discussion, serving to introduce the analyses of al-Ghazālī's stance on the controversies and his detailed view of good deeds in the next chapter.

5.1.1 The Meanings of *īmān* (Faith) and *'Amal* (Deeds)

The Arabic term for faith is *īmān*, derived from the root word *amn*, from which the verbs *amina* (to be secure; to trust; to entrust; to place one's trust [in God]) and the verb *āmana* (to believe) are formed.¹ From this root are derived other related forms, for instance *āmin* (peaceful; safe; become safe; secure), *amān* (security; safety; peace), *mu'min* (believing;

¹ See Hanna E. Kassis, *A Concordance of the Qur'an* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 9 & 149.

faithful; believer), and *īmān* (faith; believe; creed).² The term *īmān* appears many times in the Qur’ān in various forms and in different contexts.³

Literally *īmān* means “faith,” “belief,” “creed,” or “counting/declaring true” (*al-taṣḍīq*). Its antonym is unbelief or infidelity (*kufr*), or denial (*al-takdhīb*).⁴ In this literal context too, *īmān* means “accepting one’s statement as true,” or indicates one’s affirmation of other person’s statements in mind or both in mind and words.⁵ Basically, in Islam *al-īmān*⁶ or simply *īmān* means to have faith or to believe in articles of faith.⁷ Those who believe and have firm faith in Islamic faith are called *Mu’min* (pl. *Mu’minūn*) which means “the believer” or “the faithful.”

The Arabic term which denotes deed is ‘*amala* ([pl. *a’māl*] deed, work, action), derives from the root word ‘*aml* (doing, acting, action, activity, labour, practice, achievement, etc.). From this root is derived other related forms, for instance ‘*amila* (to do, act, operate, be active, work), ‘*amali* (work, working), and ‘*amaliyah* (work, job, action, activity, making, manufacture, fabrication, etc.).⁸ The term ‘*aml* appears in the Qur’ān in various forms in

² On these and other related forms of this word with their English meanings, see Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan, 4th ed. (Urbana, U. S.: Spoken Language Services, 1994), 35-36 or 29 of the 3rd ed. (Ithaca, New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976); ‘Abdul Mannān ‘Omar, *Dictionary of the Holy Qur’ān: Arabic Words-English Meanings (with notes) Classical Arabic Dictionaries Combined*. 2nd ed., (2005; repr., Hockessin, De: NOOR Foundation-International Inc., 2010), 33-34; Abdullah Abbas al-Nadwi, *Vocabulary of the Holy Quran (Arabic-English)*, 1st ed. (Karachi: Darul-Ishaat. 2005), 35-36.

³ For instance, it appears not less than 342 times in perfect active form (*āmana* or *āmanū* [pl.]), 175 times in imperfect active (*yu’minu*), 19 times in imperative (*āmin*), 45 times in verbal noun (*īmān*) and 230 times in active participle (*mu’min*). For the list of these verses see Kassis, *A Concordance*, 149-164. For some of these terms associated with the Divine Name, see pp. 9-10; Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Mu’jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur’ān al-Karīm* (Istanbul: Dār al-Da’wah, 1990), 81-93.

⁴ On the usage of the term *īmān* in Arabic literature, see Arabic classical dictionaries online, such as *Lisān al-‘Arab* (by Ibn Manẓūr), *Maqāyīs al-Lughah* (by Aḥmad ibn Fāris), *al-Ṣiḥḥah fī al-Lughah* (by al-Jawharī), *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (by al-Fayrūz Ābādī), and *al-‘Ubāb al-Zākhir* (by al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī), “Al-Bāḥith al-‘Arabī: Qāmūs ‘Arabī ‘Arabī,” <http://www.baheth.info/all.jsp?term=ایمان>. For *Lisān al-‘Arab*, see also in PDF format pp. 140ff., <http://ia340934.us.archive.org/3/items/lesana55/lesana.pdf>.

⁵ N. K. Singh and A. R. Agwan. *Encyclopedia of the Holy Qur’ān*, vol. 2 (Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2000), 553.

⁶ *Al-īmān* with Arabic prefix “al” (*alif* and *lām*) is the definitive form of *īmān*, which here exclusively refers to Islamic faith. However for convenience, I will use the natural words without the prefix “al” for transliteration, such as *īmān*, Islam, *Iḥsān*, ‘*aqīdah*, *Tawḥīd*, etc.

⁷ They are: belief in Allah (God), His angels, His (original) Books, His Messengers, in the Day of Judgment, and in the Divine Decree about good and evil or also called the Ordinance and Pre-measurement. For the list of the Qur’ānic verses which deal with the basic essentials of *īmān*, see Afzalur Rahman, *Subject Index of Quran*, 4th ed. (Lahore: Islamic Publications (Pvt.) Limited, 1996), 183-185.

⁸ On these and other related forms of this word with their English meanings see, Wehr, *A Dictionary* 3rd ed., 644ff.; al-Nadwi. *Vocabulary*, 270-271. For Arabic meaning see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 3107-3109; ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Mu’jam al-Mufahras*, 483-488.

different contexts.⁹ When referring to a good deed, the term *'amal ṣāliḥ* is normally used, often with the term *īmān* (faith), especially in perfect active form (*āmanū* [pl.]).

“Good deeds” is a general term which has a wide scope, and as stated in Chapter Three, it has no specific and unanimous definition. In an Islamic context, however, good deeds refer to those deeds that are commanded, encouraged, or praised by the *Sharī'ah*. It is a good, beautiful, virtuous, or righteous deed which is done for the sake of Allah, namely, for His content and pleasure, and done according to the *Sharī'ah*. Its scope is wide and comprehensive and therefore covers all aspects of activity, such as those related to religious rites and rituals (*'ibādah*), social activities (*mu'āmalah*), and ethics (*akhlāq*). Good deeds are required to realise the fundamental objectives or the foundational goals of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*),¹⁰ which are intended to preserve justice, balance, and harmony, among other virtues.

Among the Arabic terms which denote good deed/s are *'amal ṣāliḥ* (pl. *a'māl ṣāliḥāt*), *birr*, *khayr* (pl. *khayrāt*), etc.¹¹ The last two terms (*birr*¹² and *khayrāt*) are also used in rather a general sense as referring to all that is good, or to all good things, whereas the first term (*'amal ṣāliḥ*) is more specific in that it refers to meritorious or righteous deeds, performed according to the *Sharī'ah*. In this regard, Mohd Yusuf Noor asserts that the term *khayr* is a general term referring to all that is good which leads to happiness or to accomplish what is needed.¹³ On the other hand, the term *ṣāliḥāt* (sg. *ṣāliḥ*) refers more specifically to righteous deeds that conform to God's will. The primary criteria for such deeds, in addition to conforming to God's will, are that they should be performed sincerely and accordingly, namely, in the right way as prescribed by the *Sharī'ah*.

⁹ It appears not less than 99 times in perfect active form (*'amila*), 165 times in imperfect active (*ya'malu*), 11 times in imperative (*i'mal*), 71 times in verbal noun (*'amal*, pl. *a'māl*) and 13 times in active participle (*'āmil*). For the list of these verses, see Kassis, *A Concordance*, 259-266.

¹⁰ There are five fundamental objectives of Islamic law, namely, to safeguard religion, life, lineage, intellect, and property.

¹¹ The first two terms will be discussed later. As for the general use of the term *khayrāt* (good deeds, good works, good, beautiful, etc.) in the Qur'ān, see 2:148; 3:114; 5:48; 9:88; 21:73, 90; 23:56, 61; 35:32 and 55:70. For a brief discussion of these and other related terms, see Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 203-250.

¹² As will be discussed below, however, the term *birr* is also used in the Qur'ān in a quite specific and comprehensive context.

¹³ Mohd Yusuf Noor, *Baḥṣ fī al-Khayr wa al-Sharr fī al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, (Nilai, Negeri Sembilan: Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 2011), 5.

5.1.2 The Comprehensive and Dynamic Nature of *Īmān* (Faith) and *A‘māl Ṣāliḥāt* (Good Deeds)

The above brief analysis only pertains to the literal meaning of faith (*Īmān*) and good deeds (*a‘māl ṣāliḥāt*). Their technical meanings are more comprehensive and dynamic.¹⁴ As listed above, the term *Īmān* has been used in different contexts, making it “all the more comprehensive.”¹⁵ In the Qur’ān, it is sometimes used to mean the content of faith, sometimes to refer to the act of faith, and sometimes to imply both together. This indicates that, just like a general concept of faith, *Īmān* also embraces two dimensions, namely, the theoretical and practical dimensions. Accordingly *Īmān* means more than a mere “belief,” “counting or declaring true” (*taṣdīq*), or intellectual assent in the sense of simply accepting something as true without knowing it as such. It is, indeed, a belief based on firm conviction, certitude, compliance, and commitment.¹⁶ *Īmān* should be accompanied by God consciousness or piety (*taqwā*), and action (*‘amal*), or rather good deeds. On this, affirming the views of the majority of prominent Muslim scholars, Singh and Agwan state that *Īmān* “sums up the obedience to God and Prophet; love, devotion, and sacrifice in the name of God and in the way of God.”¹⁷ An act of faith consists of three principal elements, namely, the internal conviction, the verbal expression, [and] the performance of the prescribed works.¹⁸ Accordingly, *Īmān* entails a full submission or obedience on the part of Islamic believers after which it demands the performance of good deeds. In the Qur’ān the term *Īmān* first appears in imperfect form (*yu‘minu*) in chapter 2:3. It states:

Those who believe in the Unseen [*yu‘minūn bi al-ghayb*], establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions...

¹⁴ The concept of *Īmān* as well as its contents has been discussed in detail by several prominent Muslim scholars. The views of the different Muslim schools of law of *Īmān* will be examined briefly in the next discussion.

¹⁵ Singh and Agwan. *Encyclopedia of the Holy Qur’ān*, 553.

¹⁶ For a contemporary discussion on the dynamics of faith, see Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman, *Understanding Islam: Contemporary Discourse* (Kuala Lumpur: Saba Islamic Media, 2007), 97ff.

¹⁷ Singh and Agwan. *Encyclopedia of the Holy Qur’ān*, 553. The views of prominent Muslim scholars are discussed below. Among them are al-Ṭabarī, al-Qushayrī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Bayḍawī, al-Shawkānī, as well as the Mālikites, the Shāfi‘ites, the Ḥanbalites, and some others.

¹⁸ Al-Ash‘arī, *Al-Ibānah*, 53; Lewis, Menace, Pellat, and Schacht, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1170; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 267; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 32-33, 44, 71, etc.

In his exegesis on this verse, al-Ṭabarī¹⁹ (838-923 CE) relates that the nature or the term “*yu’minūn*” (those who believe) has comprehensive meaning.²⁰ Among its meanings are “accounting or declaring true” or “trust” (*yuṣaddiqu* or *taṣḍīq*), “fear [of God]” (*yakhshu*) and action (*amal*).²¹ Interestingly, al-Ṭabarī includes fear of God into the meaning of *īmān* which in turn, he refers to ratification of speech by deeds. He states that faith should be accompanied by good deeds, arguing that the term *īmān* is a general term which encompasses the belief or the acknowledgment of the oneness of Allah as the only God (which is exhibited in the concept of *Tawḥīd*), His books, and His messengers, and all these acknowledgments should be ratified by deeds.²² He concludes that the above phrase “*yu’minūn bi al-ghayb*” (those who believe in the Unseen) is attributed to those who have faith in the unseen matters taught by Islam, and ratify it with their speech, heart, and deeds.²³ These three components are an integral part of a true faith. Thus, a true *Mu’min* (believer) must testify his faith by speech, firmly believe in heart, and reflect it with the performance of good deeds. Even though it is uncertain whether al-Ṭabarī considers good deeds as part of faith or not, it is clear that he considers good deeds as essential to one’s sincere faith.

Al-Qushayrī²⁴ (986-1072/1074 CE) also agrees in maintaining that *īmān* embraces theoretical and practical aspects. He argues that the reality of *īmān* is the ratification (*al-taṣḍīq*) and the actualisation or the practical verification (*al-taḥqīq*). The ratification is by the mind, and the actualisation is through efforts in keeping God’s commandments, and the two must be observed together.²⁵

¹⁹ Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. He was one of the earliest and most prominent exegetes and historians of the 10th century.

²⁰ Some of the exegeses referred here are taken from Altafsir.com, known as the most comprehensive and authentic online Qur’ānic resource. However, I also consult and provide the details of the printed form of some of them which I obtained during my research.

²¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Qur’ān*, vol. 1, ed. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (al-Qāhirah: Markaz al-Buḥūth wa al-Dirāsāt al-‘Arabiyyah wa al-Islāmiyyah, 2001), 241; see also Altafsir.com, <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=3&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

²² Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, vol. 1, 241.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Qushayrī. He was a renowned Sufi exegete of the 11th century.

²⁵ Al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā‘if al-Ishārāt bi Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān*. <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=31&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=3&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

Al-Zamakhsharī²⁶ (1074/75 – 1143/44 CE) relates this verse to the previous verse. He states that this phrase (*yu'minūn*) is meant to describe and disclose the state of *al-muttaqīn* (those who fear God, those who guard (against evil), the God-revering, the pious, etc.).²⁷ He asserts that among the meanings of *al-muttaqīn* is the action of performing good deeds and avoiding bad ones.²⁸ He agrees that *īmān* embraces both faith and good deeds, and regards it as the foundation of good deeds (*al-ḥasanāt*).²⁹

Similarly, other prominent exegetes also agree that *īmān* is not simply a verbal confession but covers all the three elements, namely, profession by speech, ratification by heart, and reflection on the performance of good deeds. Al-Shawkānī³⁰ (1759–1834 CE) also agrees with al-Ṭabarī's definition of *īmān* which covers all the three aspects, namely, speech, heart, and action.³¹ He argues that this definition has been accepted by the majority of Muslim scholars.

In order to prove that both faith and good deeds are essential in a Muslim's life, al-Bayḍāwī³² (d. 1286 CE) argues that whoever lacks any of them (faith and good deeds) will be rendered into different categories. He asserts that the one who does not have faith is *munāfiq* (hypocrite), the one who does not confess is *kāfir* (unbeliever), and the one who does not perform good deeds is *fāsiq* (transgressor, miscreant, or grave sinner).³³

All the above opinions affirm that *īmān* is more than just faith or belief, but is comprehensive and dynamic. As *īmān* requires the ratification and action by speech, heart, and physical limbs, it embraces all the three human dimensions, namely, the physical, the spiritual, and intellectual. *īmān* is also dynamic in that it is not a passive concept. Instead, it

²⁶ Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī. He was a prominent exegete and linguistic scholar in the 12th century.

²⁷ Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf 'an Haqā'iq Ghawāmid al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, ed. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd and 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwiḍ, vol. 1 (al-Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-'Ubaykān, 1998), 150-151

²⁸ Ibid., 151-152.

²⁹ Ibid., 153-154.

³⁰ Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh al-Shawkānī. He was another prominent exegete, jurist, and reformer of the 19th century.

³¹ Al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr al-Jāmi' bayna Fannī al-Riwāyah wa al-Dirāyah min 'Ilm al-Tafsīr*, ed. Yusuf al-Ghush, Bāyrūt: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 2007), 26.

³² 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar al-Bayḍāwī. He was a prominent exegete and judge in the 13th century.

³³ Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl*, vol. 1 (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1998), 37. Afzalur Rahman also affirms this view. He lucidly states that Islam does not separate *īmān* and good deeds, instead one of them will become useless without the other. See Afzalur Rahman, *Islam: Ideology and the Way of Life* (London: The Muslim Schools Trust London, 1980), 1.

requires an active engagement especially in performing good deeds. This affirms that *īmān* has “a doctrinal, epistemic, moral, behavioural and sociological value.”³⁴ Thus, the majority of prominent Muslim exegetes maintain that good deeds are an integral part of *īmān*.

As in the case of faith, there are also many Qur’ānic accounts on good deeds, where on many occasions they are mentioned simultaneously with faith. Several relevant verses on this are worthy of being examined, for they provide the general Qur’ānic approach to good deeds, as well as illustrating the close relationship between faith and good deeds. The term ‘*amal ṣāliḥ*’ (good deeds) is first mentioned in the Qur’ān 2:25. It states:

Give glad tidings to those who believe and do good, righteous deeds
(‘*amilū al-ṣāliḥāt*’): for them are Gardens through which rivers flow.

It is interesting to note that in this verse—located in the early part of the Qur’an—the term “good deeds” (i.e., those who do good deeds) is directly linked to the term “faith” (i.e., those who believe or have faith), making it uniquely an important Qur’ānic feature.³⁵ There are no other terms which are used and connected with “faith” as frequently as “good deeds.” Being the fundamental requirement and the first stage in a believer’s life, faith is mentioned first. The placing of good deeds right after faith is significant. This is a common feature of the Qur’an, indicating the great importance attached to good deeds and its close relationship to faith. In his compilation of Qur’ānic commentary, Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faghih Imani affirms this, asserting that faith is regarded as the root of a tree and good deeds are its fruit.³⁶ Some Qur’ānic exegetes—such as al-Bayḍāwī and al-Alūsī³⁷ (1803-1854 CE)—also maintain that this common approach of the Qur’an signifies that faith is the foundation of good deeds, and therefore, good deeds must be based on faith.³⁸ For this reason, al-Qurṭubī³⁹

³⁴ Singh and Agwan. *Encyclopedia of the Holy Qur’an*, 553.

³⁵ For instance, see al-Qur’an 2:25, 82-85; 8:2; 18:30-31, 107-108; 19:60-61, 96; 20:75-76, 82, 112; 21:94; 22:14, 23, 50, 56; 24:55; 25:70-71; 27:2-5; 28:67, 80; 29:7-9, 31:3, 8-9; 34:4, 37; 35:7, 10; 41:8, 44; 42:22-23, 26; 45:20, 30-31; 47:2-3, 12; 48:29; 57:7-11, 21; 65:11; 66:8; 84:25; 85:11; 90:17; 95:6; 98:5-8; 103:3, etc.

³⁶ Kamal Faghih Imani et al., *An Enlightening Commentary into the Light of the Holy Qur’an*, part 1, 6th ed., trans. Sayyid ‘Abbās Ṣadr-‘āmelī, ed. Celeste Smith (Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran: Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (a.s.) Library, 2005), 125-126.

³⁷ Maḥmūd ibn ‘Abdullah al-Ḥusaynī al-Alūsī al-Baghdādī. He was a modern exegete.

³⁸ Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl*, vol. 1, 59-60; see also his commentary on chapter 18:30 in vol. 3, 280; al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī fī Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm wa al-Sab‘ al-Mathānī*, vol. 1 (Bayrūt: Idārah al-Ṭabā‘ah al-Muniriyyah, n.d.), 112. See also <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=7&tTafsirNo=52&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=3&tDisplay=yes&Page=3&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

³⁹ Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Qurṭubī or Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abū Bakr al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī. He was a prominent scholar of the sciences of the Qur’an, *ḥadīth*, and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).

(1214-1273 CE) asserts that the good deeds of unbelievers will be of no avail.⁴⁰ Likewise, al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī⁴¹ (1892-1981 CE) insists that faith alone without good deeds will not be rewarded. This signifies that faith and good deeds are complementary and inseparable.⁴² Based on this verse (2:25)—as well as other similar verses—the prominent Qur'ānic exegetes unanimously agree on maintaining the need of good deeds and that there are important roles played by them.

Al-Zamakhsharī, al-Qurtubī, and al-Shawkānī relate the context of this verse (2:25) to the previous verse (2:24). They contend that it is part of the common approach of the Qur'ān to give glad tidings or encouragement and reminder or warning (*al-tarḡīb wa al-tarhīb*). As the previous verse already underscored the bad consequences for unbelievers and their deeds, this verse highlights the benefit and good news to believers and their good deeds.⁴³ All these signify that a believer should adorn himself with them. They demonstrate that Islam views both faith and good deeds as interrelated and inseparable.⁴⁴ Al-Qurtubī and al-Shawkānī go a step further by arguing that Paradise is attained by faith and good deeds.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, al-Qurtubī also acknowledges the other view which asserts that Paradise is attained by faith and that good deeds are still important in determining its levels and the degrees of other rewards.⁴⁶

Analysing the linguistic aspect of some verses of the Qur'ān which mention faith and good deeds together is also helpful in order to understand the nature and relationship between both these concepts. Based on the above verse (2:25)—as well as other verses that contain the same expression—several points deserve to be highlighted. The majority of exegetes maintain that the conjunction *wa* (meaning “and”) which joins faith and good deeds signifies that both are but one. Al-Zamakhsharī for instance, argues that both these terms

⁴⁰ See his commentary on chapter 18:30 at <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=5&tSoraNo=18&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

⁴¹ Seyyed Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī. He was a prominent Twelver Shī'ite scholar.

⁴² See his commentary on chapter 18:30 at <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=4&tTafsirNo=56&tSoraNo=18&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&Page=4&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

⁴³ Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 1, 225-226; al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān wa al-Mubayyin limā Taḍammanah min al-Sunnah wa Āyy al-Furqān*, ed. 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Bayrūt: Al-Resalah Publishers, 2006), 357; al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 38.

⁴⁴ However, al-Rāzī argues that the verse shows that faith and good deeds are not similar.

⁴⁵ Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām*, 359; al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 38.

⁴⁶ Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām*, 359.

(faith and good deeds in the context of the above verse as well as other similar verses) carry the same meaning.⁴⁷

Al-Rāzī⁴⁸ (1149-1209 CE) and a few other exegetes, however, insist that the verse indicates that faith and good deeds are different. Part of their argument is that if it is true that both of them are one and the same thing, then it would be a repetition to mention good deeds again after faith.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the exegetes who maintain that both faith and good deeds in the verse are one disagree with this contention, asserting that the latter is not the repetition of the former but an explanation or description. Thus, the term good deeds, which follows faith, is seen as explaining the criteria of faith in the verse, namely, faith that is accompanied by good deeds. Regardless of this difference of opinion, however, all of them agree in maintaining that the verses indicate that both faith and good deeds are required together. This explains why faith and good deeds are frequently mentioned in tandem.

Another important point is that faith and good deeds are mentioned in their past tense and in plural forms. According to the rules of the Arabic grammar, among the functions of the past form is to indicate the absolute form or to emphasise the issue. It also implies that the acts of having faith and performing good deeds have been accomplished, and do not refer to future wishful thinking which may not be executed. Thus, the reward of the Garden promised in the verse is given to those who have already been confirmed to have believed and to have done good deeds. This also signifies that both faith and good deeds are absolutely required, and that they cannot be separated.

Their plural form implies that the Islamic concept of faith and good deeds is inclusive and pluralistic. This position is supported by some other verses, which mention that God will accept and reward good deeds of other communities too—such as the Christians, the Jews, and the Sabians⁵⁰—as long as they do not oppose the fundamental teachings and belief of Islam.⁵¹ This acknowledgement given by the Qurʾān to the right faith and good deeds of other communities signifies its inclusive approach of Islam. It also demonstrates

⁴⁷ See his exegeses of chapter 18:30 in *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, 584.

⁴⁸ Abū Abdullah Muḥammad ibn Umar ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Taymī al-Bakrī al-Tabaristānī Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. He was a Persian Sunnite theologian, philosopher, and exegete.

⁴⁹ Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī al-Mushtahir bi al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr wa Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 2 (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1981, 139).

⁵⁰ There are some interpretations of who were the Sabians in this context. Primarily, it refers to certain previous Monotheistic groups of Middle Eastern tradition.

⁵¹ E.g., the Qurʾān 2:62 and 5:69.

that the Qur'ānic approach is pluralistic, recognising the existence of other communities and faith.

Another significance of using the past and plural form is that it makes the case more important, stronger, and absolute. In addition to signifying the inclusiveness, the plural form also suggests that they are comprehensive and limitless. This is especially true in the case of the plural form of good deeds, in which it illustrates that they are not to be confined only to one or two prescribed acts of devotion. As already mentioned in the definition of good deeds, they are limitless, in that they embrace all deeds that are meritorious, and are performed according to God's will.

In fact, not only are faith and good deeds mentioned together in their positive form, but they are always addressed in the same arrangement and approach even in their passive form. There are at least three occasions of this passive form found in the Qur'ān (i.e., 103:3; 84:25; 95:6). For instance, the Qur'ān says:

By Time (especially the last part of it, heavy with events). Most certainly, human is in loss. Except those who believe and do good, righteous deeds...⁵²

Although this verse—and some other similar verses—address the issue in passive form, the arrangements are still exactly identical; both faith and good deeds are mentioned together and are in similar order, and both are in the past and plural forms. In this passive form, faith and good deeds are identified as the only exception (i.e., from those who are in loss [103:3], from the grievous penalty [84:25], and from “the lowest of the low” [95:6]). The term *illā*—a preposition employed in these verses which means “except,” “save,” “but,” etc.—is another significant term. This signifies an absolute exception, exclusion, and denial. This term is used even in the primary creed of Islam (i.e., I bear witness that there is no god except (*illā*) Allah). It demonstrates an absolute exclusion or denial of all gods except Allah. In the same manner, the above verses affirm that the condition stated after the exception is the only way of exclusion or exemption (i.e., from being in loss). Interestingly, in all these verses, the Qur'ān makes both faith and good deeds the only exception, which signifies that the one will not work without the other. Thus, it is clear that in addition to faith, good deeds are very

⁵² The Qur'ān 103:1-3.

important, and indeed as already established previously, the majority of prominent exegetes affirm that good deeds are an essential part of faith.

With regard to the meaning of good deeds—particularly based on the above verse 2:25—there are slight variations of opinions proposed by different exegetes. This is due to the fact that some of these exegetes see good deeds in different contexts. For instance, al-Ṭabarī, al-Bayḍāwī, and Ibn ‘Āshūr⁵³ (1879-1972/3 CE) perceive good deeds in their general sense to refer to all deeds that are meritorious, and therefore, they do not specify them in any context.⁵⁴ Al-Bayḍāwī, however, gives a brief explanation of the meaning of good deeds by quoting another’s definition which states that they refer to those deeds that are permitted and declared as good by *Sharī‘ah*.⁵⁵ Ibn ‘Arabī⁵⁶ (1165-1240 CE) recapitulates them as deeds that lead the doers to Paradise⁵⁷. Primarily, the majority of exegetes agree in maintaining that good deeds embrace both the performance of what is good and the avoidance of what is wrong.

Al-Zamakhsharī explains further that good deeds in this verse refer to those deeds that are good and done in accordance with Islam, and that they are performed constantly by Muslims who are under obligation (*mukallaḥ*).⁵⁸ Al-Maḥallī⁵⁹ (1389-1459) and -Suyūṭī⁶⁰ (1445-1505), on the other hand, define good deeds as referring to obligatory and optional or supererogatory deeds.⁶¹ However, al-Shawkānī associates good deeds in the above verse only to the obligatory deeds.⁶²

Apart from the term *‘amal ṣāliḥ*, the Qur’ān also addresses the term *birr*, which is another term to denote good or righteous deeds, for example, in chapter 2, verse 177.

⁵³ Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ‘Āshūr. He was a prominent modern scholar and exegete of Tunisia.

⁵⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, vol. 1, 405-406; al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl*, vol. 1, 59; for Ibn ‘Āshūr, see <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=7&tTafsirNo=54&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=25&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

⁵⁵ Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl*, vol. 1, 59.

⁵⁶ Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Arabī. He was an eminent Sufi and philosopher.

⁵⁷ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 23, <http://ia700409.us.archive.org/3/items/tafsir-ibn-arabi/tafsir-ibn-arabi.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 1, 229. *Mukallaḥ* refers to the accountable person, namely, a person who meets the requirements to carry religious responsibility. For instance, he is a pubescent Muslim, of sane or sound mind, and is free (not a slave), etc.

⁵⁹ Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Maḥallī. He was an Egyptian Shāfi‘ite scholar.

⁶⁰ Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī. He was a famous student of al-Maḥallī.

⁶¹ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Jalāyn*, trans. Feras Hamza, ed. with intro. Ghaza bin Muḥammad bin Talal (Amman, Jordan: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), 5.

⁶² Al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 38.

Although the term *birr* here is used more in the context of righteousness or godliness, yet it also can be applied to the concept of good deeds. In either case, the verse deals with the concepts in a quite specific and comprehensive context. This verse (2:177) illustrates what constitutes a true believer (i.e., godliness or righteousness), and describes some examples and the nature of good deeds. The term *al-birr* denotes several meanings,⁶³ namely, godliness, righteousness, piety, kindness, virtuous conduct, and even every act of obedience to Allah. Contextually, al-Ṭabarī observes that there are different views in interpreting the term *al-birr* in this verse. The first group interprets it as prayer (*al-ṣalāh*), and in this case the verse will indicate that godliness or righteousness is not only limited to prayer but it refers to the performance of other good deeds mentioned in the verse. The other interpretation, which is accepted by the major prominent exegetes, contends that the verse refers to Jews and Christians. According to this interpretation, it follows that righteousness and good deeds are not to be associated with certain groups of people (e.g., Jews and Christians), or with certain specific directions (e.g., the East or the West), as proclaimed by certain Jews and Christians of that time. Instead, they are attained through faith and good deeds as mentioned in the verse.⁶⁴

In addition to the above interpretation, there is another meaning to the term *al-birr*. Al-Zamakhshārī and al-Bayḍāwī argue that it is a general name to indicate good things and all deeds that are pleasing.⁶⁵ Ibn Kathīr⁶⁶ (1301–1373), however, provides further explanation. He states that the term refers to the act of obedience to God, performing all His commandments, facing towards the direction that He commands to face [and not towards a specific direction, such as to the East or to the West], and complying with His *Shari'ah*.⁶⁷ He also quotes other explanations of the term, mainly associating it with general kinds of

⁶³ For the term *birr* in the Qur'ān, see 2:44, 177, 189; 3:92; 5:2; 58:9. On the usage of the term *birr* in Arabic literature, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 252-254. Indeed, there are some other Arabic terms that denote righteous and righteousness. For example are *aḥsana*, *ṣiddīq*, *ṣalaḥa*, *zakā*, and *taqwā*.

⁶⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol. 3, 74-77.

⁶⁵ Al-Zamakhshārī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 1, 362; al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl*, vol. 1, 121.

⁶⁶ Ismā'īl Ibn 'Amar Ibn Kathīr al-Demashqī. He was a prominent exegete, jurisprudence, *ḥadīth*, and historian of the 14th century.

⁶⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Sayyid Muḥammad et al., vol. 2 (Al-Qahirah: Mu'assasah Qurtubah, 2000), 155-156. Bracketed phrases are mine. This is to counter the claims of some Jews and Christians of that time who argue that righteousness is to be associated with facing towards their *Qiblahs* (direction faced in prayer).

good deeds.⁶⁸ Al-Alūsī suggests one more interpretation, maintaining that it refers to all good deeds that can bring the doer nearer to God.⁶⁹

The above views indicate that the term *al-birr* has two dimensions. The first refers to the state of godliness or righteousness, and the second refers to righteous acts or good deeds. In either case, the above verse shows that *al-birr* covers both faith and good deeds where the injunction to believe in Islamic doctrines is followed directly with the command to perform some good deeds. Abdalati has rightly concluded that this verse shows that righteousness (*al-birr*) is not merely a matter of confession of faith or void utterances but it needs to be based on a firm *īmān* (faith) and constant performance of good deeds.⁷⁰ Likewise, Afzalur Rahman also agrees that this verse shows that actions (*a‘mal*: good deeds) are included in *īmān*.⁷¹

All the above verses and their exegeses provide different aspects of good deeds. All the prominent exegetes referred to above unanimously agree that good deeds generally refer to all deeds that are commanded or encouraged by *Sharī‘ah*. Again, all of them agree that good deeds play an important role in relation to faith and righteousness. Some of them even maintain that they also have a significant role in salvation.

5.1.3 Different Schools of Law

As al-Shawkānī indicates, the majority of Muslim scholars agree that profession by speech, ratification by heart, and performance by deeds form the three integral elements of faith (*īmān*). Notwithstanding, there are slightly different views on the actual relationship between faith and good deeds among the Sunnite schools of law, particularly between the Ḥanafites and the other three Sunnite schools (the Mālikites, the Shāfi‘ites, and the Ḥanbalites).⁷² The

⁶⁸ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān al-‘Azīm*, vol. 2, 156.

⁶⁹ Al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, vol. 2, 44.

⁷⁰ Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, 2nd ed. (Doha, Qatar: Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, 1996), 26.

⁷¹ Rahman, *Islam: Ideology and the Way of Life*, 2.

⁷² These are the four major Sunnite schools of law. They are named after their respective founders. Today, their influences and followers can be identified demographically. The Ḥanafite school is predominantly followed in Afghanistan, Albania, Bangladesh, China, Central Asia, India, parts of Iraq, Levant, Pakistan, Malcedonia (in the Balkans), Mauritius, Turkey and parts of Germani and United Kingdom. The Mālikite school is widely adopted in Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Morocco, North and West Africa, parts of Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia and parts of the United Arab Emirates. The Shāfi‘ite school is the dominant school of law in Brunei Darussalam, Chechnya, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Kurdistan, Malaysia, Maldives, Palestine, Singapore, Somalia,

definition of faith by different scholars usually can be found in their creeds or statements. Some of these have been compiled and translated by Western scholars, such as Watt, Wensinck, and Williams.⁷³

To begin with, the Ḥanafites—the earliest Sunnite main school of law—exclude good deeds from the definition of faith, contending that the two are dissimilar, and therefore faith is complete without good deeds. Following this view, they uphold that faith is neither increased nor decreased and therefore the faith of all believers is the same. For instance, Abū Ḥanīfah (699-767 CE)—the founder of the Ḥanafite school—defines faith as “professing [or confessing] with the tongue, believing [counting or declaring true] with the mind and knowing with the heart,”⁷⁴ or simply as “to affirm and be convinced.”⁷⁵ Interestingly, actions or deeds are neither mentioned in this definition nor regarded as a part of the three elements of faith. On the contrary, the fifth clause of his statement makes it clear that “[w]orks (action) are other than [or are distinct from] faith, and faith is other than [or is distinct from] works....”⁷⁶

Other prominent Ḥanafite theologians, such as al-Māturīdī⁷⁷ (853-944 CE), al-Taḥāwī⁷⁸ (843 or 853 to 935 CE), and al-Nasafī⁷⁹ (1068-1142 CE), affirm this definition in their statements except that they combined the two later elements (mind and heart) together. Thus, they maintain that faith is confessing with the tongue and ratifying with the heart.⁸⁰ Indeed, Abū Ḥanīfah himself combined these two elements. This is because mind and heart

Sudan, United Arab Emirates etc. The Ḥanbalite school is mainly widespread in the Arabian Peninsula and Saudi Arabia.

⁷³ W. Montgomery Watt, trans., *Islamic Creeds: A Selection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994); A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development*, 2nd impression (1932; repr., New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965); John Alden Williams, ed. *The Words of Islam: Lā Ilāh illā Allāh, Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

⁷⁴ See his *Waṣīyyah* [the Testament], clause 1, quoted in Mullā Ḥusayn al-Ḥanafī Ibn Iskandar, ed., *Al-Jawharah al-Munīfah fī Sharḥ Waṣīyyah al-Imām al-A‘zam Abī Ḥanīfah* (Hind: Majlis Dā‘irah al-Ma‘ārif al-Nizāmiyyah, Hyderabad, 1321H [1901?]), 3; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 57; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 125.

⁷⁵ Abū al-Muntahā al-Maghnisāwī, *Imām Abū Ḥanīfah’s al-Fiqh al-Akbar Explained*, compiled and trans. with intro. Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf (California, USA: White Thread Press, 2007), 171.

⁷⁶ See Ibn Iskandar, *Al-Jawharah*, 6; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 57; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 125-126.

⁷⁷ Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd Abū Maṣṣūr al-Samarqandī al-Māturīdī al-Ḥanafī. He is the founder of the Māturīdite School, one of the two great Islamic schools of theology.

⁷⁸ Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Al-Taḥāwī.

⁷⁹ Najm al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī.

⁸⁰ See al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Fathalla Kholeif (Beyrouth: Dar el-Machreq Editeurs, 1970), 373ff; Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Al-‘Aqīdah al-Taḥāwī*, ed. with intro. Zuhayr al-Shāwaysh (Bayrūt: al-Maktabah al-Thānīyah, 1993), 62; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 52-53; 82-83.

are used interchangeably in traditional Muslim literature. Nevertheless, all of these Ḥanafites exclude good deeds from being among integral elements of faith.⁸¹

Unlike the Ḥanafites, the other three Sunnite schools of law (the Mālikites, the Shāfi‘ites, and the Ḥanbalites) consider good deeds as one of the essential components of faith and consequently they maintain that faith will increase or decrease according to one’s deeds. For instance, al-Qayrawānī⁸² (c. 928-96 CE)—the Mālikite jurist—states:

Faith is speech with the tongue, sincere devotion in the heart and works with the limbs. It increases with the increase of works, and decreases with their decrease, so that works bring about decrease or increase (of faith). The profession (speaking) of faith is perfected only by works, professions and works only by intention, and profession, works and intention only by conformity with the Sunna.⁸³

Likewise, al-Shāfi‘ī⁸⁴ (767-820 CE)—the founder of the Shāfi‘ite school of law—affirms the Mālikite’s definition of faith. He asserts that “[f]aith is knowing with the heart, confessing with the tongue and performing the chief works.”⁸⁵ In the same manner, al-Ash‘arī—a Shāfi‘ite theologian—also maintains this definition in his *al-Ibānah*. He writes “[w]e believe that faith consists of words and deeds, and is subject to increase and decrease.”⁸⁶ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (780-855 CE)—the founder of the Ḥanbalite school of law—also agrees with this view. He states that faith is “speech and action (or works). It increases and decreases. It decreases where works are few, and increases where they are many.”⁸⁷ This definition is further affirmed in clause 7 and clause 1 of *A Shorter Ḥanbalite Creed* and *A Longer Ḥanbalite Creed* respectively.⁸⁸ Ibn Taymiyyah—an outstanding Ḥanbalite scholar—also upholds this notion of faith. He develops his view of faith throughout his book entitled *Kitāb al-Īmān (Book of Faith)*, affirming that faith is both *qawl* (speech) and *‘amal* (work or deed)

⁸¹ For instance see al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar* (Hind: Majlis Dā’irah al-Ma‘rif al-Nizāmiyyah, Hyderabad, 1321H [1901?], 9-10; Ibn Iskandar, *Al-Jawharah*, 6; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 57, 66; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 125-126.

⁸² Ibn Abī al-Qayrawānī.

⁸³ Quoted in Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 71.

⁸⁴ Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 267.

⁸⁶ Al-Ash‘arī, *Al-Ibānah*, 53; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 44.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 32.

⁸⁸ See Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 32-33. See also Watt, *The Formative Period*, 292.

and that it escalates or decreases according to one's deeds.⁸⁹ He even boldly states that absolute faith requires works.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, these slight differences between the Ḥanafites and the other Sunnite schools of law on the concept of faith do not contradict each other as might appear on initial perusal. Rather, their differences are related to the different socio-political contexts and different approaches employed by the two groups to the concept of faith, that is, their varying focus on different aspects of faith. Socio-politically, Abū Ḥanīfah—as well as the early Ḥanafites—was living in an urban area (Kūfah, Iraq) where Islam was relatively new, and there was a lack of commitment to faith and good deeds among people compared to the rural area. In addition, his time was *coloured* with many controversies, such as the Khārijite–Murji'ite controversy. The former declared anyone guilty of grave sin—or who committed serious bad deeds—to be an unbeliever, while the latter promised salvation to anyone regardless of his sins. It may have been in part to attract people to genuine faith, as well as to counterbalance the Khārijite–Murji'ite controversy that Abū Ḥanīfah developed his intermediate view of faith. This contention, however, does not deny the fact that he established the foundation of, as well as supported his arguments with the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions.

In terms of approach, the Ḥanafites focus more on the theoretical aspect of faith, whereas other Sunnite schools acknowledge the twofold dimensions of faith, namely, its theoretical and practical aspects. Nonetheless, both of these views have been accepted as orthodox positions on the issue. Moreover, they all maintain that good deeds are important and that all deeds are accountable. Even the Ḥanafites themselves—who exclude good deeds from being part of faith—refute the view that bad deeds or sins will not be detrimental to believers.⁹¹ Indeed, they maintain that a believer who commits grave sin will be punished in Hell first before being allowed to enter Paradise.⁹² Thus, any allegation that the Ḥanafites are Murji'ites or even “the Sunnite Murji'ites” is improper.

⁸⁹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Book of faith*, trans. and ed. Salman Hassan al-Ani and Shadia Ahmad Tel (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009), 18ff.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Chap. 11.

⁹¹ For example see clause 14 of *The Fiqh Akbar II* in Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 192; *Fiqh Akbar II* in al-Maghniṣāwī, *Kitāb Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar* (Hind: Majlis Dā'irah al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmiyyah, Hyderabad, 1321H [1901?]), 28; see also his *al-Fiqh al-Akbar Explained*, 147; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 65.

⁹² See clauses 18 to 21 of *the Waṣīyyah*; (Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 59-60; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 129-130), clauses 14, 21 and 23 of *Fiqh Akbar II* (al-Maghniṣāwī, *Kitāb Sharḥ*, 28ff; *al-Fiqh al-Akbar Explained*, 147;

The views discussed above are exclusively from Sunnite positions. Because al-Ghazālī also engaged with the Bāṭinites (the Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ite or the Ta‘līmites), a brief description on the Shī‘ite view, especially the Bāṭinites, on faith and good deeds is useful. This will not only help the reader to understand the minor differences between the Sunnite and the Shī‘ite views on the issue, but it also serves as a background in understanding al-Ghazālī’s reaction to different aspects of the Bāṭinites (e.g., on their concept of *Imām*, and their attitude towards good deeds).

The most outstanding difference lies in their concept of an infallible *Imām* or Imamate doctrine (i.e., the religious, spiritual, and political leadership) as the central figure and the only authentic interpreter of religious doctrines and practices in the Shī‘ite tradition.⁹³ In relation to faith and good deeds, the Shī‘ites argue that both should be in accordance to the interpretation of the *Imām*. Whatever opposes the teachings of the *Imām* is regarded as invalid. The Shī‘ites believe that the *Imām* is the leader of the age, divinely ordained from the Prophet–‘Alī’s⁹⁴ family lineage, otherwise known as the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the family of Prophet Muḥammad).

There are disagreements between different sects of the Shī‘ite tradition on the number of the *Imāms*.⁹⁵ However, they all believe that the *Imāms* are infallible, faithful, and perfect examples to lead their communities.⁹⁶ As stated above, the *Imām* is the central and powerful figure in the Shī‘ite tradition. His teachings and decisions are binding on his communities. Compliance with the *Imām* is among the key factors in determining the validity of a Shī‘ite faith and good deeds. Extreme groups, such as the Bāṭinites, have gone so far as to regard those Muslims outside their community as unbelievers or at least accusing them of not following the right way. They held firm to their *Imāms*’ teachings and they also

Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 65-67; Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, 192-195); clause 25 of al-Ṭahāwī’s statement (Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 53); clause 11 and 18 of al-Nasafī’s statement (Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 81-82).

⁹³ For a discussion on the concept of *imām* and the Imamate, see ‘Allamah Tabataba‘ī, “The Imams and the Imamate,” and Henry Corbin, “The Meaning of the Imam for Shi‘i Spirituality,” in *Shi‘ism: Doctrines, Thought, and Spirituality*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hamid Dabashi, and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, 155-187; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 60.

⁹⁴ ‘Alī was the fourth caliph. He was also the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet.

⁹⁵ For instance, the Twelver Shī‘ite believes that there are twelve *Imāms*, the Sevener asserts that there are seven, and the Zaidist argues that there are five. For more discussion on this and other related issues, see al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt*, 65ff; al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 125ff; Ibn Ishāq al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist*, 436ff; Watt, *The Formative Period*, 271ff.

⁹⁶ See Goldziher, *Islamic Theology*, 183ff. For al-Ghazālī’s account and treatment of the Shī‘ite—particularly the Bāṭinites—view on this and on other issues see his *Fadā‘ih/al-Mustazhirī*.

interpreted the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions in the light of their doctrines. Al-Ghazālī himself criticised and refuted the Bāṭinites of his time. He wrote several books of refutation against this group of which the most important is *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭiniyyah* (The Infamies of the Bāṭinites) or also known as *al-Mustazhiri* (the Mustazhirites).

The Bāṭinites, one of the extreme sects of the Shi'ite tradition whose views al-Ghazālī earnestly refutes, held scrupulously to this Imāmate doctrine to the extent that, they argued, no truth and knowledge can be known except by and through the *Imām*. Therefore, the knowledge of good and bad, and the way to practice the good and avoid the bad should be in accordance with the interpretation of the *Imām*. They also advocated the inner or esoteric meaning of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions, interpreting them in the light of their doctrines. Al-Ghazālī vehemently refutes these views, contending that the Imāmate doctrine was a sheer *taqlid* (naïve belief or blind following the view and authority of others), and their so-called esoteric meaning as an innovation which was full of various contradictions.⁹⁷

The majority of Muslim scholars maintain that *īmān* (faith) entails performing good deeds. This is one of the characteristics of the Islamic creed or of being a true Muslim, namely, surrendering or submitting to God's will. John L. Esposito has rightly observed this Islamic stance. He concludes that, unlike Christianity which places much emphasis on orthodoxy (or correct doctrine of belief), Islam insists on orthopraxy (or correct action), but without neglecting the importance of orthodoxy.⁹⁸ He then concludes that in Islam "[f]aith (*iman*) and right action or practice are intertwined."⁹⁹ This contention further supports that both faith and good deeds are interrelated and united in Islam.

As elucidated above, the majority of the Sunnite schools of law (the Mālikites, Shāfi'ites, and Ḥanbalites), with the exception of the Ḥanafites, agree that good deeds constitute an indispensable element of faith. They further advocate that *īmān* consists of three "acts," namely, of the tongue or speech (such as testimony or confession),¹⁰⁰ of the heart or

⁹⁷ See *al-Mustazhiri*, *Decisive Criterion*, and *Just Balance*. See also the discussion of al-Ghazālī's stance on the Bāṭinites in Chapter 6.

⁹⁸ John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, rev. 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 68.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ See also the Qur'ān, 3: 84; 49: 14.

mind (such as counting true or verification),¹⁰¹ and of the limbs (actions, works, or deeds).¹⁰² Thus *īmān* covers the whole human dimensions (physical, spiritual, and intellectual). Several Prophetic traditions affirm this state, indicating that the level of faith could change.”¹⁰³ Based on this concept, the majority of Sunnite scholars, again with the exception of the Ḥanafites, agree that faith increases or decreases according to deeds. This view makes good deeds become more important, and emphasises that they are the fundamental requirement of faith.

5.1.4 The Positive Stance of the Qur’ān and the Prophetic Traditions on Good Deeds

As I have suggested and discussed in the previous discussion on faith and good deeds in the New Testament,¹⁰⁴ a brief examination of some accounts of the Qur’ān and the Prophetic traditions which illustrate the importance of man’s deeds is also useful in order to appreciate the necessity and significance of good deeds in both lives, here and the Hereafter.

To begin with, the Qur’ān places great emphasis on the necessity of performing good deeds. The Qur’ān (3:104, 110, 114) commands man to enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong. Likewise, the Prophet also says:

He who amongst you sees something abominable should modify it with the help of his hand; and if he has not strength enough to do it, then he should do it with his tongue, and if he has not strength enough to do it, (even) then he should (abhor it) from his heart, and that is the least of faith.¹⁰⁵

The Qur’ān (99:6-8) also affirms that all man’s deeds—regardless of how small they are—are accountable. This concept of accountability of man’s deeds entails judgement, namely, rewards and punishments. This concept is further illustrated in 101:6-11. Although good deeds will be rewarded, the Qur’ān states that faith is the primary foundation of good deeds, without which the good deeds done are rendered useless. For instance, in 47:1, the Qur’ān says:

Those who disbelieve and bar (people) from God’s way – God will render all their deeds vain.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 13: 28; 16: 106.

¹⁰² Ibid., 2: 214; 4: 76; 29:2; 32: 15; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I:XXIII:56; XXI:79.

¹⁰³ See Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fatḥḥ Bārī bi Sharḥ̣ Ṣaḥīḥ̣ al-Bukhārī* (Riyadh: Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyyah, n.d.), 33:44, 298-299.

¹⁰⁴ See the discussion of *Faith and Good Deeds in the Bible* in Chapter 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I;XXI:79.

¹⁰⁶ For the Prophetic traditions, see for instance, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I:XXIII:96-97.

The Qur'ān's positive attitude towards good deeds goes beyond any particular sex, races or place. For instance, the Qur'ān (4:124; 9:71; 16:97; 57:18) enjoins them on both male and female, and that the good deeds of both genders will be rewarded and none will be ignored. Another interesting verse is 2:62 which maintains that the rewards of good deeds are not the privilege of Muslims alone, but, indeed Jews, Christians, and Sabaeans who have correct faith and do good deeds will also be rewarded.¹⁰⁷ The Qur'ānic positive attitude towards good deeds is further affirmed by the Prophetic traditions. The Prophet affirms their accountability. For instance, he says:

[E]ach good deed and evil deed will be recorded as it is unless Allah forgives it.¹⁰⁸

The Prophet always commands man to constantly do good deeds and to avoid evil ones. Different kinds of good deeds are recommended. For instance, he commands Muslims to avoid harming other Muslims,¹⁰⁹ encourages them to feed the poor and greet all people,¹¹⁰ to observe fast sincerely,¹¹¹ to offer prayer,¹¹² to pay *zakāt* (tax),¹¹³ and many others. He exhorts man to be prompt in doing good deeds,¹¹⁴ and asserts that even the intention to do good deeds is also recorded and will be rewarded.¹¹⁵

Indeed, there are numerous passages contained in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions that stress the necessity and importance of good deeds for this life and in the Hereafter.¹¹⁶ There are also various kinds of rewards awaiting those who believe and do good deeds. Among them are that they will be given (different kinds of) Gardens or Paradise;¹¹⁷ that their rewards shall not perish or fail;¹¹⁸ that they will be bestowed love;¹¹⁹ will be granted

¹⁰⁷ This is among the verses which indicate that the Qur'ānic approaches are inclusive and pluralistic, where the Qur'ān recognises the correct belief and good deeds of other people or religions.

¹⁰⁸ For instance, see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:28:39.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:3:10.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:5:12.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2:25:36.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 2:27:38.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 2:31:43.

¹¹⁴ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I:LII:213.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I:LX:233-237. For bad intention, however, it will not be recorded so long as it does not take a firm root. See *Ibid.*, I: LIX:230-231.

¹¹⁶ The Qur'ān 84:7-12; 3:114; 21:90; 23:61, etc. For the Prophetic traditions, see *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, esp. book *Īmān* (faith), *al-Adab* (good manner), etc.

¹¹⁷ The Qur'ān 2:25, 82; 18:31, 107; 19:60-61; 20:76; 22:14,23,56, 31:8; 40:40; 42:22; 47:12; 57:12; 65:11; 85:11; 98:8.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18:30; 41:8; 84:25.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 19:96.

ranks exalted;¹²⁰ will be forgiven again and again;¹²¹ will have no fear of harm nor of any curtailment;¹²² that their endeavours will not be rejected and God shall record it in his favour;¹²³ that they will be granted forgiveness and a sustenance most generous;¹²⁴ that they will be granted in the land, inheritance (of power) and security and peace in life;¹²⁵ that they will be changed into good;¹²⁶ that they will have hopes to be among those who achieve salvation;¹²⁷ that their evil will be blotted out;¹²⁸ that they shall be admitted to the company of the Righteous;¹²⁹ promised with a multiplied reward and the dwelling on high;¹³⁰ that their good will be increased;¹³¹ that God will increase His bounty on them;¹³² that they are regarded as the best creatures;¹³³ and many other rewards.

In addition to urging man to have faith and enjoining him to do good deeds, the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions also stress the other aspect of these injunctions, namely, admonishing those who disbelieve and commanding man to avoid bad or evil deeds. As in the case of good deeds, the Qur'ān also affirms that bad deeds are accountable, and that man will receive his due punishments according to the bad deeds done.

There is no question of the fact that the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions are full of reminders to those who disbelieve or reject God.¹³⁴ As regards bad deeds, for instance, in 40:40, the Qur'ān affirms that those who do bad deeds will be recompensed accordingly. In 65:9-10, the Qur'ān reiterates the accountability of bad deeds and that severe punishment has been prepared to those who commit them. Indeed, as stated above, there remain various verses of the Qur'ān and the traditions on this issue (i.e., on maintaining the accountability of bad deeds; on forbidding bad deeds; on punishment on the doer to bad deeds, etc.). All of

¹²⁰ Ibid., 20:75.

¹²¹ Ibid., 20:82.

¹²² Ibid., 20:112.

¹²³ Ibid., 21:94.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 22:50; 34:4.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 24:55.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 25:70.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 28:67.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 29:7.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 29:9.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 34:37.

¹³¹ Ibid., 42:233.

¹³² Ibid., 42:26.

¹³³ Ibid., 98:7.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 2:6-7, 28; 34:5; 35:7; 47:11; 98:6, etc.

these verses affirm that the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions take the issue very seriously, and are very positive in enjoining good deeds and forbidding bad or evil ones.

5.2 THE CHARACTERISTICS AND THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH AND GOOD DEEDS IN THE QUR'ĀN AND THE PROPHETIC TRADITIONS

5.2.1 In the Qur'ān

This section examines briefly the fundamental characteristics and themes of the Qur'ān, which focuses, among other themes, on belief in one personal God (Allah), expressed in the principle of *Tawhīd* (the oneness, unity or unicity of God, or also known as Absolute Monotheism).¹³⁵ The Qur'ān calls people to believe or to have faith in Allah alone as God, and to Him alone people must give worship. Indeed, this is the central message of the Qur'ān. The name “Allah” appears around 2800 times in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ānic concept of God centres on the principle of *Tawhīd*, which refers to the belief in a strict and absolute monotheistic concept of God. The Islamic concept of monotheism is not identical to the Jewish or Christian concept of monotheism. This is because the Jewish concept of monotheism is an exclusive monotheism, in which Yahweh's love is particularly for the Jewish people. On the other hand, the Christian concept of monotheism—though it is universal—is based on a Trinitarian monotheism, in which the One God is undivided but is manifested in three persons, namely, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Qur'ānic concept of monotheism, on the other hand, is absolute monotheism and inclusive in scope, in which Allah is absolutely one in all aspects and He is for all people.¹³⁶ This primary theme of faith of the Qur'ān can be seen throughout the whole revelation especially in chapters which were revealed in Mecca.

In addition to *Tawhīd*, the Qur'ān also addresses other primary themes of *īmān* (the Islamic faith). They are encapsulated in “the Six Articles of Faith” (*al-Arkān al-Īmān*). Most of the items of the Islamic faith relate to the unseen things, particularly those things related to God and the Hereafter, such as the judgement day, reward and punishment, the scale and the retribution, Heaven and Hell. The Qur'ān frequently calls people to have faith in these principal beliefs, and warns those who refuse and transgress this faith with punishment and

¹³⁵ For further discussion of the major teachings of the Qur'ān, see Esposito 2005, 21-31. For an extensive discussion of the concept of *Tawhīd*, see Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Al Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, 3rd ed. (Herndon, Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995).

¹³⁶ For further discussion of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic concepts of monotheism, see Abdul Razak Abdullahi Hashi, “Islamic Transvaluation of Jewish and Christian Concepts of Monotheism,” (PhD thesis, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 2008).

Hellfire. With regard to the doctrine of *Tawhīd*, the chapter of *al-Ikhlāṣ* (112:1-4) which consists of only four verses, yet is comprehensive in its content—can be taken as the representative.¹³⁷

In addition, as already established in the early part of this chapter, the Qur’ān frequently joins its messages of faith to good deeds. Therefore, in most cases, whenever the Qur’ān addresses things related to faith, it will always adjoin good deeds.¹³⁸ For instance, the Qur’ān states that “[w]ho believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer...”,¹³⁹ and on another occasion it declares “...any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord...”,¹⁴⁰ and many others. All of these verses establish that the principles of Islamic faith (*īmān*) have their firm foundation in the Qur’ān, and that the performance of good deeds is among the characteristics of a true faith.

5.2.2 In the Prophetic Traditions

The fundamental characteristics and themes of faith as found in the Qur’ān are further affirmed by the Prophetic traditions. Being the messenger of God to convey God’s messages, the Prophet did not only confirm the messages of the Qur’ān, but he also practised and explained them in detail. Indeed, the primary characteristics of faith and other themes of Islamic teachings are mentioned on numerous occasions in the Prophetic traditions and can be easily found especially in chapter *īmān* (Faith) in *ḥadīth* compilations. The most straightforward one concerning faith is known as the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel who came to the Prophet in the form of a man asking him about Islam, *īmān*, and *iḥsān*. The Prophet answers:

Al-Islam implies that you testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, and you establish prayer, pay Zakat, observe the fast of Ramadan, and perform pilgrimage to the (House) if you are solvent enough (to bear the expense of) the journey...Iman (faith)...That you affirm your faith in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Apostles, in the Day of Judgment, and you affirm your faith in the Divine Decree about good and evil...al-Ihsan (performance of good

¹³⁷ For some other themes of faith, see for instance the Qur’ān 2:285.

¹³⁸ E.g., it includes the performance of good deeds in its context, or it commands to perform some kind of good deeds.

¹³⁹ The Qur’ān 2:3.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 2:62.

deeds)...That you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, for though you don't see Him, He, verily, sees you.¹⁴¹

The definition, which contains the components of *īmān* (faith) is clearly enumerated in this Prophetic tradition. *īmān* is the belief in, or consists of, six elements, namely, to have faith in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Apostles, the Day of Judgment, and in the Divine Decree about good and evil (or in Ordinance and Pre-measurement). The Prophetic tradition also reveals that the religion of Islam consists of three elements, namely, *islam*, *īmān* and *iḥsān*, which can be simply illustrated as surrender, faith, and spiritual beauty.¹⁴² This Prophetic tradition becomes the basis for the formulation of the three categories of believer, namely, Muslim, *Mu'min*, and *Muhsin*.¹⁴³ In this respect, a Muslim is a person who makes a profession and observes the Islamic teachings outwardly, whereas a *Mu'min* is a person who believes and observes the Islamic teachings both outwardly and inwardly. It is at the stage of *Muhsin*, however, where the perfection of faith—both the outward and inward or the outer and inner, as well as the theoretical and practical dimensions—is realised. At this stage too, a person will unceasingly perform good deeds in the best way possible, as if seeing God directly, reflecting an intimate relationship with God.¹⁴⁴

Both the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions place great emphasis on good deeds.¹⁴⁵ There are various Qur'ānic verses dealing with good deeds in various aspects, and as already stated, there are also many verses which mention faith and good deeds together. In addition, some brief accounts of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions on the necessity and importance of good deeds have also already been addressed in the previous section. The

¹⁴¹ See *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I:I:1; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:34:47.

¹⁴² Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, 60. At a simple level, *iḥsān* can be interpreted as doing what is beautiful. Al-Mawdudi simply interprets *iḥsān* as godliness. For his discussion of these different concepts, see Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *The Islamic Movements: Dynamics of Values Power and Change*, ed. Khurram Murad (Leicester, U.K.: Islamic Foundation, 1984), 111ff.

¹⁴³ For a detailed discussion of these different concepts, see Ibn Taymiyyah, *Book of Faith*. See also Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology: A Semantic Analysis of Īmān and Islām* (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1965; repr., New York: Books For Libraries, 1980), 57-82; Izutsu, *Ethico Religious Concepts*, esp. Chap. X-XI.

¹⁴⁴ For further discussion of the concept of *iḥsān*, see Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1994), Chap. 7 & 8.

¹⁴⁵ See the previous discussion, esp. *The Positive Stance of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions on Good Deeds*. For the list of the Qur'ānic verses or concept of good deeds, see Afzalur Rahman, *Subject Index of Quran*, 154-156.

following discussion will further examine the roles and relationship between faith and good deeds according to the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions.

5.2.3 The Relationship between Faith and Good Deeds in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Traditions

In general terms, the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions are in complete agreement on the importance of both faith and good deeds. Being the messenger, interpreter, and ideal practitioner of revelation, the Prophet is seen as always conforming to the Qur'ān. Likewise, on the issue of roles and the relationship between faith and good deeds, the accounts of the Prophetic traditions are identical to the Qur'ānic views, except that for the most cases the former always give a detailed explanation on the issue addressed. Nevertheless, as I will discuss further below, there seem to be two approaches in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions on the issue. The first approach indicates that there is a definite relationship between faith and good deeds. It also suggests that good deeds play a role in attaining Paradise or happiness, and to be saved from Hell, otherwise it would be also referred to as salvation.¹⁴⁶ The second approach, however, seems to suggest a rather different view from the first position, namely, that good deeds do not play any role in salvation.

There are numerous accounts in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions which affirm that good deeds play an important role in salvation, and that there is a close and reciprocal relationship between faith and good deeds. As already established in the preceding discussion,¹⁴⁷ in addition to emphasising the necessity of faith, both the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions are very positive towards good deeds (e.g., in maintaining their necessity, roles, rewards, etc.).

The preceding discussion also established the existence of a close relationship between faith and good deeds,¹⁴⁸ stating that there is a mutual relationship between them, in which the one will have a direct effect on the other. For instance, the various accounts of the

¹⁴⁶ Although “salvation” is a Christian concept, for the sake of convenience, I will use it here in its general sense to refer to a general concept of ultimate end of any religion. In Islamic perspective, this refers to attaining Paradise and to be saved from Hell, or attaining happiness in the Hereafter.

¹⁴⁷ See the previous discussion entitled *The Positive Stance of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Traditions on Good Deeds*.

¹⁴⁸ See the previous discussion entitled *The Comprehensive and Dynamic Nature of Īmān (Faith) and A'māl Ṣālihāt (Good Deeds)*.

Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions which maintain that faith increases and decreases based on one's deeds indicate that good deeds—as well as evil deeds—leave direct effects on faith.¹⁴⁹

Both the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions maintain that faith without good deeds is at risk and good deeds without faith are baseless. For instance, in addition to addressing the importance of faith, the Qur'ān also states that men were created with the objective of worshipping God,¹⁵⁰ to be His vicegerent,¹⁵¹ and to be tested in order to know who among them are best in deeds.¹⁵² All of these prove that good deeds are vital, without which one's life and faith would be at risk. However, the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions also state that good deeds without faith (i.e., good deeds of disbelievers) will not be rewarded in the Hereafter.¹⁵³

In addition to confirming these assertions of the Qur'ān, the Prophetic traditions also affirm the reciprocal relationship between faith and good deeds. For instance, when the Prophet was asked about what kind of deeds is the best, his first answers “to believe in Allah and his Messenger...”¹⁵⁴ In this context, having faith is identified with the best kind of deeds. On another occasion, he states that “[a]busing a Muslim is *fusūq* (an evil doing) and killing him is *kufr* (disbelief).”¹⁵⁵ This indicates that evil deeds, especially the grave ones, have a direct negative effect on one's faith. In addition, the Prophetic tradition which states that the fornicator, thief, and drunkard lose their faith when committing the respective sins also supports this position.¹⁵⁶

These passages in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions demonstrate that good deeds play a key role in salvation. The existence of a direct relationship between faith and good deeds also cannot be questioned. However, as mentioned at the outset, there is also another approach of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions that seems to minimise the role of good deeds. Specifically, there are two versions of this approach. One appears to state that

¹⁴⁹ E.g., the Qur'ān, 3:173; 9:124; 18:13; 19:76; 33:22; 47:17; 48:4; 74:31; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:12:21; 2:30:41, etc.

¹⁵⁰ The Qur'ān 51:56.

¹⁵¹ E.g., *ibid.*, 2:30.

¹⁵² E.g., *ibid.*, 1:7.

¹⁵³ E.g., *ibid.*, 47:1; *Muslim*, I:LXXXIX:416.

¹⁵⁴ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:15:25.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:33:45.

¹⁵⁶ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I:XXV:104.

Paradise is attained by faith alone, and the other maintains that Paradise is only attained by God’s mercy and grace. Both versions seem to suggest that good deeds do not play any role in salvation. For example, there are Prophetic traditions which state that whoever has faith, though very small, will be taken out from hell,¹⁵⁷ and whoever dies without associating anything with Allah—even if he committed adultery and theft—would enter Paradise.¹⁵⁸ On another occasion, the Prophet says “[h]e who dies knowing (fully well) that there is no god but Allah will enter Paradise.”¹⁵⁹

These and other similar passages appear to suggest that everyone who has faith—though committing grave sins—would enter Paradise, or to imply that salvation is by faith alone. They need to be examined in a wider context. Primarily, the Prophetic traditions in early Islam focus more on faith, but in Medinan period, both faith and good deeds are emphasised. Therefore, the above different Prophetic traditions do not indicate that there is a contradiction, but a development of the concept of faith and good deeds.

It is true that sinners who have faith will eventually enter Paradise, but this does not mean that they will not be punished beforehand. Indeed, the first Prophetic tradition above affirms that they will be taken out from Hell, which proves that sinners will be punished in Hell first before being allowed to enter Paradise. In addition, Abdul Ḥamid Ṣiddīqī—a compiler of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*—explains that the above Prophetic tradition does not refer to faith alone, or a mere confession, but it refers to faith that “covers all the responsibilities, obligations and duties which fall upon the shoulders of a man...”¹⁶⁰ So it is evident that the concept of faith in the Qur’ān and the Prophetic traditions refers to faith that is accompanied by good deeds.

Other passages appear to maintain that no one will attain salvation by good deeds, but only by God’s mercy or grace. This is especially evident in the Prophetic traditions. For instance, the Prophet says:

None amongst you would attain salvation purely because of his deeds. A person said: Allah’s Messenger, even you also? Thereupon he said: Yes. Not even I, but that Allah wraps me in Mercy, but you should act with moderation.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:30:41.

¹⁵⁸ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I:XLI:167-172.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I:XI:39. See also I:XI:45.

¹⁶⁰ See his explanation of the above tradition (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I:XI:39, 19-20).

¹⁶¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, XXXVII:MCLXVIII:6760.

At the outset, this and other similar Prophetic traditions¹⁶² might suggest that good deeds have absolutely no role to play, as argued by the Murji'ites. However, as in the case of the previous accounts discussed above, the above Prophetic tradition also needs to be analysed in its context. The Prophet did not deny the importance of good deeds, but he was addressing those who were extreme in performing devotional acts alone—such as prayer and meditation—to the extent that they ignored their social responsibilities.¹⁶³ The Prophet emphasised that good deeds should be performed moderately and continuously, and not to think that Paradise is attained by good deeds alone.¹⁶⁴

The different views as illustrated here are not contradictory, but indeed complement each other. They need to be understood in their broader context. Since final judgement belongs to God, therefore, salvation ultimately depends on God's grace and mercy. Yet, this does not deny the roles and place of faith and good deeds in salvation. As already established above, the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions state that only believers or those who have faith will attain salvation. Unbelievers will have no chance to attain it, for they already fail to meet this primary requirement of salvation. The majority of Muslim scholars argue that faith which saves is faith that is accompanied by good deeds.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, the majority of them argue that the concept of faith already includes good deeds. Hence, these three factors of salvation (i.e., God's grace or mercy, faith, and good deeds) are interrelated and complementary. This position affirms that good deeds have a very close relationship with faith, and that they have some roles to play.

¹⁶² See also *ibid.*, 6761-6771.

¹⁶³ This tradition refutes the Mu'tazilite view which maintains that God must reward all good deeds.

¹⁶⁴ See *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, XXXVII:MCLXVIII, 6760-6770.

¹⁶⁵ See the previous discussion entitled *The Comprehensive and Dynamic Nature of Īmān (Faith) and A'māl Ṣāliḥāt (Good Deeds)*, and (the views of) *Different Schools of Law*.

5.3 ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS IN EARLY MUSLIM TRADITION

This analysis has established that the concept of faith in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions is dynamic and comprehensive, requiring an active performance of good deeds. The various Qur'ānic verses and the Prophetic traditions on this, however, did not prevent certain groups from proposing alternate interpretations of certain relevant issues which caused some controversies especially in the early centuries of Islam, some of which still resonated in al-Ghazālī's time. Those groups that are relevant to the issue of faith and good deeds are the Khārijites, the Murji'ites, and the Mu'tazilites, each holding different and even contradicting views. According to al-Ghazālī, there were also different interpretations spread in his time as represented in the four groups of the "seekers after truth," namely, the theologians (*mutakallimūn*), the philosophers, the Bāṭinites, and the Sufis or mystics. Some of the above interpretations were regarded as heretical.¹⁶⁶

The Khārijites were among the earliest Islamic sects who addressed the issue related to faith and good deeds differing from the orthodox position.¹⁶⁷ Even though they split into several sects, they still shared many common beliefs. They regarded good deeds as an indispensable part of faith, and that both faith and good deeds were absolutely interrelated and cannot be separated. Since they believed that deeds will directly affect faith, therefore, some of them advocated that not only bad deeds could be detrimental to faith, but it could also obliterate faith altogether. For that reason, some of them—for instance all the Azāriqa, the 'Ajārida, the Akhnasiya, and the Mukramiya—maintained that a grave sinner no longer remained as a believer or a Muslim.¹⁶⁸ In other words, a grave sinner was considered as either an unbeliever or a polytheist.¹⁶⁹ They also advocated rebellion against any leader they

¹⁶⁶ For the list of different sects of Muslims, as well as their histories and teachings, see al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sects*; Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Faṣl fī al-Milal*; al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*. For extensive refutation on certain issues held by some sects considered heretics, particularly the Mu'tazilites doctrines see al-Ash'arī's *al-Ibānah* and *Maqālāt*.

¹⁶⁷ Al-Baghdādī categorises them into twenty sects under seven main divisions, whereas al-Shahrastānī divides them into eight important groups, of which when combined together will be around twenty-five sects. This different categorisation is due to different methods and contexts employed by them. See al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sects* and al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*.

¹⁶⁸ Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Division*, 103, 109, 112.

¹⁶⁹ Al-Baghdādī argues that not all of them held this view. For instance, the Najadāt did not declare a grave sinner as heretic, whereas some others differed on the types of grave sin which could invalidate one's faith. Al-Shahrastānī asserts that the Ibādīya still regarded those who commit grave sins as monotheist. See al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sect*, 75-76; al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 115.

considered as an unbeliever.¹⁷⁰ Some of the Khārijites exercised *takfīr* (condemning as an unbeliever) indiscriminately.¹⁷¹ For instance the Azāriqah¹⁷² declared that those who opposed them as being an unbeliever or even a polytheist. In fact, the children of those who opposed them were also regarded as polytheists, who will be thrown into Hellfire.¹⁷³ As a result, they became fanatics within their own group.

The radical interpretation of the Khārijites of faith and good deeds accelerated the conflict among early Muslims. Accordingly, a new theological school that disagreed with the Khārijite interpretation emerged.¹⁷⁴ They were known as the Murji'ites (those who postpone or suspend judgement).¹⁷⁵ Primarily, the Murji'ites maintained that there was no essential relationship between faith and good deeds. They declined to judge people—no matter what serious sins they had committed—in this life, but to postpone the judgement and to leave it to God alone. Al-Shahrastānī has observed that they either regarded good deeds as totally different from faith, and that therefore they did not really matter, or that good deeds were perceived to be a mere secondary matter that had no relative importance.¹⁷⁶ For instance, the Yūnusīya held this first view and therefore claimed that all believers who had a pure faith would definitely enter Paradise regardless of their bad deeds. They argued that the requirements to enter Paradise were sincerity and love alone. Another group, the Ghassānīya, maintained that faith increased but did not decrease. Whereas the Thaubānīya advocated that all deeds were secondary. This view was supported by the 'Ubaydīya who held that God will certainly forgive all sins except polytheism, and therefore, no sin would be detrimental to the faith of any Muslim.¹⁷⁷ Because of the above interpretations, the majority of the Murji'ites

¹⁷⁰ Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 99.

¹⁷¹ For a discussion of the concept of *takfīr* and *kāfīr*, see Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief*, 17-34; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 119-177.

¹⁷² They are the followers of Nāfi' ibn al-Azraq al-Ḥanafī. His surname was Abū Rāshid. See al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sects*, 83.

¹⁷³ Al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sects*, 83-84.

¹⁷⁴ Al-Shahrastānī divides them into four main divisions, namely, the Khārijite Murji'a, the Qadāriye Murji'a, the Jabrite Murji'a, and the pure Murji'a. However, in his *al-Milal (Muslim Sects and Divisions)*, he only discusses the pure Murji'a. See al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 119.

¹⁷⁵ As Toshihiko Izutsu has analysed, the concept of *irja'*—from which was derived the name of Murji'ite—means “putting ‘work’ behind ‘belief’, that is, regarding ‘work’ *'amal* (pl. *a'māl*) as of secondary significance in relation to *īmān*, which alone is of essential importance.” See Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief*, 83.

¹⁷⁶ Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 121-124.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

considered good deeds as not essential and that bad ones did not bring any negative impact to one's faith and status as a believer.

The conflict over the issue of faith and good deeds was not resolved and continued with the positions of the Khārijites and the Murji'ites. In between these opposite interpretations there was another alternate interpretation which claimed to advocate the intermediate position, which was propagated by the Mu'tazilites.¹⁷⁸ The Mu'tazilites attempted to propose a balance between the Khārijites and the Murji'ites. Departing from their contradicting interpretations, the Mu'tazilites advocated that a grave sinner was neither a true believer nor an unbeliever but was placed in an intermediate position between these two states. However, if the person died unrepentant he would abide in Hell forever.¹⁷⁹ The majority of the Mu'tazilites agreed with the Khārijites in maintaining that a sinner was destined to Hell forever. However, unlike the Khārijites who declared that a sinner was an unbeliever and could be opposed, the Mu'tazilites were still cautious by placing him in the middle state. Some sects of the Mu'tazilites—such as the Jubbā'īya and the Bahshamīya—called this person or state as a *fāsiq* (sinner); neither a believer nor an unbeliever, but if he died unrepentant he would abide and be punished in Hell forever.¹⁸⁰

The Mu'tazilites agreed to regard good deeds as part of faith as maintained by the three major Sunnite schools of law (the Mālikites, the Shāfi'ites, and the Ḥanbalites).¹⁸¹ Nonetheless, they disagreed on some other related issues. For instance, on the origin of faith and deeds, unlike the Sunnites who attribute their real source to God, the Mu'tazilites argued that it was man himself who created guidance or misguidance and that man himself who decided and authored his acts—good or bad. Thus, they asserted that man was the creator of his own guidance (or misguidance), action, and fate.¹⁸² They believed that man has absolute

¹⁷⁸ Al-Baghdādī divides them into twenty-two sects, whereas al-Shahrastānī categorises them into twelve groups. See al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sect* and al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*. The Mu'tazilites called themselves “the people of unity and divine justice” (*ahl al-tawḥīd wa al-'adl*). In addition, they were also called the Qadariya (or the Qadarites) and Adlīya; see al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 41.

¹⁷⁹ See al-Baghdādī, *Moslem Schisms and Sect*, 121; al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 44-45; Sharif, *A History*, 199-200. The doctrine of an intermediate state (*al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*), which held that a grave sinner was neither a believer nor unbeliever, was first advocated by Wāṣil; see al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 45.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 66.

¹⁸¹ Sharif, *A History*, 203.

¹⁸² Al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 42; Sharif, *A History*, 200-201.

capability and free will. In this regard, they were the Qadarites.¹⁸³ In addition, the Mu'tazilites did not readily attribute to God the creation of bad things, evil, and unjust actions. On the other hand, they maintained that God only created and made what is right and good. Because of that, they believed that it was incumbent upon God to execute justice, namely, to reward good deeds and punish evil deeds. All these doctrines have been refuted by some prominent Sunnite scholars, such as al-Ash'arī, al-Baghdādī, al-Shahrastānī, Ibn Hazm, and al-Ghazālī.

As has been alluded to above, in the time of al-Ghazālī, there were four main alternate interpretations propagated by theologians, philosophers, Bāṭīnites, and Sufis or mystics. As I will analyse briefly in the next chapter, al-Ghazālī scrutinised each of them, observing that some of these interpretations are inadequate, inaccurate, irreligious, and even a dangerous threat to religion. Nevertheless, he also recognised certain positive views of some of these groups, and he was convinced that only Sufism can fulfil his quest after the truth.

Thus, as in the case of Augustine, al-Ghazālī was also living in the time of the emergence of conflicting interpretations concerning faith and good deeds. In the early centuries of Islam, these alternate interpretations were propagated by groups perceived as heretics. In al-Ghazālī's time, the problem lay more with legalistic or purely ritualistic interpretation of Islamic beliefs and practices, as well as the purely esoteric interpretation of the Bāṭīnites. Al-Ghazālī was convinced that there was a need to respond to these interpretations that he considered inaccurate or dangerous. His response towards these alternate interpretations, as well as his views of good deeds and other relevant issues, are analysed in the next chapter.

¹⁸³ The Qadarites was a theological movement in early Islam which held that man had total freedom. See al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 41.

CHAPTER SIX: AL- GHAZĀLĪ ON GOOD DEEDS

PART 1:

6.1 THE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ

Like Augustine, al-Ghazālī was one of the most distinguished scholars of his time, whose life was transformed by the experience of spiritual crisis and a desire to respond to what he perceived as erroneous interpretations and practices against Islamic orthodoxy. Having studied in north-eastern Persia under al-Juwaynī (the most famous theologian of his time), his scholarship captured the attention of the Seljuk vizier, Nizām al-Mulk, who appointed him as chief professor in the Nizāmiyyah college of Baghdād. A spiritual crisis, however, led him to renounce his worldly possessions and seclude himself from public life. Al-Ghazālī was living in seclusion for 11 years (1095-1106). His thinking about good deeds can be divided into three main periods, namely, before, during, and after seclusion.¹ Initially he was mainly jurist and theologian, but radically transformed to become a *personal* Sufi during the seclusion period, leading to his subsequently becoming an active *public* Sufi. There was significant evolution towards a spiritual orientation in the second phase, that he later sought to share with others after seclusion.

There were several primary reasons for al-Ghazālī's critical stance and withdrawal from worldly affairs for a spiritual life. The imbalance between mind (reason) and heart (spirituality), and between outward and inward observance of religious life among Muslim society provided the axis of these motivations. In addition, his mystical goal of attaining closeness (*taqarrub*) to God leading to spiritual union with Him also serves as another factor. He passionately advised readers to observe the inner dimension of religious observance in order to achieve a higher spiritual state promising real eternal happiness. He perceived his time as coloured by many potentially arid and even

¹ For a brief analysis of al-Ghazālī's intellectual evolution, see Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 16-21. Scholars divide al-Ghazālī's life into different categories. For instance, MacDonald divides it into two main parts (before conversion and after conversion); al-Hourani divides it into four periods (an early period, a period of retirement, after coming out from retirement, and a final retirement); and Muhammad Hozien divides it into three phases (the phase of learning and education, the career life, and the phase of retirement until death). See MacDonald, "The Life of Al-Ghazālī," Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," and <http://www.ghazali.org/index.html>.

misleading interpretations and practices. He saw the faith of various classes of people as becoming weak, religious observance as deprived of spirituality, with much erroneous philosophy widespread. He believed that the overall condition of his time was corrupt and stagnant, and that these problems had spread to all levels of people, from laymen to the elite, from jurists and theologians to philosophers and mystics. He observed that this serious sickness “has become general, the doctors have fallen ill, and mankind has reached the verge of destruction.”²

Al-Ghazālī considered the most noticeable lack among various groups of people was in the observance of any inner dimension, or spiritual element of good deeds. He realised that there were some groups who claimed to teach the real essence of Islam, such as mystics and certain esoteric movements, in particular as represented by the Bāṭinites. However, he held that these people were not free from what he saw as erroneous beliefs and practices. Some mystics claimed that they were no longer in need of formal worship. In addition, they focused too much on the heart (spirituality) and ignored the importance of the mind (reason). The philosophers, on the other hand, depended much on the mind (reason), ignoring the importance of the heart (spirituality). Esoteric movements, such as the Bāṭinites who claimed to teach the spiritual dimension, had distorted the fundamental teachings of Islam under the veil of spirituality. Al-Ghazālī argued that their teachings were full of distortions and contradictions, ignoring and rejecting the established external meaning and outward observance of good deeds. In addition, he also argued that most theologians and other scholars were not free from *taqlīd* (naïve belief or blind following the view and authority of others), the majority only emphasising the outer dimension of good deeds. Al-Ghazālī believed that all of these problems had weakened faith and made Muslim conditions stagnate,³ and therefore, “a complete overhaul was needed.”⁴

6.1.1 The First Phase: Before Seclusion

During his early career (until 1095), al-Ghazālī mastered several subjects, such as *‘ilm al-kalām* (theology), *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* (jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence), and philosophy. He was also asked by the Abbasid ruler of Baghdad to write against Ismā‘īlism or Bāṭinism, a Shī‘ite sect. Although he wrote several books on *fiqh* which

² *Munqidh*, 120-121; *Deliverance*, 80.

³ *Munqidh*, 117-131, 69-99; *Deliverance*, 76-92, 26-56. See also *al-Mustazhirī*.

⁴ Abdul Qayyum, introduction to *Letters Gh.*, 15.

address different kinds of good deeds,⁵ there is not much difference between his approach and that of jurists, both of the past and of his own time, in that they focus on the details of the outer dimension of the subjects. The difference is that his treatments of the subjects are much more extensive and profound, as evident from his works *al-Wasīfī al-Madhhab* (The Medium [digest] in the [Jurisprudential] School) and *al-Wajīz fī Fiqh al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī* (The Condensed in Imām al-Shāfi‘ī Jurisprudence).⁶ In both of these works, especially *al-Wasīfī*, al-Ghazālī explains various issues in great detail concerning different kinds of prescribed devotional acts, mainly related to formal outward observance.

As Hourani observed, although al-Ghazālī already studied and began to have some interest in Sufism at this time, he had not devoted any writing to it.⁷ As he relates in *Munqidh* (his autobiographical account), this was mainly because in addition to his teaching activity he was concerned with searching for necessary truths by scrutinising various sects and teachings, but he had not yet started to practise Sufism.⁸ Within this time he produced several great works on scrutinising and refuting the Bāṭinites and the philosophers. For instance, on the Batinites, he wrote (in 1092 CE) *Faḍā’ih al-Bāṭiniyyah wa Faḍā’il al-Mustazhiriyyah* (The Infamies of the Bāṭinites and the Merits of the Mustazhirites), and in 1094 and 1095 CE he completed two important works on philosophy, namely, *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* (The Aims of the Philosophers) and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers).⁹ In addition, al-Ghazālī also wrote several other important works on theology and philosophy.¹⁰ In a book known as *Mīzan al-‘Amal* (Criterion of Action), written in his last year in Baghdād (1095 CE) before his withdrawal from the worldly life, he did praise Sufism. Although it emphasises that apart from knowledge (‘ilm), action (‘amal) is required for happiness, its discussion is more theoretical and philosophical, and its central focus is more on ethics, or rather philosophical ethics.¹¹

⁵ E.g., devotional acts, such as prayer, almsgiving, etc.

⁶ *Al-Wasīfī al-Madhhab*, ed. Aḥmad Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, 7 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1997); *al-Wajīz fī Fiqh al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī*, ed. ‘Alī Mu‘awwid and ‘Ādil ‘Abd al-Mawjūd, 2 vols. (Bayrūt: Dar al-Arqam, 1997).

⁷ Hourani, “A Revised Chronology,” 291.

⁸ *Munqidh*, 60-64, 69-109; *Deliverance*, 17-20, 26-66.

⁹ See *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, ed. Maḥmūd Bījū (Damascus, Matba‘ah al-Dabbāh, 2000); and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (see *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*). The former is to explain their fundamental views, and the latter is to refute their errors.

¹⁰ For the complete chronology of al-Ghazālī’s writings, see Hourani, “A Revised Chronology.”

¹¹ For an analysis of al-Ghazālī’s theory of ethics, see Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*; Sherif, *Ghazali’s Theory of Virtue*; Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy*; and Mubārak, *Al-Akhlāq ‘ind al-Ghazālī*. For an extensive analysis of philosophical theology in al-Ghazālī’s thought, see Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*.”

In order to find the truth, al-Ghazālī classified all the sects and movements in his time into four main categories, namely, the theologians (*mutakallimūn*), the Bāṭinites (*the Bāṭiniyyah*), the philosophers, and the Sufis (mystics), all groups that he called the “seekers after truth.”¹² He strongly believed that the truth could not lie outside these groups.¹³ Part of the focus of his investigation was the performance of good deeds and the observance of religious Law. He discovered that there were gaps, imbalances, and a lack of spiritual elements among various classes of these seekers in particular, and within the society in general. He observed that there was an imbalance between mind (reason) and heart (spirituality), or between outer and inner aspects of religious observance among the philosophers, mystics, theologians, and the public.

Al-Ghazālī became convinced that the socio-religious conditions of his time needed to be reformed. But he also realised that he himself was lacking in spirituality and did not yet know the best way to implement such a reformation. Indeed, he himself was still searching for the necessary truths that could answer his questions and confusions. Thus he realised that unless he reformed himself he could not effectively reform the Muslim world.¹⁴

Finding himself destitute of necessary truths or the infallible knowledge that he had been searching for, he fell into almost total scepticism for nearly two months until being cured by God’s mercy.¹⁵ Within this short but critical period, he doubted all things including the infallibility of self-perception, a method subsequently used by Descartes.¹⁶ Later, after scrutinising the various “seekers after truth,” and beginning to realise that

¹² *Munqidh*, 69; *Deliverance*, 26. Since this categorisation of the “seekers after truth” into four main categories is reported by al-Ghazālī in his *Munqidh* which is written after seclusion phase, one may argue that it belongs to his discovery during or after seclusion. However, I argue that he already categorised the various “seekers after truth” into four main divisions before seclusion. For instance [in *Munqidh*, 69; *Deliverance*, 26] he states “when God by His grace and abundant generosity cured me of this disease [e.g., referring to his disease of scepticism and the confusion regarding problem of certainty], I came to regard the various seekers [after truth] as comprising four groups...” In the following paragraphs he states “I now hastened to follow out these four ways and investigate what these groups has achieved, commencing with the science of theology...” As recorded in the *Munqidh*, it took several months after the completion of this investigation that al-Ghazali eventually set out for the seclusion. In other words, it is because of this investigation that he finally decided to follow the Sufi path, leading to his seclusion period.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Munqidh*, 120-123; *Deliverance*, 79-83. See also Abdul Qayyum, preface to *Letters Gh.*, vii-viii.

¹⁵ *Munqidh*, 65-68; *Deliverance*, 21-25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Watt, introduction to *Faith and Practice*, 10. For a detailed discussion of doubt and certainty in al-Ghazālī, see Sobhi Rayan, “Al-Ghazālī’s Method of Doubt,” *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 38, no. 2 (2004), 162-173; Tamara Albertini, “Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in al-Ghazālī (1058-1111) and Descartes (1596-1650),” *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 1 (2005), 1-14; Syed Rizwan Zamir, “Descartes and al-Ghazālī: Doubt, Certitude and Light,” *Islamic Studies* 49, no. 2 (2010), 219-251; Omar Edward Moad, “Comparing Phases of Scepticism in al-Ghazālī and Descartes: some First Meditations on Deliverance from Error,” *Philosophy East and West* 59, no. 1 (2009), 88-101.

Sufism could answer his quest and help him attain his goal, he fell into a serious inner crisis between “the attractions of worldly desires and the impulses towards eternal life” for nearly six months. This inner crisis affected his physical health seriously.¹⁷ At this stage, his goal was totally spiritual and other-worldly. After earnestly seeking refuge with God and praying to Him, al-Ghazālī re-gained confidence in necessary truths and managed to overcome his passion, resolving to turn himself away from the world.¹⁸ Al-Ghazālī considered God’s help as His light cast into his breast. He came to believe that things divine cannot be understood merely from rationalism and empiricism. He considered God’s mercy or the light of God as “the key to the greater part of knowledge,” and he regarded this as the first principle.¹⁹ Finally, in November 1095 CE (Dhū al-Qa‘adah, 488 AH), he set out for a new phase in his life, namely, one of seclusion and devotion,²⁰ finding happiness through the genuine Sufism.²¹ He writes:

I learnt with certainty that it is above all the Sufis (or the mystics) who walk on the road of God; their life is the best life, their method the soundest method, their character the purest character.²²

Al-Ghazālī experienced a radical spiritual and intellectual transformation, which led him to discover Sufism, but without neglecting theology, jurisprudence, and philosophy. As in the case of God’s grace to Augustine, God’s mercy or the light of God became the first criterion, pervading his personal journey and writings. His aim was mystical, namely to attain the *ma‘rifah* (gnosis or the true knowledge) of God,²³ closeness to God, or even the spiritual union with God through direct personal experience and quest. In order to find the best way to achieve this noble aim, al-Ghazālī investigated critically various methods of the different seekers after truth.

Before his seclusion, al-Ghazālī’s view of good deeds was not so different from previous and contemporary scholars, namely, emphasising their outer dimension. He was then mainly a jurist, theologian, and even *philosopher* who did not really focus on

¹⁷ *Munqidh*, 102-104; *Deliverance*, 58-61.

¹⁸ Al-Ghazālī says “I sought refuge with God most high as one who is driven to Him...He answered me...He made it easy for my heart to turn away from position and wealth, from children and friends.” See *Munqidh*, 104; *Deliverance*, 60-61.

¹⁹ *Munqidh*, 67-68; *Deliverance*, 24-25.

²⁰ *Munqidh*, 102-104; *Deliverance*, 58-61.

²¹ As I will examine in the following discussion of his stance on Sufism, he is able to analyse and differentiate between what he believes to be genuine Sufism, as distinct from pseudo-Sufism. Although he highly respects Sufism, he does not hesitate to critique some of their extreme points.

²² *Munqidh*, 106; *Deliverance*, 63.

²³ Also known as knowledge gained through direct personal experience. Thus it is a direct knowledge that one attains directly from God.

analysing the spiritual or inner dimension of good deeds. Although at the end of this phase he was already praising Sufism, it was only on the theoretical level, as he had not yet practically engaged himself in a Sufi path. Likewise, although he already recognised that the Muslim condition needed to be reformed, he was still not ready, for he realised that he was *part* of the situation and needed such a reformation. For these reasons, he eventually withdrew from his worldly life and situation, setting out for retirement and seclusion, where he lived the life of a Sufi, searching for the spiritual life and contemplating on the spiritual dimension of religious observance.

6.1.2 The Second Phase: During Seclusion

This phase marks the most important turning point of al-Ghazālī's life. It extended for almost eleven lunar years, starting from the year of his retirement or withdrawal from his luxurious life and position in Baghdād in 1095 CE, to his return to resume teaching at Nīshāpūr, in north-eastern Persia, in 1106 CE. His spiritual journey began when he entered and remained in Damascus for two years. He devoted all of his time to reforming himself through religious and ascetic exercises, purification of his soul, improving and beautifying his character, and performing constant recollection (*dhikr*) of God.²⁴ Although during this phase he focused wholly on the reformation of his soul and character in seclusion, and was not socially active, it was immensely productive in terms of writing. Among other texts, he produced the *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, widely celebrated as among the greatest works of Muslim spirituality.²⁵ He also travelled to several places, practising meditation, extensive recollection of God (*dhikr*) and contemplation, and intensive purification of his soul and character, among other activities.

As recorded in his autobiography, al-Ghazālī claims that during this seclusion phase “things innumerable and unfathomable” were revealed to him,²⁶ and he attained various truths.²⁷ It was within this phase that he attained *ma'rifah* as well as the real and deep understanding of various things. His spiritual enlightenment included a deeper understanding of the relationship between God and men, the inner or spiritual state of self and religious matters, as well as the mysteries behind them.

²⁴ *Munqidh*, 105; *Deliverance*, 61-62.

²⁵ <http://www.ghazali.org/site/ihya.htm>.

²⁶ *Munqidh*, 106; *Deliverance*, 63.

²⁷ *Munqidh*, 115; *Deliverance*, 74.

Unlike Augustine, whose Christian theology is based on the centrality of the notion that only through Christ can man return to God, al-Ghazālī's theology is fundamentally *Tawḥīdic*, in being based on the notion of *Tawḥīd*, the principle of the absolute Oneness, primacy, and Unity of God. Thus, although the theology of both scholars are theocentric, they differ in their particular foundations in that Augustine's theology is also Christocentric, whereas al-Ghazālī's is *Tawḥīdic*.

In the *Iḥyā'*, al-Ghazālī reminds readers that the term "*Tawḥīd*" has now been misunderstood and reduced to become equivalent to scholastic theology, which only concerns with argumentation, the arts of asking questions, and raising doubt. He argues that in reality *Tawḥīd* has several states, and at the highest state it refers to the belief that God is alone in all actions (*munfarid bi al-af'āl kullihā*), and therefore, "all things come from God, a belief which ruled out all intermediary causes (*al-asbāb wa al-wasā'il*)."²⁸ He holds that God is the real agent of men's actions, the determining factor of good deeds, and the source of all goodness and indeed of all creatures and actions. Nothing is outside His knowledge and will, and He has full control over all things. A person who reaches this state will only see God in all creations and actions, and will devote all his life and deeds absolutely to the One and Absolute God,²⁸ leading towards spiritual union with Him.

Firmly believing in Islamic teachings, he does not acknowledge the doctrine of the Original Sin or the need for the saving action of Christ, but he does admit that no man is free from sin (except prophets), and is therefore in need of God's grace. Nevertheless, unlike Augustine, he holds a more optimistic view of human nature, whereby men are capable, and indeed, are encouraged to purify themselves and work for their own salvation.²⁹ In fact, the constant process of purification and beautification of the soul, which indicates his optimistic view of human nature, is among his primary objectives.

Al-Ghazālī presents creation as consisting of two main dimensions, namely, the physical and the spiritual, the outer and inner, or the visible and invisible.³⁰ He sees man as consisting of the physical body (*zāhir*) and heart or soul, which is inner (*bāḥin*) and spiritual. The former belongs to '*ālam mulk* or '*ālam al-shahādah* (the visible, physical,

²⁸ *Iḥyā' INF*, 77-79; *Iḥyā'*, I.1, 33-34; *Iḥyā'* 2, 4-5; *Revival*, I.2, 110-115; IV.1, 11-12; *Alchemy*, 146; *al-Arba'īn*, I.1, 22; I.5, 30; I.8, 33-34; *Jalan Pintas*, I.1, 3-4; I.5, 14; I.8, 15-16. For al-Ghazālī's discussion of God's actions, see *al-Iqtiṣād*, 126-119-136; *Iḥyā'*, I.1, 110-114.

²⁹ See the next discussion entitled *Al-Ghazālī on the Dynamic Nature of Faith and the Significance of Good Deeds*.

³⁰ For al-Ghazālī's mystical analysis of this concept, see *The Niche*, 68-84.

material or phenomenal world), while the latter belongs to ‘*‘alam al-malakūt*’ (the spiritual world or the realm of the divine world).³¹ By heart he means “the real nature of his [man’s] spirit which is the seat of his knowledge of God, and not the flesh and blood which he shares with the corpse and the brute beast.”³² It is a “subtle tenuous substance of an ethereal spiritual sort (*latīfah rabbāniyyah rūḥāniyyah*)” which is regarded as the real essence of man.³³ Al-Ghazālī uses different terms to refer to the inner state of man, such as *qalb* (heart), *rūḥ* (soul), *nafs* (self or spirit), and sometimes ‘*aql*’ (mind or intellect).³⁴ Each of these terms is given an inner meaning, referring to the soul. The heart or soul is regarded as the core and secret essence of man, man’s inner dimension, the spiritual substance from God,³⁵ the seat or grand castle of *ma‘rifah*,³⁶ the king of the city,³⁷ which is “a divine spiritual entity of great subtlety (*latīfah rabbāniyyah rūḥāniyyah*).”³⁸ In fact, al-Ghazālī formulated and systematised a religious psychology of man that is still celebrated today.

Likewise, al-Ghazālī believes and argues that good deeds also consist of two dimensions, namely, outer and inner. It is the inner dimension of good deeds which is the essence.³⁹ He maintains that every act will produce an effect on the soul and that this effect largely depends on how an act is performed. Therefore, good deeds are only able to bring their desired effects on the soul as well as to achieve their purpose through observing balance between their outer and inner dimensions.⁴⁰ Al-Ghazālī’s emphasis on the observance of the inner dimension of good deeds is also evident in his argument that there are mysteries and wisdoms beyond the religious observances.⁴¹ He maintains that the constant performance of good deeds is required at every stage of life, and by every class of believers.⁴² The detailed view of al-Ghazālī about good deeds will be discussed further in the next discussions.

³¹ *Iḥyā’*, III.1, 3-5; *Revival*, III.1, 7-9; *Munqidh*, 115; *Deliverance*, 74; *Jalan Pintas*, II.5, 44; , II.6, 48-49; *al-Arba‘īn*, II.5, 64; II.6, 6; *Alchemy*, 3-4, 743; *Kīmīyā’*, 125; *Letters Gh.*, 2:24. In addition to the terms ‘*‘alam mulk*’ and ‘*‘alam al-malakūt*’, al-Ghazālī also uses some other terms to refer to these two different worlds, see Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qur’ān*, 38.

³² *Munqidh*, 115; *Deliverance*, 74; *Iḥyā’*, III.1, 3-5; *Revival*, III.I. 7-9.

³³ *Iḥyā’*, III.1, 3-5; *Revival*, III.I. 7-9.

³⁴ Following al-Ghazālī’s definition, I will use the term “heart” and “soul” interchangeably which carry the same meaning.

³⁵ *Iḥyā’*, I.1, 54-55; *Revival*, I.1, 58-59.

³⁶ *Alchemy*, 7-8; *Munqidh*, 115; *Deliverance*, 74.

³⁷ *Iḥyā’*, III.1, 8; *Revival*, I.1, 11

³⁸ *Iḥyā’*, III.1, 3-5; *Revival*, III.1, 7-9; *Alchemy*, 12; Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 44-45;.

³⁹ Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī’s Theory of Devotional Acts,” 50.

⁴⁰ Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 47-48.

⁴¹ E.g., prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage. See *Munqidh*, 116; *Deliverance*, 75.

⁴² Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī’s Theory of Devotional Acts,” 53.

The *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, which he wrote during this phase, encapsulates al-Ghazālī's deep thought and vision for reformation.⁴³ Its discussion of good deeds is different from his previous works in presenting spiritual insights and revealing some of their mysteries. Yet, al-Ghazālī does not neglect the importance of reason. Although he realises the limit of reason, he resorts to it in explaining his arguments on many occasions. Thus, he balances and even unites the roles of the heart (spirituality) and the mind (reason) that were previously separated between the philosophers and mystics. He is keen to share some of his spiritual experience through his writings. He used various methods furnished with rich sources that he obtained from his encyclopaedic mind as well as through gnosis (i.e., direct knowledge gained through personal experience) and spiritual experience.

At this stage, al-Ghazālī became convinced that he had already gained the answers to his quest, the solutions to the socio-religious condition of his time. He realised that he ought not to keep himself in seclusion any longer, but should help society, to share with them his answers and solutions, and thus to reform the stagnant condition of Muslims at large. After receiving what he believed as inspiration from God to tackle the social and religious problems and had consulted several wise men about it, al-Ghazālī became convinced that he was the man determined for such a reformation as envisaged by Prophetic tradition.⁴⁴

Seclusion produced a new al-Ghazālī.⁴⁵ The jurist and theologian had become a practising and enlightened Sufi. Endowed with gnosis, spiritual enlightenment, and the realisation of various truths, he was then able to see the mysteries and the inner dimensions of good deeds. From this moment, al-Ghazālī had a new intention, vision, and mission. He states:

Previously, however, I had been disseminating the knowledge by which worldly success is attained; by word and deed I had called men to it; and that had been my intention. But now I am calling men to the knowledge whereby worldly success is given up and its low position in the scale of real worth is recognized. This is now my intention, my aim, my desire, God knows that this is so. It is my earnest longing that I may make myself and others better."⁴⁶

⁴³ For a brief analysis of the character and architecture of the *Iḥyā'*, see Ormsby, *Ghazali*, esp. Chap. 6, 111-138.

⁴⁴ *Munqidh*, 121-123; *Deliverance*, 80-83. There is a well-known Prophetic tradition that God will send a reformer at the beginning of each century. The event in question took place just before the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century AH. Al-Ghazālī is generally regarded as the reformer (*mujaddid*) of the 5th century AH.

⁴⁵ For more discussion of "the old and new al-Ghazālī," see Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, Chap. 1 & 2.

⁴⁶ *Munqidh*, 123; *Deliverance*, 82.

Spirituality and other-worldly eternal happiness were now his core concerns. At the mystical level, similar to other prominent Sufis, his goal was to attain the closeness of God, leading to the spiritual union with Him. He systematised the spiritual science which complemented conventional and religious sciences, namely, “the Science of the Way of the Afterlife (*‘Ilm Ṭarīq al-Ākhirah*) or “the Science of the Hereafter (*‘Ilm al-Ākhirah*).”⁴⁷ Al-Ghazālī resolved to end his seclusion, heading towards society to reform its conditions.

6.1.3 The Third Phase: After Seclusion

If in the phase of seclusion al-Ghazālī was *personal*—namely, focused on personal reformation, devotion, and inner spiritual self—the phase after seclusion marked the beginning of an active spiritual public life. It began in July, 1106 CE (Dhū al-Qa‘adah, 499 AH) when he appeared from seclusion to resume teaching at Nizāmiyyah College in Nīshāpūr.⁴⁸ However, for some reason al-Ghazālī only taught briefly at Nizāmiyyah College⁴⁹ before returning to Ṭūs where he opened his own *madrasah* (religious school), where he could freely share and institutionalise his noble mission according to his own way, free from any external intervention and political pressure.⁵⁰ Some scholars regard this later event as al-Ghazālī’s final withdrawal or retirement, prior to his death in 1111CE.⁵¹

This new al-Ghazālī actively tried to reform every class of society (the public, elites, theologians, philosophers, mystics, and others) through teachings, writings, and by sharing his personal spiritual experience. He even addressed various ministers and other high administrative officers, sending them tracts and letters which contain his sincere but firm calling for repentance and to observe the spiritual dimension of the religious life.⁵² Among his great contributions is that he was able to combine Sufism with formal religious observance, which he had previously seen as always in conflict.

⁴⁷ For further discussion of this science according to al-Ghazālī, see Gianotti, “Beyond both Law and Theology.” See also Garden, “Coming Down from the Mountaintop,” 582-585.

⁴⁸ This was at the request of the Seljuq minister Fakhr al-Mulk.

⁴⁹ The precise length of al-Ghazālī’s teaching in Nīshāpūr is not certain. Hourani proposes 503 AH (1109/1110) as the end of this period, which indicates that it only took between three to four years.

⁵⁰ Among the uniqueness of al-Ghazālī’s *madrasah* is that its teaching consists of a combination of reason and heart, *fiqh* and *taṣawwuf*.

⁵¹ Hourani classifies this period as a final retirement of al-Ghazālī, the last period of his four periods of al-Ghazālī’s life. See Hourani, “A Revised Chronology,” 290-291.

⁵² See *Letters Gh*.

Al-Ghazālī was keen to institutionalise his spiritual vision and enlightenment in the Muslim world. Perhaps, one reason for his second retirement—namely, his resignation from teaching at Niẓāmiyyah College in Nīshāpūr—was that he could not achieve this mission, for he was compounded within a formal institution and lacked the freedom to implement his visions in real life. He felt that there was lack of spiritual experience which he tasted during seclusion. Perhaps it was for this reason that he returned to Ṭūs and established his own *madrasah*. He sought to synthesise Sufism with traditional Islam, in a way that was understandable and practicable by various classes of people.⁵³ This was, Quasem argues, the culmination of the endeavours of some previous great Sufis, such as al-Muḥāsibī and al-Makkī of the 9-10th century.⁵⁴ Since al-Ghazālī was able to develop, systematise, and complete the various endeavours of other previous scholars, Yasien Mohamed regards him as “the great systemiser.”⁵⁵

With al-Ghazālī’s achievement also, good deeds—as well as Islam at large—was freed from dogmatism and “formalism of scholastic literalism,” as he breathed into them what has been called “the warmth of the living spirit.”⁵⁶ Al-Akiti observes that al-Ghazālī was able to:

balance the pursuit of the middle way with respect to everything he encountered...delicately balancing the various disciplines and traditions...and...intricately weaving together the different dimensions of Islam—the outer as well as the inner, the legalistic as well as the spiritual...⁵⁷

It is evident that with all his efforts and achievements al-Ghazālī offered a great contribution in reviving the spiritual dimension of Islam, furnished and served it to the Muslim world.

An important feature of al-Ghazālī’s approach is that his comprehensive discussions are addressed to various classes of people. When he discusses good deeds, he covers their various aspects, and he even goes to the smallest and subtle aspects of the issues which are seemingly insignificant to other people. He tries to fill in the gaps

⁵³ As already mentioned in Chapter 1, the term “Islam” here is used mostly to refer to the Sunnites. There are some interesting similarities on the life and spiritual quest between al-Ghazālī and his contemporary Christian Saint Bruno of Cologne, such as both abandoned their high positions when they were at the height of their professional careers and fame, finding satisfaction in mysticism. See Dallh, “The quest for the Divine.”

⁵⁴ Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī’s Theory of Devotional Acts,” 48, 51.

⁵⁵ Yasien Mohamed, “The Ethics of Education: Al-Iṣfahānī’s *al-Dharīʿa* as a Source of Inspiration for al-Ghazālī’s *Mīzān al-ʿAmal*,” *The Muslim World* 101, no. 4 (2011), 657.

⁵⁶ Faris, “Al-Ghazzālī’s Rules of Conduct,” 50.

⁵⁷ Al-Akiti, “On Celebrating the 900th Anniversary of al-Ghazālī,” 573-574.

(mainly the inner or spiritual dimension) that he found were missing in his contemporary writings and teachings, going into the highest level of explanations, which are always mystical. However, unlike al-Ḥallāj⁵⁸ (c. 858, 922 CE) and Ibn ‘Arabi⁵⁹ (1164/65-1240 CE), al-Ghazālī does not go beyond the limits set by the *Shari‘ah*. He sets limits to his discussions and tries to avoid becoming entangled in very controversial issues, such as through offering purely esoteric interpretations which can be misunderstood by or mislead people. He is aware that his readers come from different classes of people, therefore, he devotes discussions that can include all of them. Consequently, different classes of people can find something for themselves in *Iḥyā’*. By doing this, they have alternatives to practise the teachings of *Iḥyā’* that are suitable to their religious or spiritual state.

Another unique approach of al-Ghazālī is the way he uses personal experience, furnishes his discussions with rich sources, and offers various role models. He is keen to share what he gained through his spiritual journey in order to make others better.⁶⁰ In order to satisfy the mind and heart and different classes of readers, as well as to offer more additional proofs and to shed more insights and interpretations on the issues he discussed, al-Ghazālī offers various additional sources beyond the Qur’ānic verses and the sound Prophetic traditions (*al-ḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥ*). These include weak Prophetic traditions, some Biblical references, reports from the Companions of the prophet as well as other great scholars, mystics, philosophers and many others.⁶¹ To provide role models, he narrates various stories, reports, and experiences of different classes of Muslims. It can also be argued that he systematised “the code of the role model” in writings. Thus his views and teachings are not mere theoretical or imaginary concepts, but are indeed practical and have been practised previously.

⁵⁸ Abū al-Mughīth al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj. He was a controversial Sufi master who held some very controversial mystical teachings which led to his imprisonment and execution.

⁵⁹ Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Arabī, also known as Muḥyiddīn (the Revivifier of Religion). He was a controversial Muslim scholar and Sufi.

⁶⁰ *Munqidh*, 123; *Deliverance*, 82.

⁶¹ For an analysis of al-Ghazālī’s literary style and his wide resources, see Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, Chap. 5, 67-81. For his indebtedness to the philosophers, see Kukkonen, “Al-Ghazālī on Accidental Identity and the Attributes;” Zaqzud, *Antara Falsafah Islam dan Falsafah Moden Barat*; Al-Akiti, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of *Falsafa*”; Jules Janssens, “Al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut*: Is It Really a Rejection of Ibn Sīnā’s Philosophy?,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2001), 1-17; Jules Janssens, “Al-Ghazālī between Philosophy (*Falsafa*) and Sufism (*Taṣawwuf*): His Complex Attitude in the Marvels of the Heart (‘*Aja’ib al-Qalb*) of the *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*,” *The Muslim World* 101, no. 4 (2011), 614-632.

6.2 AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S STANCE ON DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF GOOD DEEDS

Although al-Ghazālī's writings do not address specific controversies in the same way as those of Augustine, I argue that an analysis of his stance towards different interpretations is essential in understanding his thought on good deeds. Al-Ghazālī offers some critical analyses of various beliefs and interpretations of several groups, sects, or movements that he considered inaccurate or erroneous. Among the four movements addressed briefly previously—namely, the Khārijites, the Murji'ites, the Mu'tazilites, and the Bāṭinites—it is the last one which al-Ghazālī vehemently refuted. This is because he considered the Bāṭinites—the prevalent movement in the Shī'ite Faṭimid Caliphate, which opposed the 'Abbasid Caliphate under which al-Ghazālī lived—as influential and harmful. Their central Imāmate doctrine and extreme or rather misleading esoteric interpretations and practices disturbed al-Ghazālī. Indeed, as I will argue below, al-Ghazālī maintains that these teachings and practices are contradictory to, and even destroy, religion. Unlike Augustine, al-Ghazālī did not write special books exclusively to refute all these movements except on the Bāṭinites.⁶² His arguments with the first three movements are found rather scattered and indirect in several books. He was also critical of the other three groups that were prevalent in his time, namely, the theologians, the philosophers, and some extreme Sufis or mystics. As accounted in *Munqidh*, these three latter groups together with the Bāṭinites constitute the four groups that he mastered and afterwards analysed critically, and even refuted in his quest after truth prior to his spiritual crisis and seclusion.⁶³ These events served as the paradigm shift in his spiritual and intellectual quests, which led him to Sufism as the only way that could answer his questions.

An overview of the theologians, philosophers, and some extreme mystics are also important in understanding al-Ghazālī's intellectual and spiritual development, as well as his thought on the issue of faith and good deeds. His persistent endeavour in refuting the views of all these movements and groups has been widely accepted and established itself as the standard view in the majority of Muslim lands, just as the views of Augustine became influential in Latin Christendom.

⁶² He did write a refutation of the philosophers. But the philosophers are not among the four main movements mentioned above.

⁶³ See *Deliverance*, 26-66.

6.2.1 Al-Ghazālī on the Theologians, the Philosophers, and the Sufis or Mystics

In *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī classifies the various seekers after truth into four main groups, namely, the theologians (*mutakallimūn*), the Bāṭinites, the philosophers, and the Sufis or mystics. He believes that the truth which he has been seeking must be somewhere within these four groups.⁶⁴ Following his quest and plan, al-Ghazālī started to examine the achievements of these different groups “commencing with the science of theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*) and then taking the way of philosophy, the ‘authoritative instruction’ of the Bāṭinīyah, and the way of mysticism, in that order.”⁶⁵

Investigating the science of theology, al-Ghazālī found that it was inadequate for his purpose. It had a different aim, namely, to preserve the Sunnite faith and principles, and therefore, it only attained its own aim but not his.⁶⁶ Hence, al-Ghazālī acknowledges the achievement of the theologians in their own context, namely, they successfully preserved and defended Orthodox Islam against the heretical interpretations and practices.⁶⁷ Moreover, he also acknowledges those who were “truly learned” among them, namely, those who “espoused the nobility that knowledge brings,” and those who “comprehended the true meaning of the word ‘discernment’ (*fiqh*).”⁶⁸ Nevertheless, he believes that the majority of the theologians were still involved in, and “were compelled to admit by naive belief (*taqlīd*), or the consensus of the community, or bare acceptance of the Qur’ān and Traditions.”⁶⁹ He also acknowledges that the theologians attempted to study the real nature of things, as well as the nature and properties of substance and accidents. However, he observes that they did not deal with it thoroughly, for it was not their aim. They were still becoming trapped into observing the outer dimension and the diligent performance of pious actions. Although they were diligent in performing good deeds, they still failed to observe their spiritual dimension, and therefore, their deeds were not able to bring the desired effect to the heart or soul.⁷⁰ Consequently, they were still not able to “arrive at results sufficient to dispel universally the darkness of confusion due to

⁶⁴ He says “[t]he truth cannot lie outside these four classes. These are the people who tread the paths of the quest for truth. If the truth is not with them, no point remains in trying to apprehend the truth.” See *Deliverance*, 27.

⁶⁵ *Deliverance*, 27.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Moosa, *Ghazālī and the Poetics of Imagination*, 10.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁰ For al-Ghazālī’s classification of different groups of Muslims with reference to their attitudes to good deeds, *Letters Gh.*, 26, 110. For a brief examination of al-Ghazālī’s categorisation of those who obsessed with religiosity and acts of piety, see Arafat, “Al-Ghazālī on Moral Misconceptions,” 59-60.

the different views of men,” and certainly, they were unable to cure al-Ghazālī’s malady.⁷¹ This indicates that al-Ghazālī was not satisfied with the theologians and the practice of general society in emphasising only the outer dimension of religious observance. Walid N. Arafat has observed that even al-Ghazālī emphasises the need to perform good deeds diligently, he regards those who are obsessed with religiosity and acts of piety as excessive which could offend the Islamic principles or cause some other problems.⁷²

Dissatisfied with the science of theology, al-Ghazālī moved his venture and quest to consider the contribution of philosophy.⁷³ Although the philosophers are not directly related to al-Ghazālī’s view of good deeds in religious perspective, A brief examination of his stance towards philosophers may help explain why he came to question many of their interpretations relating to good deeds.

Al-Ghazālī’s acute understanding of philosophy is reflected in his work entitled *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah (Aims of the Philosophers)*, which was written as the background to *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah (Incoherence of the Philosophers)*. As mentioned previously, *Tahāfut* dealt the last blow to philosophy, from which it did not recover in the Muslim lands.⁷⁴

As al-Ghazālī relates in *Munqidh*, he is aware of the various schools of philosophers, but he believes that their understanding was impaired through their distance from religion.⁷⁵ He also questions the belief in, and reliance on intellectual self-sufficiency which is the foundation of the philosophers. In his mind, the dependence of most philosophers on reason had reduced the spiritual element in their hearts, thus they failed to balance between mind (reason) and spirituality. In *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī classifies the various sects and systems of philosophy into three main groups, namely, the Materialists (*Dahriyyūn*), the Naturalists (*Ṭabī’iyyūn*), and the Theists (*Ilāhiyyūn*). None of them satisfied him because of their infidelity and the fact that they were devoid of spirituality as mentioned previously.⁷⁶ In *Tahāfut* al-Ghazālī offers a critical analysis and

⁷¹ *Deliverance*, 28.

⁷² For instance, this obsessive attitude develops neurosis and doubt, as well as causing them to ignore the real essence or objective in performing certain good deeds or devotional acts. See Arafat, “Al-Ghazālī on Moral Misconceptions,” 59-60.

⁷³ *Deliverance*, 29.

⁷⁴ See Watt, introduction to faith and practice, 13.

⁷⁵ *Deliverance*, 30.

⁷⁶ He considers the Materialists who deny the existence of the Creator as the *Zanādiqah* or irreligious people. Although the Naturalists are compelled to acknowledge “a wise Creator Who is aware of the aims and purpose of things,” they reject the belief in the Last Day and all things related to it, such as the

refutation of the twenty fundamental doctrines of philosophy, seventeen of which were charged as heretical innovations and the other three as irreligious (*kufur*).⁷⁷ He even charges al-Fārābī⁷⁸ (c. 872-950) and Ibn Sīnā⁷⁹ (c. 980-1037)—the two outstanding Muslim philosophers—with holding some irreligious views.⁸⁰ Although it is often thought that al-Ghazālī disliked and refuted philosophy, some scholars such as Zaquq and al-Akiti have observed that he did not reject philosophy in *toto*, but was able to differentiate between *unIslamic* and *good* philosophy.⁸¹

Having studied, analysed, criticised, and refuted various doctrines of the philosophers, al-Ghazālī realised that the science of philosophy did not fully satisfy his aim, and therefore, he moved to examine the “authoritative instruction” of the Bāṭinites or the Ta‘līmites as he sometimes identified them. He disagreed and persistently refuted their doctrine of the infallible *Imām* and extreme esoteric or mysterious interpretation, and charged them with heresy. I will reserve the analysis of al-Ghazālī’s stance on the Bāṭinites to its proper place below, in relation to the issue of faith and good deeds.

Becoming dissatisfied with the three sciences that he examined, al-Ghazālī turned to the way of Sufism or mysticism, which was his last hope in searching for the truth.⁸² He carefully studied the writings and teachings of the Sufis or mystics, and was sought to distinguish the real Sufism from the extreme and pseudo one. He was critical of certain views of the mystics, especially of those extremists who claimed that since they had reached a special state between themselves and God, therefore, they were no longer bound to observe the religious obligations and other forms of good deeds.⁸³ Al-Ghazālī’s

resurrection, judgement, heaven, hell. Since they believe that life ends with death and do not believe in the future life, therefore, they deny any reward and punishment for obedience and sin respectively. Al-Ghazālī observes that they “give way to a bestial indulgence of their appetites.” Thus, obedience to God, which characterises the fundamental principle of good deeds has no place in the life of the Materialists. Since they deny the Last Day, which is part of the bases of faith, al-Ghazālī regards them as irreligious. Al-Ghazālī argues that the Theists are the more modern philosophers to whom Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle belong. Although the Theists attacked and rejected the two previous groups, al-Ghazālī believes that they still retain their heretical residues. Accordingly, he reckons some of their teachings and views as amounting to unbelief—primarily those which oppose the fundamental principles of the existence of God, the prophethood of His prophets, and the reality of the Last Day. See *Deliverance*, 30-32.

⁷⁷ See especially the first, thirteenth, and last chapters of the *Tahāfut*. For an analysis of al-Ghazālī’s criticism of the philosophy, see Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, esp. Chap. 3, 6 & 7.

⁷⁸ Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī.

⁷⁹ Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Sīnā.

⁸⁰ However, al-Ghazālī admits that there were no other Muslim philosophers who could make great achievements in philosophy, particularly the philosophy of Aristotle, as comparable to Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī. See *Deliverance*, 32.

⁸¹ Zaquq, *Antara Falsafah Islam dan Falsafah Moden Barat*; Al-Akiti, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of *Falsaf*”; Janssens, “Al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut*.”

⁸² Abdul Qayyum, introduction to *Letters Gh.*, 8.

⁸³ *Decisive Criterion*, 115.

critical stance towards some extreme Sufis is affirmed by Arafat.⁸⁴ For al-Ghazālī the Sufi way of life is not complete without outward religious observance. This is affirmed by Quasem who observes that al-Ghazālī considers outward religious observance as the foundation of Sufism. In his view, the Sufi way of life “is not an alternative to formal Islamic observances, rather it complements them.”⁸⁵ Likewise, al-Ghazālī also censures the view which claims that sins do not bring any negative effects to those who have strong faith.⁸⁶ Al-Ghazālī came to realise that genuine Sufism offers the only way that can lead to the truth he had been searching for.⁸⁷ Thus, the Sufism that al-Ghazālī embraced was not identical to extreme or passive ones, but, as John H. Watson asserts “his mysticism was neither vague nor impractical, nor was it alienated from reason.”⁸⁸

As al-Ghazālī relates in *Munqidh*, he maintains that real Sufism consists of “both intellectual belief and practical activity.”⁸⁹ He admits that the actual belief is easier for him than the latter, for he could gain it through the reading of the works of prominent Sufis, such as al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, Abū Yazid al-Bisṭāmī (804-874/877) and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996).⁹⁰ Regarding the practical activity of Sufism, al-Ghazālī asserts:

[T]he latter consists in getting rid of the obstacles in the self and in stripping off its base characteristics and vicious morals, so that the heart may attain to freedom from what is not God and to constant recollection of Him.⁹¹

Thus, al-Ghazālī observes that the way of Sufism requires a lot of practical activities which are exemplified in the purification of the inner self (the heart or soul) from evil character, and adorn it with good character and good deeds. Indeed, having examined Sufism, he realised that Sufism could not be accomplished through mere study, but it required “an immediate experience [spiritual joy or pleasure] (*dhawq*), by ecstasy and by a moral change.”⁹² Accordingly, he became convinced that the Sufis were “men who had real experience, not men of words...”⁹³ This discovery left a remarkable influence and

⁸⁴ Arafat, “Al-Ghazālī on Moral Misconceptions,” 62.

⁸⁵ Muhammad Abul Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī’s Evaluation of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī and His Disapproval of the Mystical Concepts of Union and Fusion,” *Asian Philosophy: An International Journal of the Philosophical Traditions of the East* 3, no. 2 (1993), 160.

⁸⁶ *Alchemy*, 73-74. For an analysis of al-Ghazālī’s conception of sin, see Helmi Afizal, “The Concept of Sin,” 69-74, 77-81.

⁸⁷ *Deliverance*, 63; Abdul Qayyum, introduction to *Letters Gh.*, 9.

⁸⁸ John H. Watson, “The Religious Beliefs of al-Ghazālī,” *The Expository Times* 86, no. 200 (1975): 202.

⁸⁹ *Deliverance*, 56.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 57.

⁹³ *Deliverance*, 58.

abiding impact on him. He started to re-evaluate and became more critical of his life, career, good deeds or devotional acts, and motive in the light of Sufi's view. He realised that all this time he was still trapped in the love of the world and superficial observance of religious teachings, and therefore, was still far from God.⁹⁴ Ultimately, he *embraced* Sufism wholeheartedly, withdrawing from the material world for the spiritual life.⁹⁵

6.2.2 Al-Ghazālī on the Khārijites, the Murji'ites, and the Mu'tazilites

Although al-Ghazālī did not devote a special book to the Khārijites, the Murji'ites, and the Mu'tazilites as he did to the Bāṭinites, he still addresses these various groups briefly and refutes some views that he regards as erroneous through several of his writings. From his writings, it is clear that he disagrees with the Khārijites who claimed that faith and good deeds were absolutely indispensable, and therefore, bad deeds or sin could obliterate one's faith. Al-Ghazālī does not regard faith and good deeds as one entity, but instead considers the latter as "a superaddition (*mazāid*)" which supplements the former.⁹⁶ He illustrates faith as the head of man and good deeds as the limbs which indicates that the former can stand without the latter, for a man can still be alive without a limb.⁹⁷ But he does acknowledge that as a living man without limbs is imperfect, faith without good deeds is also imperfect. Because of this conception, al-Ghazālī invalidates the extreme view which maintains that faith is void if one fails to perform obligatory deeds.⁹⁸

Al-Ghazālī even considers verbal confession as only the interpreter of one's faith, and therefore, as also not an essential element of faith. Thus, al-Ghazālī disagrees with those who assert that inner belief without confession is useless, and therefore, such a person will remain eternally in Hell. He argues that although such a person does not confess verbally, his heart overflows with faith. Therefore, he questions how such a person can remain in Hell forever. This position demonstrates how al-Ghazālī is concerned with the substance of faith, which is inner. For him, the proper place of faith is in the heart. He therefore maintains that faith has already existed in its entirety even before its verbal confession is made.⁹⁹ For that reason he argues that one's faith will not become void because of the failure to confess or to perform obligatory works.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ *Deliverance*, 58-59.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 82-83.

⁹⁶ See *Iḥyā' 2*, IV, 116.

⁹⁷ E.g., a hand or a foot. See *Iḥyā' 2*, IV, 115-116.

⁹⁸ See *ibid.*, 105.

⁹⁹ See *ibid.*, 100, 108.

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, 105.

However, he rebuts the passive and misleading interpretation of the Murji'ites in maintaining that no one who professed faith would ever enter Hell regardless of his sins.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, he agrees with the standard view in maintaining that a person who disbelieves in his mind or heart will be placed with unbelievers in the Hereafter. Yet, he maintains that in this world, such a person will still to be reckoned among the Muslims, for no man has access to his heart except God.¹⁰²

Al-Ghazālī also took a firm stance in refuting the Murji'ites and the Mu'tazilites as demonstrated in his *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* (*The Foundations of the Articles of Faith*). He observes that generally, the fallacies of the Mu'tazilites and the Murji'ites arose in their failure to understand, or rather that they misunderstood, certain generalities of the relevant Qur'ānic verses.¹⁰³ For instance, refuting the Murji'ites, al-Ghazālī asserts that some of the verses employed by them¹⁰⁴—which seem to simply state that whoever believes will enter Paradise—are indeed general verses and they carry some specifications, and some of them carry affirmation and negation.¹⁰⁵ For example, al-Ghazālī argues that the term “faith” (*imān*) or “those who believe” in these verses¹⁰⁶ refers to belief coupled with good deeds.¹⁰⁷ He asserts:

But they have no proof in any of these verses, because when belief is mentioned in them it means belief coupled with good works. We have shown that belief is used to signify Islam, which is in conformity with the mind, word, and deed.”¹⁰⁸

This argument demonstrates al-Ghazālī's understanding of the deeper or real meaning and context of the verses. He does not accept the generalities of the verses as the only argument, for, as he proves in his later discussions, this approach will lead to some contradictions with some other general verses.¹⁰⁹ Thus, al-Ghazālī criticises the erroneous interpretation of Murji'ites which led to a pessimistic attitude towards good deeds and an indifferent stance towards those who commit sins.¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ See *ibid.*, 109.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 111-112, 114.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., the Qur'ān 72:13; 57:19; 92:16-16; 27:89; 18:30, etc.

¹⁰⁵ See *Ihyā' 2*, IV, 112.

¹⁰⁶ E.g., the Qur'ān 72:13; 57:19; 92:16-16; 27:89; 18:30, etc.

¹⁰⁷ See *Ihyā' 2*, IV, 112.

¹⁰⁸ See *ibid.*, 112.

¹⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, 113-114.

¹¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 109.

Al-Ghazālī's disagreement with the Murji'ites is also demonstrated in his refutation of the concept of pure determinism of the Jabarites, which in turn forms the foundation to the Murji'ite theology. He observes that they attributed all good and evil to God in order to avoid any weakness from the Almighty. Thus, they maintained that man did not have free will, for whatever he does—good or bad—all had been determined by God. Al-Ghazālī argues that this view is erroneous for it had attributed injustice to God through its claim that all evils or bad deeds come from God. Indeed, Al-Ghazālī maintains that this stance has deceived many of them in committing sin. This is because, since the doctrine of pure determinism states that all evils come from God, they used this view as an excuse for their evils or bad deeds.¹¹¹

As for the Mu'tazilites, al-Ghazālī criticises their controversial views in much bolder ways. He observes that primarily, the approach of the Mu'tazilites came closer to that of the philosophers in that both of them depended heavily on reason. Nevertheless, unlike the philosophers who were going beyond the apparent meaning of the scripture to the extent of denying some of the Qur'ānic teachings,¹¹² the Mu'tazilites still tried to interpret figuratively some of those verses which seem to them as contradictory to logical proofs.¹¹³

Al-Ghazālī disapproves of the Mu'tazilite doctrine of intermediate state (*al-manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*), which placed a grave sinner in an intermediate position between a believer and an unbeliever. The Mu'tazilites considered such a person simply as a reprobate (*fāsiq*) who will remain in Hellfire forever.¹¹⁴ Like the previous groups, al-Ghazālī maintains that the Mu'tazilites failed to grasp the real meaning of some of the Qur'ānic verses that they employed,¹¹⁵ which are also general and therefore, need to be specified to their contexts.¹¹⁶ It is based on some of those verses that the Mu'tazilites claimed that a Muslim sinner—whom they called *fāsiq*—would be punished in Hell forever. Their principal doctrine was that God is just, and therefore God must reward good believers and must punish sinners.¹¹⁷ Al-Ghazālī perceives this belief as limiting God's power,¹¹⁸ and as forcing God to reward or to punish. He insists that God is

¹¹¹ *Al-Arba'īn*, I.1, 24; *Jalan Pintar*, I.5, 7.

¹¹² E.g., the resurrection of the body, reward and punishment in the Hereafter, etc.

¹¹³ *Decisive Criterion*, 103, 111.

¹¹⁴ See *Ihyā' 2*, IV, 105.

¹¹⁵ E.g., the Qur'ān 20:82; 103:1-3; 19:72-73; 72:23; 4:93, etc.

¹¹⁶ See *Ihyā' 2*, IV, 114-115.

¹¹⁷ The principle that God is only just and cannot do otherwise is among the principle of Hard Natural Law, see Anver M. Emon, *Islamic Natural Law Theories* (Oxford: University Press, 2010), 25-27.

¹¹⁸ E.g., to forgive sinners or to do otherwise.

absolutely free either to punish or to forgive sinners, and therefore, God is not compelled to reward or punish man's deeds, and He is also not under any obligation to do whatever is good or salutary for man. He created the world and all creations as they are because of His voluntaristic grace. All things should be left to God and nothing is compulsory for Him, for God is always free to do anything He wants.¹¹⁹

Al-Ghazālī also disagrees with the Mu'tazilite concept of absolute freedom of the will to the extent that man becomes the creator of his own guidance or misguidance. Their conception of evil which they attributed solely to man in order to guard God from being charged as unjust and as the evil Creator is also rejected by al-Ghazālī. For al-Ghazālī, this conception implicitly attributes weakness to God, and therefore is considered as erroneous.¹²⁰

From the above brief analysis, it is clear that al-Ghazālī took a firm stance and was critical of the fundamental views of the Khārijites, the Murji'ites, and the Mu'tazilites that he considered erroneous. Al-Ghazālī observes that among the main factors that lead to their erroneous beliefs and practices were their inaccurate or misleading interpretations of some Qur'ānic verses. Al-Ghazālī's stance towards good deeds is in the middle state between these groups, a characteristically Sunnite position. He observes that while on the one hand the Murji'ites were misled in attributing their bad deeds and misguidance to God, the Mu'tazilites on the other hand were deceived in claiming that all their good deeds and guidance absolutely came from their own.

6.2.3 Al-Ghazālī and the Bāṭinites or the Ismā'īlī Shī'ites

Al-Ghazālī's engagement with the Bāṭinites or Ismā'īlī Shī'ites was more direct as compared to other groups. He saw their doctrines as opposing traditional teaching. Since al-Ghazālī involved himself directly in the debate with the Bāṭinites, his engagement, reaction, and position towards them will be given a special examination.

While some works of al-Ghazālī on the Bāṭinites are lost, others have survived, namely, *al-Mustaẓhirī* or also known as *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭiniyyah wa Faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhiriyyah* (The Infamies of the Bāṭinites and the Merits of the Mustazhirites),¹²¹ *al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm* (The Just Balance), *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah bayna al-Islām wa al-*

¹¹⁹ *Iḥyā'* 2, III, 81-87; *Revival*, I. 2, 114-115. See also *al-Iqtisād*, 126-129; Emon, *Islamic Natural Law Theories*, 132-133.

¹²⁰ *Al-Arba'īn*, I.5, 25; *Jalan Pintar*, I.5, 8; *al-Iqtisād*, 126-129.

¹²¹ It refers to two caliphs, namely 'Abbasid Mustazhir, the reigning caliph, and the Fatimid Mustanṣir.

Zandaqah (The Decisive Criterion for Distinguishing Islam from Masked Infidelity),¹²² and *Qawāsim al-Bāṭiniyah* (Backbreakers of the Esoterics) which he wrote after *al-Mustaẓhiri*.¹²³ However, the most important of these works—and the most relevant for the present analysis—is *al-Mustaẓhiri* or *Faḍā'ih*, which was written at the request of Caliph al-Mustaẓhir in order to reveal the prevalent and subtle innovations and errors of the Bāṭinites.¹²⁴ As exhibited in his *al-Mustaẓhiri*, al-Ghazālī's stance towards the Bāṭinites is critical. Not only does he point out their many errors, but he also maintains that certain doctrines amount to unbelief, some of which are considered as dangerous threats to religion.

In analysing their designations or appellations, al-Ghazālī argues that there are ten appellations, in which “the Bāṭinites” (*Bāṭiniyyah* or Esoterics) and “the Ta‘līmites” (*Ta‘līmiyyah*) are the most common and appropriate ones.¹²⁵ The Bāṭinites believed that the Qur’ān and the Prophetic traditions have inner or esoteric meanings (*bawāṭin*, pl. of *bāṭin*), and that the literal meanings were meant for the ignorant and foolish people, whereas the inner meanings which were the kernel were only grasped by the intelligent people.¹²⁶ There were two main foundations of the Bāṭinite theology which shape their attitude towards good deeds, namely, their belief in the authoritative instruction or teaching of infallible *Imam* and their extreme and misleading esoteric interpretations of religious beliefs and practices.

Al-Ghazālī's stance towards the Bāṭinites as well as his writings about them is critical and polemical in nature. He opposed two of their main teachings, namely, *ta‘līm* (the authoritative instruction or teaching)—exhibited in the concept of the infallible *Imām* or the Imāmate doctrine—and their extreme esoteric or mysterious beliefs and practices. Although al-Ghazālī himself believes in the existence of inner dimensions of religious beliefs and practices, and welcomes the esoteric interpretation which do not contradict their outer or literal meaning, he observes that the Bāṭinite esoteric conceptions were

¹²² Also translated as *The Criterium of Distinction between Islam and Clandestine Unbelief*.

¹²³ See Hourani, “A Revised Chronology.”

¹²⁴ See *Faḍā'ih* or *al-Mustaẓhiri*. According to Hourani's analysis, the book must have been at least begun before *Tahāfut*, but was completed after it (Jan. 1095); see Hourani, “A Revised Chronology,” 293. This indicates that al-Ghazālī was already engaged in the controversy against the Bāṭinites while he was examining philosophy critically. For a brief analysis of al-Ghazālī's relationship and stance towards the Saljuqs, and the Abbasid Caliphate, see Farouk Mitha, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ismailis: A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam* (London: I.B.Tauris Publisher in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2001), 4-19.

¹²⁵ They are 1. the Bāṭinites, 2. the Qarāmiṭa, 3. the Qarmaṭiyyah, 4. the Khurramites, 5. the Khurramdīnīs, 6. the Ismā‘īlites, 7. the Seveners, 8. the Bābakites, 9. the Muḥammara or Muḥammira, 10. the Ta‘līmites.

¹²⁶ *Al-Mustaẓhiri*, 181.

extreme, misleading, and not only were in contradiction to the fundamental teachings of Islam but indeed destroyed them. In fact, al-Ghazālī describes the Bāṭīnites as hypocrites who appeared to be Muslims only outwardly, but in reality their hearts were filled with errors and misdeeds.¹²⁷

Al-Ghazālī argues that they claimed that those who are unable to delve into the hidden meaning and mysteries, and are content with their literal meaning are still “in the bonds and fetters and tormented by heavy loads and burdens.”¹²⁸ By “fetters” they meant the prescription of the *Sharī‘ah* (the Islamic Law). They claimed that whoever rose to the knowledge of the inner meaning were therefore “relieved from prescription and freed from its encumbrances.”¹²⁹ But what they meant by the inner meaning was something completely different and contradicted the established teachings and practices of the traditional Islam. Some of their ideas even destroyed completely the fundamental teachings of Islam. Thus, al-Ghazālī maintains that their ultimate goal was to destroy religion and its Laws.¹³⁰ This observation indicates that the Bāṭīnites did not really emphasise the observance of the prescribed good deeds and the normal way of living as suggested by the *Sharī‘ah*.

Referring to the Bāṭīnites in his era, al-Ghazālī argues that the term “Ta‘līmites” is the accurate designation because:

[T]heir greatest reliance is on summoning to [authoritative] instruction and invalidating individual reasoning and imposing the following of the infallible Imam and putting him—with regard to the necessity of believing in him and following him—on a par with the Apostle of God...¹³¹

Al-Ghazālī argues that the invalidation of the necessity for individual reasoning (*al-ra’y*) and intellectual exercise, as well as the blind following of the infallible *Imām* and the affirmation that his instruction or teaching as the only way of acquiring knowledge and

¹²⁷ Al-Ghazālī says “[t]hanks be to God Who...He has not made us of the number of the erring Bāṭīnites who make outward confession with their tongues while they harbour in their hearts persistence and wilfulness [in their error]. They bear heavy loads of misdeeds, and manifest regarding religion piety and gravity, and store up [fill their saddle-bags with] burdens of iniquities, because they do not hope for forbearance from God...” see *al-Mustaẓhirī*, 176.

¹²⁸ *Al-Mustaẓhirī*, 182.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 183. D.P. Brewster has observed that although al-Ghazālī uses the term “the Bāṭīnites” and “the Ta‘līmites” interchangeably, the latter is more likely to be a subgroup of the former. Yet, the precise details of their origin cannot be certain. See his introduction to *Just Balance*.

truth, are the bases of their central doctrine.¹³² He observes that their requirement of total and blind obedience to their *Imām* had deprived people of using their reason and intellect. He further characterises these people as having impediments in their intelligence which made them blind toward the truth, and he categorises them into eight classes.¹³³

With regards to the doctrine of the Ta'limites al-Ghazālī summarises:

[I]t is that it is a doctrine, the exterior of which is *rafd* [rejection, i.e. of first three Caliphs], and its interior out-and-out infidelity [unbelief]; and its beginning is the restricting of the ways to attain knowledge [sure cognitions] to the utterance of the Infallible Imam, and the removal [isolating] of minds [intellect] from being [able to] perceive [grasp] the truth because of the doubts which befall them and the disagreements to which reasoners are open, and imposing for the seeking of the truth, the way of instruction and learning, and the judgment that the Infallible Imam is *the seer* [the only one able to see], and that every age must have an Infallible Imam to whom recourse is to be had concerning any ambiguities in religious matters.¹³⁴

Al-Ghazālī argues that this was the beginning of their propaganda and eventually they would produce things contradictory to the *Sharī'ah*, which was their ultimate aim.¹³⁵ This negative attitude towards the Bāṭīnites indicates that—at least in al-Ghazālī's view—they were not only considered as innovators and heretics, but also as infidels and dangerous enemies, who did not only oppose the *Sharī'ah*, but also attempted to abolish it.

Not only does al-Ghazālī describe the historical and contextual aspects of some doctrines that he analyses, but he is also able to point out their subtle defects and errors, as well as their dangerous consequences. For instance, in analysing the Bāṭīnite attitude towards legal injunctions, which are the foundation of good deeds, al-Ghazālī observes that their belief and practices amounted to rejection of religious Law. They deemed lawful things forbidden and vice versa. This was because their obedience was not directly devoted to the *Sharī'ah* Law, but to their *Imām*. They believed that they could attain the true knowledge or the truth—such as the inner meaning of the literal text, or the esoteric of the exoteric—only through their *Imām*. The Law and other injunctions on the other hand were viewed as the fetters which would be lost once they had attained the truth.

¹³² *Al-Mustazhirī*, 182-183. As for the reason of the spread of their propaganda, al-Ghazālī argues that the only people who were deceived by them were “those who deviate from a state of equilibrium and soundness of opinion.” See *ibid.*, 193.

¹³³ For these eight classes of people who have been deceived by the Ta'limite propaganda, see *ibid.*, 193-195.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 185. For al-Ghazālī's analysis of these artifices, see *ibid.*, 195.

Because of this, al-Ghazālī warns readers that the Bāṭinites are dangerous for their doctrines will obliterate religion.¹³⁶

Al-Ghazālī argues that in order to serve their propaganda, the Bāṭinites had misinterpreted various Qur’ānic and Prophetic traditions which were already established in traditional Islam. They explained them away, attached strange inner or esoteric meaning to them, and used the literal injunctions and texts out of their contexts. For instance, they claimed that adultery or fornication was “casting the sperm of inner knowledge into the soul of him who had not previously been bound by the pact;” that *al-tuḥur* (ritual purity) was “being free and clean from believing any doctrine except allegiance to the Imam;” that the five canonical prayers were “the indication of the four fundamentals and of the Imam.”¹³⁷ They also claimed that *Iblīs* and Adam were referring to Abū Bakr and ‘Alī. All of these conceptions and interpretations are alien to the traditional stance, and as al-Ghazālī observes, they were irrelevant, driven, and indeed totally contradicted the clear literal text and injunctions.¹³⁸ Because of this, he earnestly analyses critically, reveals the many errors, and refutes the various doctrines of the Bāṭinites through different approaches and methods.

In summary, according to al-Ghazālī’s observation, not only did the Bāṭinites not appreciate the normal way of performing good deeds (such as the prescribed devotional acts), but they contradicted and even destroyed them to some extent. Al-Ghazālī disapproves of their pessimistic concept of good deeds, by which they maintained they must absolutely follow the way of their *Imām*, and religious obligations were mere fetters that will be freed once they had gained the truth through their *Imām*. Because al-Ghazālī considers certain doctrines of the Bāṭinite as a dangerous threat to religion, he therefore, earnestly refutes them in different aspects, such as theological, logical, and philosophical.

Thus it is evident that al-Ghazālī was active in responding to various interpretations and practices that he considered erroneous. If prior to seclusion he was searching for the truth, after that he attempted to defend and spread the truth that he had gained through his personal mystical journey. On the one hand, he admonished the stances of pure ritualism, legalism, or dogmatism. On the other hand, he disapproved of the

¹³⁶ For al-Ghazālī’s detailed analysis of various doctrines of the Bāṭinites, see *ibid.*, 195ff.

¹³⁷ I.e., the Dawn Prayer is the indicator of the *Sābiq*, and the Noon Prayer is the indicator of the *Tālī*, and the Afternoon Prayer of the *Asās*, and the Sunset Prayer is the indication of the *Nāṭiq*, and the Evening Prayer is the indicator of the Imam; *ibid.*, 208-209.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 208-210.

extreme or misleading mysterious interpretations and practices of esoteric movements as exemplified in his refutation against the fundamental doctrines of the Bāṭinites, as well as the intellectual self-sufficiency of the philosophers. In the midst of these different interpretations, he offers his dynamic views of good deeds which—as I will discuss in the next section—comprise and maintain balance between their outer and inner dimensions.

6.3 AL-GHAZĀLĪ ON THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF FAITH AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOOD DEEDS

Like Augustine, al-Ghazālī also offers a dynamic approach to the concepts of faith and good deeds. Indeed, on many issues his ideas are unique, profound, inspiring, and original. Not only does he refute different interpretations that he considers as erroneous or heretical, but he also does not hesitate to criticise some traditional views and practices that he perceives as inaccurate or *dry*. I argue at the outset that al-Ghazālī offers a unique view of faith and good deeds, which not only transcends the view of a particular school of law (i.e., the Shāfi‘ite school with which he affiliated), but also bridges the seemingly different views between different Sunnite schools of law.

To begin with, there are apparently different explanations of the meaning of faith and its relationship with good deeds in several works of al-Ghazālī. In *Ayyuha al-Walad* (*O Son, or O Youth*), which was written later than *Iḥyā’*, al-Ghazālī’s definition of faith is simple and almost identical to the definition of the Mālikites, the Shāfi‘ites, and the Ḥanbalites, namely, that “[*īmān* (faith) is confession with the tongue, and belief with the heart, and working with the members of the body.”¹³⁹ This definition makes good deeds an essential requirement of faith. However, this definition still does not indicate that al-Ghazālī regards good deeds as an indispensable part of faith. This contention will be evident when his discussion of this issue in *Iḥyā’* is analysed below, in which faith is discussed in a much deeper and more mystical way. Perhaps this is because *Ayyuha al-Walad* was written as a straightforward answer to the request of one of his students regarding which branches of knowledge would be beneficial (and not be of benefit) to him on the Day of Judgement. The *Iḥyā’* was written during his seclusion period, and was meant as a rich and extensive reference and inspiration to Muslims at large. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that *Iḥyā’* addresses the issue in a much more extensive way, pervaded by a profound spiritual insight, and rich with deep thinking and analysis.

In his book entitled *Qawā‘id al-‘Aqā‘id* (*The Foundations of the Articles of Faith*), which is the second book of the first volume of *Iḥyā’*, al-Ghazālī discusses the concept of faith together with the concept of Islam. He divides his discussion into the literal meaning, the technical meaning, and the functions of both faith and Islam. The first part pertains to language, the second to interpretation, and the last to jurisprudence and

¹³⁹ *Al-Walad*, 22; *O Youth*, 55.

law. Al-Ghazālī agrees with the general standard literal meaning of faith and Islam, that faith is acceptance (*taṣḍīq*), belief, or confirmation of truth, and Islam means submission (*taslīm*) and surrender (*istislām*) to God’s will.¹⁴⁰ However, for the literal meaning of Islam, he adds that this submission and surrender to God is “through yielding (*idh‘ān*) and compliance (*inqiyād*); and henceforth abjuring rebellion, pride, and stubbornness.”¹⁴¹ Explaining the dynamic nature of the concept of surrender (*istislām*), al-Ghazālī states that it refers to a complete surrender “that which includes both outward and inward [acts].”¹⁴² Describing the difference between faith and Islam, he writes:

Acceptance (faith) lies in the heart while the tongue serves as its interpreter. But submission (Islam) is more comprehensive and pervades the heart, the tongue and the senses. For every acceptance with the mind (*taṣḍīq bi’l-qalib* [sic]) is a submission and disavowal of pride and unbelief. The same is true of verbal confession (*al-i’tirāf bi’l-lisān*) as well as of obedience and compliance with the senses.¹⁴³

Based on these different natures of faith and Islam, al-Ghazālī argues that Islam (submission) is a more general term and faith (acceptance) is more specific. Faith signifies the noblest constituent of Islam. Therefore, al-Ghazālī concludes that “every acceptance [*īmān*] is submission [Islam] but not every submission is acceptance.”¹⁴⁴

Regarding the technical meaning, al-Ghazālī argues that the *Sharī‘ah* uses the terms “faith” and “Islam” in three different approaches, whether either used as synonyms interchangeably,¹⁴⁵ or as two different things that carry different meanings,¹⁴⁶ or as related terms, of which their meanings are mixed together, signifying that the one being a part of the other.¹⁴⁷ He argues that these different approaches do not contradict each other, for they are employed in their own contexts. Moreover, he asserts that “belief [faith or *īmān*] is in reality a work – in fact the best of works.”¹⁴⁸ This view indicates that faith is flexible, and therefore, can be used in different approaches and contexts.

With regards to the legal rules, al-Ghazālī argues that faith and Islam have two functions, one of which pertains to the Hereafter (*ukhrāwī*), and the other is related to this

¹⁴⁰ *Ihyā’* 2, 100.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ E.g., the Qur’ān, 51:35-35 and 10:84; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:1:8 and 2:40:53.

¹⁴⁶ E.g., the Qur’ān, 49:14; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:34:47.

¹⁴⁷ For the Prophetic traditions see al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan al-Nasā’ī*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Riyād: Maktabah al-Ma‘ārif, 1996), 47. Henceforth referred to as *Sunan al-Nasā’ī*. See further *Ihyā’* 2, 100-102; *Revival*, I.4, 119.

¹⁴⁸ See *Ihyā’* 2, 102.

world (*dunyāwī*). For the first function, he asserts that faith is to bring men out from the Hellfire and to prevent them from remaining there forever. Al-Ghazālī admits that there are different views on the details of what kind of faith is meant here. Some say that it is a mere inward belief, others contend that it refers to verbal confession, and still others relate it to faith that is accompanied by good deeds. Al-Ghazālī approves the need of these three elements altogether, and he states that “whoever combines all these three elements will have his final abode in Paradise.”¹⁴⁹ Hence, it is evident that for al-Ghazālī, good deeds—along with faith—are always essential in one’s life.

In his attempt to clarify the ambiguity surrounding other aspects of faith and its relationship with good deeds, al-Ghazālī argues that faith is used in three different ways, or to borrow Izutsu’s expression, that there are three major meanings of faith in theological thinking.¹⁵⁰ The first usage refers to an acceptance “based on the authority of others (*taqlīd*) without the benefit of revelation and an open heart.”¹⁵¹ Al-Ghazālī argues that this kind of faith (i.e., blind faith) belongs to the common folk, or rather it belongs to all people except the elite religious scholars.¹⁵² This belief is subject to change; at times it could be strong, at others it could be weak. In this regard, good deeds can influence the development and growth of one’s faith.¹⁵³ Al-Ghazālī substantiates his argument with the Prophetic tradition which states that “belief is subject to increase and depreciation.”¹⁵⁴ Thus, this first kind of faith, al-Ghazālī argues, will increase through good deeds.¹⁵⁵

Al-Ghazālī contends that the second usage of the term faith embraces both acceptance and performance of good deeds. This is substantiated by the Prophetic traditions, such as “[f]aith comprises over seventy divisions...”¹⁵⁶ and “[a] believer is no longer a believer when he commits fornication....”¹⁵⁷ Al-Ghazālī argues that when deeds become an integral part of faith, the latter is subject to increase and decrease.¹⁵⁸

As for the third usage of faith al-Ghazālī writes:

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 105.

¹⁵⁰ Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief*, 184.

¹⁵¹ See *Ihyā’* 2, 117.

¹⁵² Ibid.; see also *Revival*, III.1,19; IV.1, 30.

¹⁵³ See *Ihyā’* 2, 117-118.

¹⁵⁴ See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 30:41-42; *Sunan al-Nasā’ī*, 47:18:5010-5012; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Riyāḍ: Maktabah al’Ma’ārif, 1996), 38: 2612-2614.

¹⁵⁵ See *Ihyā’* 2, 120.

¹⁵⁶ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:2:9; *Sunan al-Nasā’ī*, 47:16:5004-5006.

¹⁵⁷ See *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, I:XXV:104. This means that a Muslim who commits adultery is not a real Muslim and his faith is at risk. Nevertheless, he is not to be considered as infidel.

¹⁵⁸ *Ihyā’* 2, 121.

The third usage of the term belief denotes certain acceptance resulting from revelation and an open heart as well as from seeing [truth] with the light of the mind.¹⁵⁹

This is the highest state of faith, namely, firm or certain faith. It is a state of certainty (*yaqīn*), without the least doubt in it.¹⁶⁰ This stage of faith belongs to the friends (*awliyā'*) of God.¹⁶¹ Al-Ghazālī argues that this kind of certain faith is the last to accept any changes (i.e., to increase or decrease). This state is indeed a work of special *ma'rifah* (gnosis or true knowledge of God), and therefore, only a small number of persons can achieve this state.¹⁶²

Having explained all the three usages or states of faith, al-Ghazālī reaffirms that the earlier *imāms* maintained that faith is subject to increase and decrease,¹⁶³ and that faith is perfected through the performance of good deeds.¹⁶⁴ In other words, the perfection of faith depends on the performance of good deeds.¹⁶⁵ However, as mentioned above, this position does not suggest that al-Ghazālī accepts this standard or traditional view totally (i.e., that good deeds are an indispensable part of faith). Nevertheless, he completely agrees with the standard view in maintaining that since faith is the foundation of good deeds, therefore, the worth of good deeds depends on faith. If one's life ends with unbelief, all his good deeds will be useless.¹⁶⁶

Analysing the status of those who fail to perform the prescribed deeds, al-Ghazālī contends that there are different opinions concerning the issue. However, he disagrees with the argument of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī who maintains that good deeds are part of faith, and that faith is not complete without them.¹⁶⁷ This indicates that although al-Ghazālī maintains the necessity of good deeds and their close relationship with faith, he does not consider them as an indispensable part of faith.

Based on the above discussion, therefore, it is not an easy task to identify the real position of al-Ghazālī on the actual relationship between faith and good deeds. As established above, in *Ayyuha al-Walad* and certain parts of *Kitāb Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id*, he seems to affirm the standard view of the earlier *imāms* in maintaining that there is an

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 121-122.

¹⁶¹ *Ihyā'*, III.1, 15; *Revival*, III.1, 19

¹⁶² *Ihyā'*, I.1, 74; *Ihyā'*, IV.1, 28; *Revival*, I.1:83; IV.1, 30.

¹⁶³ See *Ihyā'* 2, 121.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 127.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 132.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 106.

integral relationship between faith and good deeds, and therefore, seems to accept good deeds as an indispensable part of faith. A similar view of this is mentioned briefly in *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*.¹⁶⁸ However, as indicated above, al-Ghazālī is unwilling to accept the argument of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī in maintaining that good deeds are part of faith, and that faith was not complete without them.¹⁶⁹ Likewise, he also rejects the view which maintains that one's faith is void if one fails to confess it or fails to perform obligatory deeds.¹⁷⁰

This seemingly *paradoxical* position of al-Ghazālī is further intensified by his following contentions, in which he acknowledges the view of the majority of the earlier *imams* in maintaining that faith comprises “inward adherence, verbal confession and good works.”¹⁷¹ Here, as he himself states, he does not deny that good deeds can be considered as a part of faith, of which the former completes and perfects the latter. He states:

[T]he Fathers [earlier *imams*] said that belief comprises inward adherence, verbal confession and good works....It is not unlikely that good works be considered a part of belief, because they perfect and complete it, just as it is said that the head and hands are part of man. It is evident that a person will cease to be human if his head no longer exists; but he will not cease to be a human being if one of his hands is lost through amputation.¹⁷²

He continues:

Therefore acceptance with the mind stands in relation to belief as does the head in relation to the existence of man [in this life], since the one depends for its existence upon the other and ceases to exist when the other no longer is. The remaining good works are like the limbs of the body, some are more important than the others.¹⁷³

Illustrating faith as the human head and good deeds as the limbs, therefore, he acknowledges that faith is the primary foundation and it is supplemented by good deeds.¹⁷⁴ Transcending the standard view he argues that good deeds are not an essential part of faith, but are “a superaddition (*mazāid*)” which supplements it. He writes:

¹⁶⁸ *Jawāhir*, 85; *The Jewels*, 87.

¹⁶⁹ See *Iḥyā'* 2, 106.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

It proves that good works are not an integral part of belief nor a basic thing for its existence. Rather they are a superaddition (*mazā'id*) which augments belief.¹⁷⁵

With this position al-Ghazālī does not invalidate the standard view of the early *īmams*, but his objective is to grasp the real meaning of such a view.¹⁷⁶ He also does not blindly accept the traditional view which maintains that faith increases or decreases based on good deeds. He divides this issue into two contexts. Firstly, when referring to faith *per se*, faith is not subject to any measurable quantity as man only has one head and it does not increase or multiply. Secondly, when referring to degrees faith does increase or decrease, as a beard and corpulence increase the degrees of one's existence or appearance.¹⁷⁷

Thus, al-Ghazālī's illustration that faith is like the head of man, and good deeds the limbs serves as a clue in understanding his position. As the head and limbs are not identical, therefore, faith and good deeds are also different entities though they have a very close relationship, and though the latter will supplement the former. Hence, in one way, al-Ghazālī is correct in approving the standard view that good deeds will complete faith as the limbs complete the head, or rather, a human being. Nevertheless, in another way he is also correct in asserting that in essence, the existence of faith does not depend on good deeds as man can live without the limbs, but not without the head. This illustration proves his later position in maintaining that good deeds are “a superaddition” which supplements faith.¹⁷⁸

Al-Ghazālī's view of faith and its relationship with good deeds, therefore, is not totally identical to the traditional view, but still within the Sunnite stance. He addresses different contexts and aspects of the issue discussed in order to obtain a comprehensive and deeper meaning. His view that faith does not increase or decrease in its substance is in agreement with the view of the Ḥanafites. However, in another context in which he maintains that there is a close relationship between faith and good deeds, and that faith is subject to increase and depreciation in degree, al-Ghazālī is close to the other three Sunnite schools of law, namely, the Mālikites, the Shāfi'ites, and the Ḥanbalites. Yet, he differs from them in maintaining that good deeds are “a superaddition that augments

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 116.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 116-117.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 116.

belief [faith].”¹⁷⁹ Thus, the above analysis demonstrates that in addition to developing his own thought, al-Ghazālī bridges the apparent different positions between the Ḥanafites and the other three schools on this issue (i.e., on the relationship between good deeds and the increase or decrease of faith). This shows how al-Ghazālī does not blindly follow the view and authority of others (*taqlīd*). Indeed, he utilises his own effort, investigating the existing views, and devises his own methodology in order to understand the issue discussed. He is concerned with the real and deeper meaning of the established opinions, as well as relating it to the spiritual insight revealed to him through personal spiritual experience (e.g., *sayr al-suluk*), extensive meditation, and deep thinking.¹⁸⁰

In all cases, it cannot be disputed that al-Ghazālī is very firm in maintaining the necessity of good deeds. For instance, in *al-Qawā'id al-'Asharah*—his short tract in which he lays down ten general rules of conduct and religious observance—he charges as a “moral bankrupt” anyone who neglects good deeds.¹⁸¹ As Quasem has observed, unlike the philosophers and some pseudo-mystics, al-Ghazālī insists that the performance of good deeds is always necessary for all people in every stage of life, from ordinary persons to the highest Sufis who have been endowed with *ma'rifah* (gnosis) and various spiritual attainments.¹⁸² Along the same path, Lazarus-Yafeh also affirms that the observance of religious commandments is central to al-Ghazālī's system of thought.¹⁸³

In *Alchemy (Kīmīyā')*, al-Ghazālī refutes those who are indifferent towards good deeds, declaring this misleading position as one of the seven principal causes which wrongly declares *mubāḥ* (permissible) to be *ghayr mubāḥ* (impermissible) and vice versa.¹⁸⁴ He argues that the followers of this view are misguided people, for they contradict the Qur'ān which clearly maintains the necessity of good deeds.¹⁸⁵ He also refutes those who claimed that their faith was strong to the extent that no vices could

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 116.

¹⁸⁰ In fact, it is among the unique approaches of al-Ghazālī to delve into deeper and hidden meaning of the issue discussed, and to relate it to the condition of the heart and spiritual realm. Whittingham has observed that this approach is also employed by al-Ghazālī in his hermeneutic and *ta'wīl* of the Qur'ān, in which to discern to the hidden meaning is his central concern. See Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qur'ān*, esp. Chap. 3, 37ff.

¹⁸¹ *Al-Qawā'id al-'Asharah*, rule no. 10, 461.

¹⁸² Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Devotional Acts,” 53.

¹⁸³ Lazarus-Yafeh, “Place of the Religious Commandments,” 173. For the views of other scholars on this, see Chapter Two on *Biographical Studies, Publications and Scholarly Research on al-Ghazālī*.

¹⁸⁴ *Alchemy*, 69-70.

¹⁸⁵ E.g., the Qur'ān, 29:6; 35:18; 41:46. See *Alchemy*, 70.

pollute it, and who believed that sin could consequently not be detrimental to them. Al-Ghazālī equates this view with *bāḥil* (falsehood) and fanciful belief.¹⁸⁶

In *Iḥyā'* he argues that “[t]he root of religion is to be careful of evil deeds.”¹⁸⁷ In giving advice to his beloved student as preserved in his *Ayyuha al-Walad*, he states that knowledge without action is useless.¹⁸⁸ He writes “[k]nowledge without actions is madness and actions without knowledge are useless.”¹⁸⁹ Because of this, he advises his student not to be *bankrupt* of good deeds, but to be convinced that knowledge alone without good deeds will be of no benefit on the Day of Judgment.¹⁹⁰

In *al-Risālat al-Qudsiyyah (The Jerusalem Tract)*—which later forms the third part of *Qawa'id al-'Aqa'id*—al-Ghazālī reiterates that a mere verbal confession of the *shahādah* (the Islamic creed) is not sufficient unless one fully grasps and completely understands the fundamental principles underlying the *shahādah*, among which indicates the need for an active commitment in the performance of good deeds.¹⁹¹

Not only is al-Ghazālī firm in giving advice to his students about performing good deeds diligently and avoiding sin, but he also demonstrates the same consistency in giving advice to kings, viziers, and other political leaders as exemplified in his *Naṣīḥah al-Mulūk (Counsel for Kings)*. In this work, he states that faith has ten roots and ten branches. The belief of the heart is its root, and the actions of the body are its branches.¹⁹² He states that the root of faith “consists of what exists in the heart by way of knowledge and belief; and that the branch of faith consists of what proceeds from the seven limbs by way of just and pious action.”¹⁹³ Al-Ghazālī reminds his readers:

If the branch is withered, this is a sign that the root is weak and that at the moment of death (the tree) will not stand firm but will fall; for action by the body is the mark of faith. Actions which are roots of faith are these; that you refrain from everything that is prohibited (*ḥarām*), and that you perform duty that is prescribed (*farīdah*).¹⁹⁴

This contention is affirmed in *Iḥyā'*, in which he argues that faith that is not established upon a firm foundation and not expressed in action is weak and will not stand when it

¹⁸⁶ *Alchemy*, 73-74.

¹⁸⁷ *Iḥyā'*, I.1, 77; *Revival*, I.1, 87.

¹⁸⁸ *Al-Walad*, 20-21; *O Youth*, 54-55.

¹⁸⁹ *Al-Walad*, 25; *O Youth*, 58.

¹⁹⁰ *Al-Walad*, 20-21; *O Youth*, 54-55.

¹⁹¹ *Iḥyā'* 2, 55; A. L. Tibawi, “Al-Ghazālī’s Sojourn in Damascus and Jerusalem,” *Islamic Quarterly* 9, no. 1/2 (1965): III: 95.

¹⁹² *Kings*, 4.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

faces the angel of death. It is faith which is always tempered continuously with good deeds that will remain firm until the end.¹⁹⁵

Even in his earlier works written before his spiritual transformation, such as *Mizan al-‘Amal*, al-Ghazālī already warns publicly that whoever thinks that he can attain Paradise by only confessing that “there is no God except Allah,” without being accompanied by the performance of good deeds, is like those who think that the food he cooks will be sweet by merely saying “I have added some sugar,” without actually putting it into the food.¹⁹⁶ Thus, al-Ghazālī boldly rebuts those who think that faith alone is sufficient, contending that such a view is stupid and ignorant of the real meaning of faith.¹⁹⁷

In his earnest desire to encourage readers to keep on doing good deeds, al-Ghazālī still does not forget to emphasise that good deeds depend on faith.¹⁹⁸ A person must always take care to be firm in his faith. Al-Ghazālī is keen to see that Muslims strive to attain assuredness or certainty of faith. For him, a little certain faith is better than many actions, for faith is the foundation of all good deeds.¹⁹⁹

Before analysing his spiritual insight into the inner dimension of good deeds, it is important to examine briefly several relevant issues that serve as helpful foundations in understanding his theology and spiritual insight into good deeds. Among them are his views of the nature and different qualities (*ṣifāt*) of man and good deeds, as well as the relationship between them. As regards man, unlike the body which is created from earth, he maintains that the soul originates from God, and thus it has certain *quasi-divine* qualities (i.e., angelic or lordly beautiful qualities).²⁰⁰ Resorting to some Prophetic traditions and reports which might suggest that God created Adam in His *likeness*—which is always interpreted as a reflection of God’s beautiful attributes²⁰¹—and that man can know God through knowing his reality (e.g., his own nature and heart), al-Ghazālī maintains that there are some lordly qualities in man, particularly those related to the soul

¹⁹⁵ *Iḥyā’* 31, 40; *Revival*, IV.1:13.

¹⁹⁶ *Timbangan Amal*, XX, 119.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Iḥyā’*, I.1, 72; *Revival*, I.1,81.

¹⁹⁹ *Iḥyā’ INF*, 185; *Iḥyā’ IWM*, 301; *Revival*, I.1, 81.

²⁰⁰ *Iḥyā’*, III.1, 3-5; *Revival*, III.1, 7-9; *Alchemy*, 12. See also Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 44-45; Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 141-146.

²⁰¹ See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 72:1; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, XXX:MLXXXII:6325; XXXVIII:MCLXXXI: 6809, etc. Muslim scholars including al-Ghazālī agree that this tradition is not to be interpreted literally for it would contradict the fundamental pillar of God’s attribute that nothing is like Him. For a brief analysis of this tradition, see Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Words: On the Nature and Purpose of Man, Life and All Things*, trans. Sukran Vahida (Istanbul: Sozler Publication, 1991) 2.14, 23-25.

or the heart. Because of this, he affirms that man can know God through knowing his real self and through nurturing such lordly beautiful qualities.²⁰² Thus, he asserts that man is the most superior creation, the most beautiful art of God's creation,²⁰³ and that the soul or the heart is the real essence of man, the king of his body.²⁰⁴ There are many factors in man which form different qualities, including evil qualities. These qualities can be categorised into four main categories, namely, the qualities of the beasts of prey (*al-sab'iyah*), brutish qualities (*al-bahāmiyyah*), demonic qualities (devilish or satanic qualities; *al-shaiṭāniyyah*), and lordly qualities (Godly or angelic qualities; *al-rabbāniyyah*).²⁰⁵ Man should control the lower or bad qualities and nurture the lordly quality.

Al-Ghazālī affirms that man is born in *fiṭrah*, namely, a good and pure state which inclines man towards goodness. The concept of *fiṭrah* plays an important role in al-Ghazālī's thought. According to Frank Griffel, al-Ghazālī agrees with Avicenna's understanding of *fiṭrah* as "a set of judgments that all humans agree upon, no matter how they live and what they have learned."²⁰⁶ It indicates that any human is able to arrive at this state. This is one of the indications that al-Ghazālī holds an optimistic view of human nature. Nevertheless, since man has bad qualities, each man also has an instinctual inclination toward badness in the form of concupiscence or lustful desires (*shahawāt*). It is a bad or evil spot which is dormant in each heart of man, and if nurtured will become harmful and produce vices and cause diseases to the soul. In childhood and youth before the intellectual state becomes matured, and one's soul is still imperfect, the bad qualities predominate.²⁰⁷ Because of this, al-Ghazālī believes that man is not free from vices and sin, and therefore, ardently advises man to purify and beautify the heart so that it can cultivate virtues and the lordly nature, which is the highest and noblest state of the heart.²⁰⁸ It is only with pure heart or soul that man can approach God and receive His

²⁰² See *Alchemy*, 1ff.; Marianne Farina, "Moral Goodness and Friendship with God: The moral Teachings of Thomas Aquinas and Hamid al-Ghazali" (PhD thesis, Boston College, 2004), 92.

²⁰³ *Alchemy*, 17-18. See also *Iḥyā'* III.1, 9-10; *Revival* III.1, 13.

²⁰⁴ *Iḥyā'*, III.1, 8; *Revival*, III.1, 10-11.

²⁰⁵ *Iḥyā'*, III.1, 10; *Iḥyā' 21*; 36; *Revival*, III.1, 14; *Alchemy*, 12.

²⁰⁶ Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition' (*Fiṭra*) and Its Background in the Teachings of al-Fārābī and Avicenna," *The Muslim World* 102, no. 1 (2012), 1-32.

²⁰⁷ For al-Ghazālī's discussion of matters related to the heart or soul, see *Iḥyā'* III.1; *Iḥyā' 21*; *Revival*, III.1.

²⁰⁸ See also M. S. Stern, "Al-Ghazzālī, Maimonides, and Ibn Paquda on Repentance: A Comparative Model," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47, no. 4 (1979): 590. For a comparative analysis of al-Ghazālī's concept of the soul with some other philosophers, see Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir, *Al-Ghazālī and his Theory of the Soul: A Comparative Study* (Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2008). For al-Ghazālī's discussion of purification and beautification of the heart, see *Iḥyā'* III.2; *Revival*, III.2.

light.²⁰⁹ Another way to achieve this state is through diligent performance of good deeds, with balanced observance of their outer and inner dimensions. Only through the balanced observance of both aspects of deeds can they produce the desired effect on the soul, and thus achieve their purpose. Consequently, good deeds play a crucial role in “the purification, improvement, and enlightenment of the heart.”²¹⁰

Al-Ghazālī maintains that each kind of good deed has two dimensions, namely, the outer and the inner. The former is its shape (*ṣūra*) or body, while the latter is its spirit (*rūḥ*) or life (*ḥayāh*), and accordingly both need to be observed equally.²¹¹ Because of this twofold nature he considers those deeds performed without observing their inner aspects as merely motions of the body, which are no more than habitual practices. Since these kinds of deeds are devoid of life, they could not bring the desired effect to the soul.²¹²

Quasem observes that like Aristotle in his conception of moral virtue, al-Ghazālī employs the theory of an indefinite circular (*dawr*) process which states that “a deed creates some effect on the soul; this deed again produces some effect on the soul; this effect is added to the previous effect which is now strengthened,” and this process goes on indefinitely.²¹³ Al-Ghazālī argues that the physical or outward deeds will have little benefit if they do not leave any effect on the heart, or if they do not come from real faith.²¹⁴ Thus he argues that every good deed done accordingly (i.e., with love and sincerely) will create a light in the heart.²¹⁵ In contrast, bad deeds or sin is darkness which will diminish the light of the heart.²¹⁶

Al-Ghazālī maintains that the purpose of this life is to collect a treasure of good deeds,²¹⁷ and the ultimate aim is to attain eternal happiness in the Hereafter. As indicated in Chapter Two, agreeing with other Sufis, he believes that there are different grades of eternal happiness, and each of them has a connection with the level of religious observances.²¹⁸ A believer with a better quantity and quality of good deeds will receive

²⁰⁹ See *Iḥyā'*, III.1, 12; *Revival*, III.1, 15.

²¹⁰ *Iḥyā'* 21, 56. For further analysis of al-Ghazālī's concept of man and his view of different qualities in man, see Ali Issa Othmans, *The Concept of Man in Islam: In the Writings of al-Ghazali* (Cairo: Dar al-Maaref, 1960); Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*; Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*; 'Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy*.

²¹¹ See Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Devotional Acts,” 50.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Quoted in Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 48.

²¹⁴ *Timbangan Amal*, XXVII, 181.

²¹⁵ *Alchemy*, 743.

²¹⁶ *Iḥyā'*, III.2, 60; IV.1, 35-36, 54; *Revival*, III.2, 54; IV.1, 38, 53-54; *Alchemy*, 743.

²¹⁷ *Alchemy*, 77.

²¹⁸ See Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī's Conception of Happiness,” 153-61. See also Farina, “Moral Goodness,” 154-199.

more rewards and attain a higher degree of eternal happiness. Accordingly, he addresses good deeds in different stages and contexts, and he encourages readers to improve and advance themselves to a higher stage in performing good deeds. In his works, he categorises Muslims into different stages according to different levels of their religious observances and salvation, sometime as two, three, four or even five stages.²¹⁹ In *Bidayah* for instance, he states that in relation to religious observances and salvation, man is of three classes. He writes:

In respect of his religion a man stands in one of three classes: (a) he may be ‘safe’ (or ‘saved’), namely when he confines himself to performing the duties of strict obligation and avoiding sins; or (b) he may be ‘above standard’ (literally, ‘making a profit’), namely, when of his own will he makes an offering and performs supererogatory acts; or (c) he may be ‘below standard’ (literally, ‘incurring a loss’), namely, when he falls short of what is incumbent upon him. If you cannot be ‘above standard’, at least endeavour to be ‘safe’, and beware, oh beware, of being ‘below standard’.²²⁰

Quasem argues that al-Ghazālī’s concept of happiness is taken from al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1108/1109) with slight modification.²²¹ For al-Ghazālī, real happiness is other-worldly happiness (*al-sa‘ādah al-ukhrawiyyah*),²²² which he characterises as having four exclusive characteristics of “continuity without end, joy without sorrow, knowledge without ignorance, and sufficiency, after which noting more is needed for perfect satisfaction.”²²³ Al-Ghazālī has his own conception of *salvation* which comprises three degrees. The first one is a basic salvation (*al-najāh*), the other two are success (*al-fawz*) and happiness (*al-sa‘ādah*). In al-Ghazālī’s mind, salvation in its strict sense only refers to safety and not yet success or happiness.²²⁴ It is a condition of escaping from Hell without entitlements to any rewards.²²⁵ Only in the other two degrees, particularly the last one, does man receive rewards and taste real eternal happiness. Again, happiness in paradise has different degrees which can be broadly categorised into lower grades (the

²¹⁹ *Letters Gh.*, 26:110; *Guidance*, 121-122; *Iḥyā’*, IV, 1 25-32; *Revival*, 4.1, 27-34; Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 56-57; *Jalan Pintas*, 19-20; *al-Arba‘īn*, 38.

²²⁰ See *Guidance*, 121-122.

²²¹ Al-Iṣfahānī’s full name is Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Mufaḍḍal ibn Muḥammad, better known as Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1108/1109). He was an influential Muslim thinker and ethicist. For Quasem’s analysis of al-Ghazālī’s conception of happiness, see his *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 53-71, and “Al-Ġazālī’s Conception of Happiness,” 153-161.

²²² *Timbangan Amal*, XXII, 134.

²²³ *Ibid.*, XXI, 122; Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 55; Quasem, “Al-Ġazālī’s Conception of Happiness,” 156.

²²⁴ *Al-Arba‘īn*, 38; *Jalan Pintas*, 19.

²²⁵ Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 57; Quasem, “Al-Ġazālī’s Conception of Happiness,” 159.

sensual pleasures, such as luxurious places, foods, clothes, etc.) and the higher grades (spiritual pleasures, such as nearness to God, vision of Him, encounter with Him, etc.), each with different degrees.²²⁶ Realising this situation, al-Ghazālī is earnest in his desire to educate and reform his society.

Al-Ghazālī warns people against being comfortable with a normal observance of religious duties. Gardener has observed that in order to attain the real salvation, al-Ghazālī believes that “far more is necessary than simply to be an orthodox and strict Moslem.”²²⁷ Foster also affirms that al-Ghazālī is in accordance with the Prophet in that they both maintain that Muslims should not understand superficially or perform imperfectly the conditions prescribed upon them.²²⁸ In fact, al-Ghazālī not only encourages readers—especially Muslims—to achieve the highest degree of eternal happiness, but he also tries to help them by offering them his spiritual enlightenment, and providing them with various examples and role models through his teachings and writings.²²⁹ He maintains that both the cultivation of the virtues of the soul and the observance of religious duties are the two primary means in attaining eternal happiness. The former is internal action, the latter external.²³⁰ Hamid Reza Alavi has observed that both of these elements form an integral part in al-Ghazālī’s thought, especially on education, whereby religious learning is given the highest priority, and the education of character and the virtues becomes the major theme in al-Ghazālī’s writings.²³¹ However, al-Ghazālī is not satisfied with a mere outward observance of good deeds, for he does not regard those good deeds as effective. As indicated above, he regards a good deed performed without inward observance as a lifeless body, performed as no more than a habitual action devoid of spiritual element, and therefore as not achieving its purpose.²³² However, unlike extreme esoterists who completely ignore the outer form of religious observances, he maintains the need to observe and find balance between their outer and inner dimensions. In addition, his

²²⁶ For further analysis, see Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, 57-58; Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī’s Conception of Happiness,” 160.

²²⁷ Gardener, “Al-Ghazālī as Sufī,” 131.

²²⁸ Foster, “Ghazali on the Inner Secret,” 394.

²²⁹ It is with this noble objective that al-Ghazālī furnishes his writings, particularly *Iḥyā’*, with various Prophetic traditions (sound and weak), reports, mystical interpretation, and spiritual insight. However, his approach was criticised by some scholars, such as Ibn al-Jawzī, who seem to fail to appreciate his context and the structure of his writing. For Ibn al-Jawzī’s criticism, see his *Talbīs Iblīs* (Bayrut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2005), 183-184. See also his *Kitāb al-Quṣṣās wa al-Mudhakkirīn*, ed. Qasim al-Sāmīrā’ī (al-Riyād: Dār Umayyah, 1983), 154-175.

²³⁰ Hourani, “Ghazali on the Ethics of Action,” 77.

²³¹ Hamid Reza Alavi, “Al-Ghazālī on Moral Education,” *Journal of Moral Education* 36, no. 3 (2007), 309-319.

²³² Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī’s Theory of Devotional Acts,” 50.

conception of different degrees of eternal happiness also leads him to encourage readers to strive for a better quality in performing good deeds, especially the prescribed religious observance. He argues that those who just confine themselves to the strict commandments and prohibitions will equally attain the lowest degree of salvation, which is not yet a true happiness. Thus, those who want to achieve a higher degree of eternal happiness, as well as those who want to establish intimate relationship with God, or wish to attain spiritual union with Him, should do more than what is required. This includes acquiring a deeper understanding of the real meaning and objectives, as well as observing the inner preconditions (*al-shurūṭ al-bāʿināh*) of good deeds performed. All of these will be examined in the next discussion.

Al-Ghazālī's conception of faith embraces both theoretical and practical aspects, and indeed, is also pervaded by deep mysticism and a rich inspirational dimension. He offers an explanation of the concepts of faith and good deeds which transcends the traditional view. He is very positive in maintaining the necessity of good deeds. He even asserts that the purpose of life in this world is to collect—as much as any person can—a treasure of good deeds.²³³ For him, man's success lies in his perpetual performance of good deeds, especially those in the form of worship and obedience.²³⁴ He regards the inner dimension of one's action or good deed as its substance, spirit, or life. Thus, al-Ghazālī's conception of faith is dynamic, in which the necessity of good deeds cannot be doubted.

²³³ *Alchemy*, 77.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 347.

PART 2:

6.4 INNER KNOWLEDGE (*'ILM AL-BĀṬIN*) AND INNER ACTIONS (*AL-A'MĀL AL-BĀṬINAH*) OF GOOD DEEDS

In *Iḥyā'* and in some other ethical writings, al-Ghazālī discusses various kinds of good deeds, such as the prescribed actions, devotional acts or worship, customary actions, and moral actions including mystical virtues. There are already extensive studies on his theory of ethics, moral actions, or virtues. For the purpose of current discussion, I focus on some primary kinds of religious good deeds (devotional acts or worship) that he addresses in the earlier part of his ethical writings, particularly *Iḥyā'*. They are purity or purification (*al-tahārah*), ritual prayer (*al-ṣalāh*), fasting (*al-ṣawm*), divine tax (*al-zakāh*), pilgrimage to Mecca (*al-ḥajj*), Qur'an-recitation (*tilāwah al-Qur'ān*), praise or recollection of God (*al-Dhikr*), and invocation of Him (*al-Du'ā'*).²³⁵ It is the common approach of al-Ghazālī to discuss the excellence (*faḍā'il*) or significance of good deeds, their outer dimensions, and then followed with the exposition of their inner dimensions. Primarily, his discussion of good deeds can be divided into two main principles, specifically, [the right] knowledge (*'ilm*) and [the right] action (*'amal*). The former is theoretical, the latter practical. By knowledge, he means a wider understanding of the reality of things. In relation to good deeds, this includes an understanding of their deeper meaning, real purpose, and significance. Action on the other hand pertains to the practical aspect of how to perform good deeds. Each of these principles has two dimensions, namely, the outer and inner dimensions. The primary focus of this section, however, is on the inner dimension of these principles, namely, on the inner knowledge (*'ilm al-bāṭin*) and the inward or inner actions (*al-a'māl al-bāṭinah*).

Al-Ghazālī's discussion of the above kinds of good deeds forms my main source in analysing his primary views of the psychology or inner dimension of good deeds. As will be substantiated below, I argue that by disclosing the inner dimension, al-Ghazālī breathes spirituality into almost all kinds of good deed that he addresses, attending both to the heart and mind. He does this by seeking knowledge to serve knowledge, and by

²³⁵ The first four after purification are obligatory and the remainder supererogatory. There are many kinds of purification, including ablution. Therefore, some of them could be obligatory or supererogatory on certain conditions. Quasem does not include purification among the devotional acts addressed by al-Ghazālī. This is perhaps because many consider it—particularly ablution—as a necessary precondition to prayer. I, however, argue that it is one of the independent devotional acts (*al-'ibādah al-mustaqillah*) that is not only necessarily performed as the precondition to prayer, but can be performed, and indeed is encouraged to be performed anytime throughout the day.

addressing both the heart and mind which can lead a person to attain spiritual joy. He analyses what he considers to be a certain mystery and wisdom of good deeds, presenting them in an understandable way with examples. He earnestly advises readers to reflect and act upon them, so that their good deeds will transform from mere physical motions of pure ritualistic observance to spiritually rich deeds, filled with real understanding, wisdom, and realisation.

Al-Ghazālī emphasises the right understanding of the knowledge (*al-‘ilm*) and action (*al-‘amal*) of good deeds as the primary principle. His way of thinking and mystical insight pervade his analysis and thought. For him, knowledge is very important in all matters. It was the knowledge of reality that he was searching for, and for that reason he abandoned his luxurious life for seclusion. He believes that ignorance which is the opposite of knowledge is one of the veils (*ḥijāb*) between God and His servants. He maintains that knowledge is the foundation or the means of performing good deeds, which in turn is the beginning of guidance, the first journey to God.²³⁶ His great emphasis on knowledge is manifested in his magnum opus *Iḥyā’*, where he started the discussion with a chapter on knowledge (*Kitāb al-‘Ilm*). In pursuing knowledge, however, he emphasises pure intention. Man should seek knowledge for the sake of God in order to serve knowledge, not to serve his worldly purpose.²³⁷ He observes that scholars who seek knowledge in order to serve their personal purpose (i.e., to gain status, wealth, respect, etc.) will not be able to grasp the essence and spiritual aspect of knowledge. They also will not be able to comprehend the secrets and mysteries behind that knowledge, but their understanding will be limited to the standard outer meaning.

With this conception of knowledge and spiritual mission, al-Ghazālī advises readers to ponder upon the inner knowledge (*‘ilm al-bāḥīn*) of things beyond the teachings of common jurists and the ordinary perception of the general Muslim society, namely, the knowledge of the essence that has been forgotten and changed. In relation to good deeds, this knowledge includes their inner meaning (*al-ma‘ānī al-bāḥīnah*), purpose, and significance. Al-Ghazālī observes that the meaning of many disciplines or sciences of knowledge has been changed, limited, and thus their real meaning has been forgotten.²³⁸

²³⁶ See *Iḥyā’* IV.1, 20; *Revival*, IV.1, 24-25; *Guidance*, 144. For a brief analysis of al-Ghazālī’s categorisation of knowledge, see Emon, *Islamic Natural Law Theories*, 96-101.

²³⁷ In *Bidāyah (Guidance)* al-Ghazālī divides the seekers of knowledge into three categories. See *Guidance*, 97-98.

²³⁸ In *Iḥyā’*, al-Ghazālī discusses five major terms which he argues have been altered and thus lost their real meaning. They are *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *al-‘ilm* (knowledge or the science of religion), *tawḥīd* (the doctrine

Thus he discourages *taqlīd* or naïve belief except to prophets, for they are the people who apprehend the essence and wisdom of things.²³⁹ This is supported by Robson’s analysis, in which he affirms that al-Ghazālī is very committed to urging Muslims to follow the *sunnah* (the Prophet’s examples and his way of life).²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, as Lazarus-Yafeh and Syed Rizwan Zamir have observed, al-Ghazālī does not reject *taqlīd* in *toto*.²⁴¹ Zamir distinguishes between rational *taqlīd* and blind *taqlīd*, contending that al-Ghazālī only rejects the latter but accepts the former.²⁴² However, al-Ghazālī does maintain that *taqlīd* other than to prophets is the veil or obstacle to the path of God.²⁴³ Nevertheless, this does not mean that al-Ghazālī asserts that all Muslims should not perform good deeds unless they comprehend their essence and wisdom, for he acknowledges the different intellectual degrees and capacities of his readers, and the fact that some wisdom of good deeds is unknown. In this respect, he argues that the real obedience is a total submission to obey God’s commands wholeheartedly irrespective of all considerations.²⁴⁴

Since al-Ghazālī is aware of different degrees of intellectual capacities of readers, he permits them to perform good deeds according to their degrees and abilities. For instance, it is adequate for a novice to know the fundamental things related to ritual prayers or other kind of devotional acts that he will perform, such as the basic preconditions and rules of those deeds.²⁴⁵ Those who want to achieve a higher degree of eternal happiness, however, need to acquire a deeper knowledge and a higher degree of performance than that of the ordinary level and practices.

Al-Ghazālī also reminds his readers not to be content with their ordinary outward practices of good deeds, or with mere fulfilling the basic outer preconditions, for—whether they realise or not—these kinds of good deeds are still at risk, and indeed, are not free from various defects. These kinds of good deeds are certainly the minimum requirements for salvation, which is the state of a person’s being saved from Hell, but not yet able to taste the pleasure of spiritual experience, not to mention to attain a higher degree of eternal happiness. He insists that the performance of good deeds without the

of Allah’s unity), *tadhkir* (reminding or admonition), and *ḥikmah* (wisdom). See *Iḥyā’*, I.1, 31-38; *Iḥyā’ INF*, 73-100; *Iḥyā’ IWM*, 127-155.

²³⁹ See *Deliverance*, V, 75.

²⁴⁰ Robson, “Al-Ghazālī and the Sunna.”

²⁴¹ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, “Some Notes on the Term ‘Taqlid’ in the Writings of al-Ghazzali,” *Israel Oriental Studies* 1 (1971): 249-256; Zamir, “Descartes and al-Ghazālī,” 233-234.

²⁴² Zamir, “Descartes and al-Ghazālī,” 233-234.

²⁴³ *Alchemy*, 769-770.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 322.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 153-154.

observance of the inner spiritual dimension will not be able to leave the desired effect on the soul. Indeed, such an observance will only pave the way to pure ritualism and legalism that form the barrier towards spiritual experience. Arafat has analysed how al-Ghazālī considers those who are obsessed with religiosity and acts of piety are exposed to many risks.²⁴⁶ For this reason, al-Ghazālī encourages his readers to also acquire and understand the inner knowledge of good deeds and to observe some of their inner preconditions (*al-shurūṭ al-bāʿīnah*). It is through the understanding of these elements that one will be able to realise some wisdom, reality, and secrets and mysteries of certain kind of good deeds, and consequently, they will have a positive impact on him.

6.4.1 Inner Knowledge (*ʿIlm al-Bāʿīn*) of Good Deeds and Other Related Knowledge

Al-Ghazālī's discussion of knowledge concerning good deeds can be divided into two main categories. The first is knowledge of certain matters that are pertinent to the basic knowledge of good deeds. These include knowledge of factors harmful and helpful to good deeds. The second is knowledge of good deeds, such as knowledge of their inner meaning, excellence or significance, types and stages, as well as outer and inner preconditions. Since the detailed discussion of these two kinds of knowledge is too extensive, I will only examine briefly some of their examples. With regard to the knowledge of good deeds, I will focus more on analysing its inner dimension which could be called the inner knowledge (*ʿilm al-bāʿīn*) or the secrets (*asrār*) of good deeds.

To mention briefly the first category of this knowledge, al-Ghazālī advises readers to know, understand, and guard themselves against various factors that are harmful to their faith and good deeds. Bad deeds, vices, or sins are the most obvious harmful factor. They are not only obstacles for a *sālik* (traveller or wayfarer) in the path of God, in that they prevent a person moving towards spiritual progress, but they are also the grievous factors that prevent the majority of Muslims from performing good deeds, as well as from the ability to penetrate into their inner dimensions.²⁴⁷ Al-Ghazālī argues that no evil (*qabīh*),²⁴⁸ injustice, wrongdoing, sin, and other negative things are to be

²⁴⁶ E.g., they may offend against the principles; may obsess with the proper articulation of the sounds and letters of the recitals; may become rude and rough, etc. See Arafat, "Al-Ghazālī on Moral Misconceptions," 59-60.

²⁴⁷ *Iḥyāʾ* III.2, 75; *Revival*, III.2, 66.

²⁴⁸ As Hourani has observed, the term evil is described as the opposite of good, which includes "whatever is repugnant or inappropriate to an end." The end of man is the attainment of real happiness in the next life. See, Hourani, "Ghazali on the Ethics of Action," 73, 77.

attributed to God.²⁴⁹ Their causes then must lie somewhere else, either originating from man or other factors, and all men should diligently guard themselves against these bad factors as well as bad deeds.

The factors that cause man to do bad deeds can be broadly divided into external and internal factors. The former refers to Satan (devil or *Iblīs*) as well as the evil environment or worldly temptations (such as wealth, power, fame, etc.), the latter to man himself. As for the external factor, agreeing with the Qur'ān, al-Ghazālī warns readers to guard themselves against Satan who is known to have many devious ways in tempting man.²⁵⁰ There are two forces of Satan, namely, an air force and a ground one, and they are represented by mental whispering and lustful desires respectively. Al-Ghazālī reminds that Satan will never leave man's heart, indeed, he is "a liquid that flows through the son of Adam like blood."²⁵¹ As such, al-Ghazālī also always reminds readers to guard themselves against evil temptations of this world. Indeed, he considered the love of the (reprehensible) world as among the grievous destructive factors which have deceived so many souls.²⁵² Among the treatments that he suggests are to occupy one's heart with remembrance of God, and engage oneself with religious thoughts and actions, and doing them sincerely.²⁵³ Since the heart is the target of Satan as well as worldly temptations, one should purify it from vices in order to shut up the doors of Satan.²⁵⁴ Al-Ghazālī devotes the second half of his *Iḥyā'* to discussing the purification and beautification of the heart, where he addresses different vices and virtues.²⁵⁵

The factors that come from man are mostly rooted from an impure soul or heart, and from the misuse or excessive use of the limbs, which eventually lead to various vices. Al-Ghazālī had already discussed different kinds of vices in the Third Quarter of *Iḥyā'* entitled *The Ways to Perdition (Rub' al-Muhlikāt)*, and there are several studies which have already analysed them in the light of his theory of ethics.²⁵⁶ Among the most dangerous of them are lust or passion and the love of the (reprehensible) world, from

²⁴⁹ *Al-Arba' 'm*, I.8, 33-34; *Jalan Pintar*, I.8, 15-16; Hourani, "Ghazālī on the Ethics of Action," 74; *al-Iqtisād*, 126.

²⁵⁰ *Iḥyā'* 32, 45-46; *Alchemy*, 771.

²⁵¹ *Iḥyā'* 32, 47. Cf. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, in Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ Bārī*, 33:8:2035.

²⁵² See *Iḥyā'*, III, Chapters 6-8.

²⁵³ *Iḥyā'* 32, 47; *Revival*, IV.2, 72.

²⁵⁴ *Iḥyā'* III.1, 37; *Revival*, III.1, 40.

²⁵⁵ Namely, the Third Quarter *The Ways to Perdition (Rub' al-Muhlikāt)* and the Fourth Quarter *The Ways to Salvation (Rub' al-Munjiyyāt)*.

²⁵⁶ See 'Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy*; Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazali*; Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*; and Mubārak, *Al-Akhlāq 'ind al-Ghazālī*.

which other factors and vices emerge. Other dangerous vices include rancour, envy, ostentation, pride, and some others. Al-Ghazālī maintains that most of these harmful factors and vices are rooted from within man, particularly the essence of man, which is the soul or the heart. He gives different illustrations to the soul with the purpose of showing its centrality as the essence of man. One of his favourite illustrations is that the soul is like a mirror, if polished with moral discipline and religious observances it will be able to receive and reflect the divine light, thus able to penetrate “the true nature of reality in all things.”²⁵⁷ But if polluted with vices, it will become dulled, rusted, and darkened, and even dead.²⁵⁸

Al-Ghazālī observes that man’s persistence in transgression or committing bad deeds is due to the weakness of faith. There are many causes for this. Firstly, the promised punishment is concealed and not in immediate attendance, and this leads man to remain in the state of being forgetful, or indifferent to God’s reminder or threat of punishment. Secondly, greed or craving always leads man to do sinful acts, and also because of habituation, which serves as another factor for being persistent in transgression. The third cause is to keep postponing repentance owing to having continued or long hope that one will have plenty of time to repent. The fourth cause is being deceived by the belief that God with His mercy will forgive a person although he continues to commit sins. Al-Ghazālī argues that these are the four basic causes that lead man, despite having faith, to persist in sin. The last reason is to doubt the authenticity of the Prophet, and this is tantamount to unbelief.²⁵⁹

Al-Ghazālī offers treatments for each of these conditions for persisting in transgression. In brief, the first and foremost is reflection (*fīkr*). For the first condition, man should reflect that the promise of punishment is a reality and that one’s death is closer than “one’s shoe lace.” For the second condition, one should contemplate and tell oneself that if he could not renounce the worldly delights, or could not endure the worldly pains, then he will absolutely not be able to do that (i.e., bearing the grievous pains of punishment) in the Hereafter. As for the third condition, one should realise that the longer one postpones repentance, the stronger one’s sins will grow, as a tree will grow bigger and stronger day by day until one will not be able to uproot it. The treatment for the fourth

²⁵⁷ *Iḥyā’* 21, 48. For an analysis of al-Ghazālī’s concept of the mirror in relation to its philosophical foundation, see Kukkonen, “Receptive to Reality,” 549-557.

²⁵⁸ See further discussion on this in *Iḥyā’*, III.1, 13-15; *Iḥyā’* 21, 48-57; *Revival*, III.1, 15-16; *Alchemy*, 15-16, 48; *Letters Gh.*, 18:88.

²⁵⁹ *Iḥyā’*, IV.1, 57-58; *Iḥyā’* 31, 127-128; *Revival*, IV.1, 58-59.

condition is to realise that one's hope is unrealistic just like a man who hopes that God will give him wealth and treasure without putting in any effort. For the last condition, he maintains that it is unbelief, and its treatment is to convince a person of the veracity of the prophets.²⁶⁰

Although al-Ghazālī seems to place much emphasis on man's efforts in improving their soul and deeds, it does not mean that he neglects the role of God. Indeed, I have already alluded to the fact that his theology is *Tawḥīdīc*, whereby he makes it clear that in reality the One and Absolute God is the real agent of man's deeds, and He is the real source of every creation and the real cause of all actions, and thus everything is under His control and will.²⁶¹ Nevertheless, agreeing with the Ash'arite theology, al-Ghazālī affirms the existence of a certain degree of free will of man in the form of voluntary (*maqdūrah*) actions by way of acquisition (*iktisāb*), which are nevertheless willed by God.²⁶² However, at a higher mystical context, al-Ghazālī proposes a total submission, trust (*tawakkul*), and dependence of man on God.²⁶³ This is affirmed by Hourani, contending that the leading themes in al-Ghazālī's theology are "the omnipotence of God and the complete dependence of man."²⁶⁴ As he himself acknowledges this position is the middle position between the two extreme positions of either maintaining that actions are the result of absolute compulsion, or are the result of absolute volition. Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī's conception of total submission and trust in divine providence should not be understood in a negative or pessimistic way to amount to "Islamic fatalism." David B. Burrell has analysed al-Ghazālī's understanding of this concept as showing that it is more dynamic, in that it "rather entails aligning oneself with things as they really are...with the truth that there is no agent but God Most High."²⁶⁵ Thus, al-Ghazālī maintains that man's deeds are created and willed by God, but acquired by man in the way that is not opposed

²⁶⁰ *Iḥyā'*, IV.1, 58-59; *Iḥyā'* 31, 128-130; *Revival*, IV.1, 59-60. In addition to explaining these causes and treatments, al-Ghazālī also discusses other treatments that are related to the heart, particularly those that can return the heart to reflection. See *Iḥyā'*, IV.1, 59-60; *Iḥyā'* 31, 131-132.

²⁶¹ *Iḥyā'* 2, 4-5; *Revival*, I.2, 110-115; IV.1, 11-12; *Alchemy*, 146; *al-Arba'īn*, I.1, 22; I.5, 30; I.8, 33-34; *Jalan Pintar*, I.1, 3-4; I.5, 14; I.8, 15-16.

²⁶² *Iḥyā'*, I.2, 111; *Iḥyā'* 2, 78-79; *Iḥyā'*, IV.5, esp. on *tawakkul*. See also Matthew Levering, "Providence and Predestination in al-Ghazālī," *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1037 (2011): 64-67. Cf. al-Ash'arī, *Al-Ibānah*, 50-51.

²⁶³ For an analysis of al-Ghazālī's view of trust (*tawakkul*), see David B. Burrell, *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), esp. Chap. 4.

²⁶⁴ Hourani, "Ghazali on the Ethics of Action," 87.

²⁶⁵ Burrell, *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology*, 72.

to God's will.²⁶⁶ This is in accordance with the Ash'arite concept.²⁶⁷ Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī does not entirely concur with the Ash'arites. For instance, Griffel has observed that unlike the early Ash'arites who maintained that "God gives a 'temporary power-to-act' (*qudra muḥdatha*) to the human," which implies that human is regarded as the agent (*fā'il*), al-Ghazālī maintains that there is only "one agent or efficient cause (*fā'il*)."²⁶⁸ This is in accordance with his view of the real meaning of *Tawḥīd* which maintains that God is alone in all actions (*munfarid bi al-af'āl kullihā*). This conception shows that al-Ghazālī posits a limited free will which could give justice to both parties, and it also attempts to retain balance between the *Tawḥīdic* theology and the optimistic view of human nature.

Al-Ghazālī also acknowledges the weakness of man, that man is unable to accomplish anything without God's help. This indicates that he is concerned with combatting the deceived state of man's egoism, self-sufficiency, or self-existence independent of God. Indeed, he makes the acknowledgement of one weakness (*'ajz*) as one of his ten rules of conduct, abiding in *al-Qawā'id al-'Asharah (The Ten Rules)* which Faris attributed as the best summary of al-Ghazālī's ethics.²⁶⁹ Therefore, all men should know and realise that they are all in constant need of, and dependent on, God's grace or help (*tawfiq*; divine grace). Through this knowledge, they should pray for God's grace since it is an important helpful factor in performing good deeds.

Al-Ghazālī describes different kinds of God's grace which assist men in performing good deeds and other activities. They are *hidāyah* (divine guidance), *rushd* (divine care or counsel), *tasdīd* (divine direction or leadership) and *ta'yīd* (divine support or strengthening). *Hidāyah* is necessary for attaining salvation. It is of three degrees. The first one is general guidance, which is knowledge of the way of good and evil. It could be obstructed by serious vices of pride, envy, love of this world, and other factors that blind the hearts.²⁷⁰ The second one is beyond the first, being the fruit of spiritual striving (*mujāhadah*), bestowed from one spiritual state after another.²⁷¹ The third is the highest

²⁶⁶ *Iḥyā'*, I.2, 105, 110-111; *Iḥyā'* 2, 56, 77-81.

²⁶⁷ See al-Ash'arī, *Al-Ibānah*, 51; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 42-43; Williams, *The Words of Islam*, 152-154. For further analysis on al-Ghazālī's view of free will and predestination, see David Burrell, ed., "Al-Ghazali on Created Freedom," in *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 11, 156-175; Edward Omar Moad, "Al-Ghazali on Power, Causation, and 'Acquisition'," *Philosophy East and West* 57, No. 1 (2007): 1-13; Levering, "Providence and Predestination in al-Ghazali."

²⁶⁸ Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 217.

²⁶⁹ Faris, "Al-Ghazālī's Rules of Conduct," 46.

²⁷⁰ *Iḥyā'*, IV.2, 108; *Iḥyā'* 32, 141-142; *Revival*, IV.2, 96.

²⁷¹ *Iḥyā'*, IV.2, 108; *Iḥyā'* 32, 142; *Revival*, IV.2, 96.

form of guidance, which is “the light that shines in the world of prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and sainthood (*walāyah*) at the end of spiritual striving.”²⁷² *Rushd* refers to divine care which helps men to move towards God’s will by strengthening men in what is good, and reduces their desires for what is harmful. It is “an expression of guidance that propels and compels towards salvation.”²⁷³ *Tasdīd* helps in directing men’s movement towards the right end. It facilitates things and tools for men so that they are strengthened and could perform the intended actions or achieve the goal faster. As for *ta’yīd*, it unites all of the above.²⁷⁴ All of these forms of grace are interrelated. Al-Ghazālī states:

Indeed, guidance by itself is insufficient, it requires [another form of] guidance to stimulate the motive and it is [called] counsel. And counsel is not sufficient. Rather, it is necessary to habituate the movements with the help of the organs and the limbs, until what gave rise to the motive is accomplished. Guidance is the primary introduction; counsel draws in the motive to awaken the stir movement; direction assists by moving the limbs and granting them assistance towards that which is right. As for support, it unites all of these. It strengthens [the servant’s] aim by insight from within, and by supporting action and assisting the means [of achievement] from without. It is what God intended by, ...*when I confirm you with the Holy Spirit.*²⁷⁵ It draws him near sinlessness (*iṣma*). It is an expression for a divine presence which spreads inwardly, strengthening the person in the pursuit of good and the avoidance of evil. It resembles an imperceptible preventative in his inner self.²⁷⁶

This indicates that al-Ghazālī argues that God’s grace is actively working in assisting man from within and without, and he considers these helps as a gift from God.

There are indeed many other kinds of knowledge that are harmful and helpful, as well as the mystery of the soul or the heart that are addressed by al-Ghazālī which are pertinent to those who want to improve the qualities of their good deeds. Because he maintains that the soul or the heart is the essence of man—integrally related to the performance of good deeds—he obliges every Muslim to seek the knowledge of the soul or the heart, as well as to purify and beautify it with virtues and balance observance of the outer and inner dimensions of good deeds.²⁷⁷

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ *Iḥyā’*, IV.2, 108; *Iḥyā’* 32, 143; *Revival*, IV.2, 96-97.

²⁷⁴ *Iḥyā’*, IV.2, 108; *Iḥyā’* 32, 143; *Revival*, IV.2, 97.

²⁷⁵ The Qur’ān 5:110.

²⁷⁶ *Iḥyā’*, IV.2, 108-109; *Iḥyā’* 32, 143-144.

²⁷⁷ *Iḥyā’*, I.1, 14-16; *Iḥyā’ INF*, 23-29; *Iḥyā’ IWM*, 50-60.

Al-Ghazālī introduces one more important aspect to the knowledge of good deeds, namely, inner knowledge (*‘ilm al-bāṭinah*), or the knowledge of the essence. The interpretation of inner knowledge must not contradict its outer meaning, but should be helpful in understanding it at a deeper level. Among other aspects, he invites readers to understand the inner meaning (*al-ma‘ānī al-bāṭinah*), real purpose, and the significances of good deeds. Throughout his discussions, he tries to prove that this inner knowledge was realised and practised in the early centuries of Islam, but subsequently became neglected. Consequently, the performance of good deeds has been reduced to a mere ritual act, which is devoid of spiritual dimension.

A common approach that al-Ghazālī employs in addressing the inner knowledge of good deeds is to describe their significance and wisdom, as well as their different grades and real purpose. Further it is significant that he is able to scrutinise their inner meaning and secrets. For instance, in discussing purification (*al-tahārah*), unlike the ordinary understanding—which is limited to the purification of the physical body and clothes from excrements and impurities—he argues that there are indeed three other stages of purification, namely:

The second stage is the purification of the bodily senses from crimes and sins. The third stage is the purification of the heart from blameworthy traits and reprehensible vices. The fourth stage is the purification of the inmost self (*sir*) from everything except God. This last stage is that of the Prophets and saints.²⁷⁸

These inner stages of purification are generally not considered by the majority of his contemporary jurists. The ablution or lustration (*al-wuḍū’*)—which is another form of the prescribed purification normally performed as the precondition for ritual prayer, and regarded as a mere outward ritual by the majority of Muslims—is also considered by al-Ghazālī as containing inner meaning and secrets, and thus should be observed properly, and attentively. Even the cleansing of teeth and mouth, he argues, should be performed accordingly. This is because not only is the cleanliness of mouth highly encouraged by Islam, but it is the place used to recite God’s holy words.²⁷⁹ However, the outer purification is not sufficient, and indeed is useless if the inner self is filled with dirt and filth. Because of this he reminds readers to take care of their inner purification, specifically the purification of the heart or the soul, which he considers as the inner

²⁷⁸ *Iḥyā’*, I.3, 126; *Iḥyā’* 3, 2; *Revival*, I.3, 122. See also *Alchemy*, 161-163; *al-Arba‘īn*, II.1, 43-44; *Jalan Pintar*, II.1, 24.

²⁷⁹ See his discussion on the manner of ablution, *Iḥyā’*, I.2, 132-134; *Iḥyā’* 3, 29-37.

meaning of purification. He argues that those who only perform external ablution without inner purification of their hearts should be ashamed when they want to perform prayer, for the prayer is a communion with God the Most Holy and the Most Pure. He illustrates such an act as a person who wants to invite a king to his house which is only cleaned at the outside gate, but leaving its inside filled with dirt and filth. This act, he argues, only invites contempt and perdition.²⁸⁰

Al-Ghazālī relates various acts of good deeds to their respective inner dimensions, establishing the connection between the outward and inward action, ‘*ālam mulk* (the visible, physical, material or phenomenal world) and ‘*ālam al-malakūt* (the spiritual world or the realm of the divine world), and most importantly, the spiritual relationship between man and God. This is obvious particularly in his discussion of ritual prayer and pilgrimage. He not only offers general inner meaning of these devotional acts, but also explains the specific inner meaning or inner dimension to almost every act involved. This attempt is highly mystical, and as he himself has attested, it could not be found in ordinary books.²⁸¹ According to him, every act of worship has its own significance, wisdom, and secrets, some of which can be known while some others remain mysteries. The understanding of the inner dimension of each act will increase readers’ consciousness, and help them to be more attentive or present in their worship.

Al-Ghazālī’s discussion of the inner dimension of prayer is to be found in the third section of the book of *The Mysteries of Prayer and Its Importance (Kitāb Asrār al-Ṣalāh wa Muhimmātihā)* of the *Iḥyā’*.²⁸² He argues that prayer (*al-Ṣalāh*) comprises only “Invocation (*dhikr*) and Recital (*qira’ah*), Bowing (*rukū’*) and Prostration (*sujūd*), Standing (*qiyām*) and Sitting (*qu’ūd*).”²⁸³ The purpose of prayer is “to give lustre to the heart, and to renew the remembrance of Allah, and in order that the bond of faith in Him may be established.”²⁸⁴ This definition of prayer is quite extensive and furnished with spiritual insight, unlike the standard jurist definition which normally maintains that prayer is certain recitation and action that begins with *al-takbīr* (declaration that God is great) and ends with *al-taslim* (salutation).²⁸⁵ Al-Ghazālī maintains that prayer should have

²⁸⁰ *Iḥyā’*, I.2, 135; *Iḥyā’* 3, 37-38.

²⁸¹ See al-Ghazālī’s introduction to *Iḥyā’*.

²⁸² Edwin Elliot Calverley translated *Ṣalāh* as “worship.” For convenience, however, I will use the term “prayer,” the traditional translation for the term.

²⁸³ *Iḥyā’*, I.4, 160; *Iḥyā’* 4, 39.

²⁸⁴ *Iḥyā’*, I.4, 160; *Iḥyā’* 4, 40.

²⁸⁵ For a brief definition of prayer according to the Shāfi‘ites and Ḥambalites, see *al-Wajīz*, vol. 1, *Kitāb al-Ṣalāh* (Chapter on Prayer), footnotes number 2, 150. See also al-Shāfi‘ī, *Al-Shāfi‘ī’s Risāla: Treatise on*

certain inner qualities or inner preconditions—which is the subject of the next discussion—such as the presence of the heart, apprehension, magnifying, awe, and others.²⁸⁶ The invocation is “conversation and communion with Allah,” therefore, it should be done mindfully.²⁸⁷ Al-Ghazālī considers unmindful invocation and recital as useless and even invalid, for it is no more than a mere physical movement of the tongue, performed without any hardship which does not achieve its desired purpose.²⁸⁸ Realising this reality, therefore, he emphasises the need to perform the supererogatory actions or recitations, for they complete the prayer as the limbs complete a man.

Since a major part of the ritual prayer is comprised of invocations, praises, and recitation of the Qur’ānic verses, it also relates to his discussion of the Qur’ān-recitation, praise or recollection of God (*dhikr*), and invocation (*du‘ā’*). All of these acts share many common preconditions—which are to be examined later—among them are understanding what is recited, and the presence of the heart. The mind and the heart, as well as the physical body, should understand and testify what the tongue is reciting. They should show humility and be in awe when the tongue recites praises, or verses that contain the praises and attributes of God. They should be in fear when the praises or recital contain threats and punishments, and should be joyful when they contain rewards and salvation. Heedless or unmindful recitation and performance of good deeds, for al-Ghazālī, is a humiliation to God which deserves punishment. It is like a person who wants to approach a king by offering a servant who is already dead. The offering of a corpse is a humiliation to a king which deserves serious punishment.²⁸⁹ This stance is indeed Qur’ānic.²⁹⁰

Realising the different degrees in the performance of ritual prayer, as well as in other kinds of good deeds, al-Ghazālī argues that there are also different stages in these different kinds of good deeds. For instance, the prayer of the body is different from the prayer of the soul. He thus criticises the jurist’s ordinary understanding of prayer, which only emphasises the outward performance or only underscores the outer preconditions. For the majority of jurists, a prayer is already considered valid if the primary outer preconditions are observed, although no supererogatory actions or recitations are performed. For al-Ghazālī that statement, however, is like a doctor’s statement which

the Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence, trans. with an intro., notes and appendices Majid Khadduri, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1997),159.

²⁸⁶ *Iḥyā’*, I.4, 161; *Iḥyā’* 4, 44.

²⁸⁷ *Iḥyā’*, I.4, 160; *Iḥyā’* 4, 39.

²⁸⁸ *Iḥyā’*, I.4, 160-161; *Iḥyā’* 4, 39-44.

²⁸⁹ *Al-Arba‘īn*, II.1, 46; *Jalan Pintar*, II.1, 26.

²⁹⁰ See for instance, the Qur’ān 107: 4-5.

claims that the handicapped servant offered to a king is alive and not dead, and therefore is sufficient for the offering. Al-Ghazālī was convinced that far from being accepted, this kind of deficient offering and good deeds which are full of defects will be rejected, and indeed deserve punishment. Like his previous argument, such actions are considered as a humiliation to the king and God.²⁹¹ This state is applicable to the other kinds of good deeds. Thus, at the spiritual level al-Ghazālī does not hesitate to claim that a prayer without the real essence is nothing but void. This argument is substantiated by some Prophetic traditions and other reports.²⁹²

Likewise, al-Ghazālī also argues that there are different classes of men according to the degrees in which they read the Qur’ān. He classifies them into three categories, namely, those who only move their tongue physically while their heart is unmindful; those whose heart already understands and follows the recital; and those whose heart “goes ahead to the meanings first, and then the tongue serves the heart and interprets it.”²⁹³ This mystical insight of different degrees of the Qur’ān-recitation further indicates that al-Ghazālī is contemplating the real essence and deeper knowledge of the act, which goes beyond the ordinary jurists’ perception. Thus, unlike the majority of Muslims who are only concerned with rewards, al-Ghazālī is concerned more with revealing the real purpose and inner states of an act.

Similarly, the practice of praise (*dhikr*) also consists of several degrees. In *Bidayah*, al-Ghazālī speaks of four degrees, of which the first one is the shell, and the other three are different degrees of the kernels. To repeat the praise outwardly with the tongue is the first degree, which is the shell of the praise. The second degree is when the heart has already started to attach itself to praise, and when exercised constantly will penetrate into the mind. In the third degree, the praise already firmed and influences the heart until the heart cannot be diverted to other things easily. But the highest stage which is the real essence and objective of the praise is the state which is sought. It is the state when praise is already hidden, and what remains in the heart is the object of the praise, namely, God. It is a state of *fanā’* (self-absorption, self-dissolution, or self-annihilation), where those who at this stage are already so absorbed in his praise until the person is so

²⁹¹ *Al-Arba ‘im*, II.1, 46-47; *Jalan Pintar*, II.1, 27.

²⁹² See *Iḥyā’*, I.4, esp. on the inner preconditions [*al-shurūṭ al-bāḥināh*] of prayer, 159ff.; *Iḥyā’* 4, 37ff.; *Alchemy*, 196-199.

²⁹³ *Iḥyā’*, I.4, 167; *Iḥyā’* 4, 59-60; *Revival*, I.4, 146.

drawn and annihilated himself in the praise, and spiritually united with the object of the praise, which is God.²⁹⁴

Al-Ghazālī also establishes the relationship between the outer and inner dimensions of good deeds. For instance, he relates the call for prayer to the call on Resurrection Day, outward facing the *qiblah*²⁹⁵ with the turning towards the face of God, intention as the resolve to respond and to obey God’s command, bowing and prostration as sign of humbleness of which the latter is considered as the highest degree of submission, and many others.²⁹⁶ He also relates the Qur’ān-recitation and the praise with the presence of God, in which he reminds that the former is the recitation of the holy words of God Almighty, and the latter is the exclusive praise of Him, and therefore they both are not an ordinary recitation and praise. Based on various narrations and reports, he tries to show the magnificence of the Qur’ān.²⁹⁷ Only those who understand their real meaning and significance will be able to appreciate and become more attentive in their performance.

The strong relationship between the outer and inner dimensions is also emphasised in the discussion of pilgrimage. Al-Ghazālī maintains that pilgrimage is “the seal of all that is commanded, the perfection of Islam and the completion of religion.”²⁹⁸ Based on the Prophetic traditions, he argues that pilgrimage was prescribed as the replacement to monasticism (*al-ruhbāniyyah*) which was neglected by adherents of some previous religions.²⁹⁹ Both of these practices share certain similarities, such as the need to leave family and properties, and to focus on the journey exclusively to God.³⁰⁰ In pilgrimage, God has chosen and made certain places holy, and prescribed certain actions exclusively for the ritual of pilgrimage, of which some of their mysteries (such as the throwing of the pebbles, and *al-sa’ī*, namely, running between two small mountains of *al-Ṣafā* and *al-Marwah*) are unknown by reason. It is through the performance of these acts without question that perfect obedience (*kamāl al-‘ubūdiyyah*) is achieved.³⁰¹ Al-Ghazālī illustrates this state by comparing it to a great king who receives the visitation from his people who are expected to come in humility. Therefore, a pilgrim who realises

²⁹⁴ *Jalan Pintar*, II.6, 47-48.

²⁹⁵ *Qiblah* is the direction of Muslim’s ritual prayer.

²⁹⁶ *Iḥyā’*, I.4, 165-171; *Iḥyā’* 4, 54-70.

²⁹⁷ *Iḥyā’*, I.8, 280; *Iḥyā’* 8, 57-58.

²⁹⁸ *Iḥyā’*, I.7, 239; *Iḥyā’* 7, 25.

²⁹⁹ *Iḥyā’*, I.7, 266; *Iḥyā’* 7, 105; *al-Arba‘īn*, II.4, 56; *Jalan Pintar*, II.4, 36.

³⁰⁰ Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī’s Theory of Devotional Acts,” 57.

³⁰¹ *Iḥyā’*, I.7, 269-270; *Iḥyā’* 7, 119-120; *Revival*, I.7, 207; *Alchemy*, 322-323; Quasem, “Al-Ghazālī’s Theory of Devotional Acts,” 57.

this holy visitation should be humble and filled with humility before God Almighty, the King of all kings, and they should respect the holy places, and perform the prescribed actions with full obedience.³⁰²

Al-Ghazālī reveals one more important inner meaning of this journey, namely, it is the final journey to the Hereafter, the spiritual journey of the soul. By this exposition, he opens the way to understand the inner dimension of various acts involved in pilgrimage. The journey of pilgrimage, he argues, contains various lessons and reminders. He advises pilgrims to remember the affairs of the Hereafter throughout their journey by relating most acts involved to their respective inner dimensions. For instance, separation of pilgrims from their families should be imagined as their separation from this world for the Hereafter. Their vehicles should be considered as their own coffins, their *iḥram* clothes as their shrouds, and the entering of the *Mīqāt* (a stated place) as his entering of the *Mīqāt* of the Hereafter.³⁰³ The difficulties that they face in the journey should remind them of difficulties that they will face with the interrogation of the angels of *Munkar* and *Nakīr*. Wild creatures they meet should remind them of the scorpions and worms in their graves. Their state of being alone and away from their families should be felt as it is the dreadful state of being alone in their own graves, and their *talbiyyah* recitation as their answers to God's call on the resurrection day. Thus, al-Ghazālī regards each of these actions as containing its own secret and wisdom, and therefore, the pilgrims should always be mindful throughout their journey. He advises them to reflect on these inner meanings so that they can balance between the outward and inward observances of pilgrimage.³⁰⁴ By understanding and observing this inner dimension, actions involved in pilgrimage—as well as in other kinds of good deeds—will become more spiritually fruitful to the soul, and this is important in achieving the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey.

In fact, al-Ghazālī injects spirituality into almost all kinds of good deeds that he addresses, too extensive to cover all of them. For the purpose of this research, the above analysis is sufficient to substantiate the argument. Al-Ghazālī emphasises understanding and reflecting upon the real or the inner knowledge of good deeds. This spiritual or inner knowledge—which could be among the unfathomable truths that he gained in seclusion—is too precious and can be considered as a phenomenon. It enables a person to realise the

³⁰² *Al-Arba 'īm*, II.4, 56-57; *Jalan Pintas*, II.4, 36.

³⁰³ *Mīqāt* are the assigned stations which require pilgrims to put on their *iḥrām*.

³⁰⁴ *Al-Arba 'īm*, II.4, 57; *Jalan Pintas*, II.4, 37.

real inner meaning, significance, and purpose of an act—especially the prescribed devotional acts—as well as to relate it to the spiritual realm. This inner knowledge can certainly increase readers’ spiritual desires to perform good deeds diligently, and help them to be more attentive in their observance. But they are not to be limited to several kinds of good deeds that al-Ghazālī addresses, for he only wants to set an example through his discussions. Indeed, he does discuss different customary practices—such as eating, marriage, and travelling—and different kinds of virtues or moral (and immoral) actions. Thus, this knowledge is applicable to a wider context, particularly to everyday activities, for Islam teaches that an ordinary act performed with sincerity accordingly will be considered an act of devotion which will be rewarded. In addition, al-Ghazālī’s theory of inner knowledge can be applied to all periods, and it should not be limited to Muslim society, but it is also useful to other religious societies to some extent. The following discussion will examine the second principle, namely, the inward or inner actions (*al-a‘māl al-bāḥīnah*), which is the inner practical aspect of good deeds.

6.4.2 Inner Actions (*al-A‘māl al-Bāḥīnah*)

There is no doubt that al-Ghazālī emphasises the diligent observance of religious rites and rituals. Like his view of the theoretical aspect of good deeds, he also infuses spirituality into their practical aspects, systematising and formulating certain inner preconditions, such as sincerity, humbleness, and many others. These inner preconditions, which are also inner qualities, are the essence of good deeds. Some of them are exclusive to certain kinds of good deed or devotional act, while some others are rather universal, but might be different in degrees of emphasis according to different aspects. They are certainly known by the early generations of Muslims (the *tābi‘ūn* and the *tābi‘ tābi‘ūn*) and the prominent Sufis, yet have been widely ignored by later generations. Those good deeds performed without observing these inner preconditions might be considered fruitless or useless, void, and even harmful. Al-Ghazālī’s discussions of this inner practical aspect are also extensive, and for the purpose of current analysis, I will only examine several primary inner preconditions which are common to the majority of good deeds that he addresses. The majority of them are discussed separately by al-Ghazālī in the last part (the Fourth Quarter) of his *Iḥyā’* as among the virtues, or rather mystical virtues, which need to be nurtured and observed as part of the beautification of the soul. The majority of scholars analyse them in the context of ethics and the mystical virtues. I, however, argue that they are not merely distinctive mystical or ethical virtues that are only discussed in

the last part of *Iḥyā'*, but they are already addressed—although at times rather implicitly—together with, and indeed embodied in, his discussion of good deeds at the first part (the First Quarter) of *Iḥyā'*. Therefore unlike the previous studies which examine the virtues in ethical, mystical, and philosophical discussions—considering in detail their terminologies and etymologies, different nature, states and spiritual stations, and some other related aspects—this section will only focus the discussion in relation to good deeds. These common inner preconditions of good deeds can be grouped as follows:

1. Purification of the Heart and Sincerity
2. The Presence of the Heart and Mind
3. Humbleness and Adoration of God
4. Fear (or piety) and Love
5. After Completing Good Deeds: Shame, Hope, and Trust in God

6.4.2.1. Purification of the Heart and Sincerity

Purification of the heart or the soul, the inner self, is a central concern of al-Ghazālī's mission and a principal objective of his *Iḥyā'*. But as already indicated in his view of different stages of purification (*al-tahārah*), purification of the heart also has different degrees. The heart should be purified from spiritual sickness, and faulty character. At a higher stage, the heart should also be purified from other motives other than for the sake of God. The highest level is achieved when the heart is absolutely purified from all things and thoughts other than God, and only God remains in one's heart. Hence, the purification of the heart also includes sincerity (*ikhḷāṣ*), the state of the heart which is purified from other motives than for the sake of God. It is also called as single-mindedness, where the mind of a person only focuses on one object and motive, namely, for gaining the pleasure of God. Thus, it is a state where the heart and the mind are united on one single purpose, namely, to please God.

Al-Ghazālī observes that this inner purification has been neglected by the majority of his contemporary jurists and society in general. This contention is a fact because the majority of the works of jurists which discuss purification only emphasise outer purification—such as the purification of the physical body and clothes—as the preconditions to the performance of devotional acts, particularly the ritual prayers. Al-Ghazālī on the other hand regards the outer purification as secondary compared to the

inner purification.³⁰⁵ In *Kīmīyā'*, he identifies several reasons why the majority of Muslims only emphasise the outer purification. Among the reasons are because it is the easiest of all; that it pleases the 'nafs,' namely, the inner ego of man; that it gives a general sense of well-being to the body; that it is used to show piety; and that it attracts people towards him.³⁰⁶ This assertion indicates that the outer purification could still be contaminated with certain vices. Al-Ghazālī also gives another inner reason, namely, that the lustful self is not pleased if a man's inner self or the soul is purified. In addition, unlike the outer purification, some people think that the inner purification does not attract people because it is physically invisible. These are among the reasons why the majority of people neglect the inner purification. Some do so out of ignorance, while others neglect the inner purification because it cannot serve their lustful purpose. Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī still considers outer purification as important, provided that it adheres to certain codes of conduct.³⁰⁷

Al-Ghazālī is earnest in reminding men to purify their hearts because he observes that many hearts have been contaminated with various vices. Indeed, in *Bidāyah* he openly claims that even the most prominent among the religious scholars were also not free from these diseases.³⁰⁸ He argues that this is particularly true with regard to the three evil dispositions of the heart, namely, envy, hypocrisy, and pride (or self-admiration). They are not only destructive in themselves, but they are also the root of many other evil dispositions.³⁰⁹ Because of this he advises men to purify both the outer and the inner self altogether.³¹⁰

With regard to intention, al-Ghazālī emphasises right intention, namely, sincerity. He already discussed sincerity together with intention and truthfulness (*ṣidq*) in detail in *Iḥyā'* (vol. 4, book 8). He not only agrees with the traditional view in maintaining intention (*niyyah*) as a basic requirement of good deeds, without which good deeds will not be rewarded, but he is also able to relate the role of intention with the soul. Deed without pure intention, he argues, is useless because such a deed does not leave an effect on the soul. Intention without sincerity, on the other hand, is harmful to the soul. But sincerity is useless without truthfulness and reality. Thus, he regards intention, sincerity,

³⁰⁵ *Alchemy*, 161; *Iḥyā'*, I.3, 125-126; *Iḥyā'* 3, 2-3.

³⁰⁶ *Alchemy*, 163.

³⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, 163.

³⁰⁸ *Guidance*, 159.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ *Al-Arba' 'm*, II.1, 43-44; *Jalan Pintar*, II.1, 24; *Guidance*, 158. See also Quasem, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Devotional Acts," 50-51.

and truthfulness as inseparable components of the right intention. Because of this, he argues that one's intentions must be truly sincere inwardly, and they must conform to the outward reality of his deeds.³¹¹

Al-Ghazālī's emphasis on the right intention is expressed in many ways. In *al-Qawā'id al-'Asharah* he makes a good and stable or lasting intention the first rule of conduct.³¹² He explains that the intention is good "insofar as it tries at all times to accomplish its objective, leaving the rest to God, and stable insofar as it continues to be good, that is, persists in seeking its objective without being dissuaded from it by anything worldly."³¹³ In *Kīmīyā'* he asserts that it is through sincerity that man can obtain God's happiness and blessings.³¹⁴ Likewise, it is through sincerity that good deeds performed can have the desired effects on the soul.³¹⁵ In addition, sincerity also is an important fortress of man from the devil's temptations.³¹⁶ He regards ostentation (*riyā'*), pride (*kibr*), and conceit (*'ujub*) as the serious vices that destroy one's intention and good deeds.³¹⁷ Because of this he writes to his student who consulted him for advice to always be sincere and to guard his intention against ostentation.³¹⁸ Even in his earlier ethical writing, namely, *Mīzan al-'Amal*, he already stresses the importance of sincerity and truthfulness, without which a Muslim would be considered as a hypocrite (*munāfiq*) in practice, but not in faith.³¹⁹ It is in order to preserve sincerity and to guard against ostentation, pride, and conceit that he recommends his readers to perform good deeds secretly.³²⁰

In al-Ghazālī's mind sincerity refers to the state where deeds are performed with an absolute single motive, namely, to attain nothing but closeness (*taqarrub*) to God. As indicated above, this single-mindedness in purpose should always be maintained and should be unadulterated by other motives—such as for worldly interest, fame, and others—from the beginning of a deed to its end. Truthfulness, which is the third

³¹¹ For further discussion, see *Iḥyā'*, IV.7, 361-394; *Revival*, IV.7, 319-333. See also Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazali*, 170-173; 'Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy*, 260-263; Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, 117-119.

³¹² *Al-Qawā'id al-'Asharah*, rule no. 1, 459. See also Faris, "Al-Ghazālī's Rules of Conduct," 46.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Alchemy*, 141.

³¹⁵ See Quasem, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Devotional Acts," 53-54.

³¹⁶ *Alchemy*, 771.

³¹⁷ For al-Ghazālī's detailed discussion of these vices, see *Iḥyā'*, III.8-9, 231ff.; *Revival*, III.8-9, 209ff.

³¹⁸ *Al-Walad*, 39; *O Youth*, 68.

³¹⁹ See for instance, *Timbangan Amal*, 119.

³²⁰ However, al-Ghazālī also realises that sometimes the performance of good deeds can be disclosed—but with certain preconditions—such as if it is done with sincerity and for the purpose of setting an example or encouraging others to do the same. See *Iḥyā'*, III.8, 317-319; *Revival*, III.8, 236-237.

component of the right intention, has several dimensions but it could be summarised as the state where there is perfect correspondence between the inner state and the outward deeds.³²¹ At a higher mystical level, agreeing with some prominent Sufis, he maintains that the true sincerity lies in doing good deeds absolutely out of love of God, neither for the attainment of reward, nor for the fear or avoidance of punishment. This precondition of true love will be discussed further below.

In *Iḥyā'*, he elucidates the relationship and categories of deeds vis-à-vis intention. Although there are many kinds of deeds, they can be broadly categorised into three main categories, namely, evil deeds (*al-ma'āṣī'*; or also disobedience, bad, sinful, blameworthy deeds), good deeds (*al-ṭā'āt*; or also obedience, pious or praiseworthy deeds), and permissible deeds (*al-mubāḥāṭ*; neither forbidden nor recommended deeds). There is no purpose to having sincerity in evil deeds, for evil deeds remain evil regardless of intention. In contrast, the state of the other two categories of deeds would change according to the degrees of intention. Good deeds will not be rewarded if they are not accompanied by good intention. If there are many good intentions including to please God, then the rewards would multiply. However, if the intention is bad, such as for show or ostentation (*al-riyā'*), then they become bad deeds (*al-ma'āṣī'*) which deserve punishment.

As regards permissible deeds, they are also rewarded if accompanied with good intention, and punished if accompanied with bad intention. Although these deeds are considered permissible—such as eating, drinking, applying fragrance, etc.—al-Ghazālī encourages readers to have a good intention in performing them. This is because, he argues, all deeds even the smallest deeds—such as muddling the earth with fingers, touching another's belongings—will be scrutinised in the Hereafter concerning their purpose.³²² This indicates that not only did al-Ghazālī place emphasis on prescribed good deeds, but he even regards every single and smallest customary deed as priceless, which should be performed mindfully with good intention. He firmly believes that God will not ignore any good deed or sin even though it is regarded as a small thing to men. He observes that many Muslims were in great loss for neglecting this aspect in their daily lives.³²³ All of these suggest that al-Ghazālī places importance on inner purification, both

³²¹ See further discussion in *Iḥyā'*, IV.7, 379-381, 387-393; *Revival*, IV.7, 323-324, 331-333. See also Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazali*, 171-173; 'Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy*, 260-263; Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, 117-119.

³²² For further discussion, see *Iḥyā'*, IV.7, 368-373; *Revival*, IV.7, 321-323.

³²³ *Iḥyā'*, IV.7, 371; *Revival*, IV.7, 322.

from vices and bad intention, as the foundation of all good deeds. For that reason, Muslims should always purify their hearts and rectify their intentions each time they want to perform any good deed.

6.4.2.2. *The Presence of the Heart and Mind*

Al-Ghazālī maintains that almost every kind of good deed, especially prescribed devotional acts, has its own inner meaning, significance, purpose, and effect on the soul or the heart, and therefore it should be performed attentively and consciously. Because of this he formulates and stresses the need for the presence of the heart (*ḥudūr al-qalb*) and mind. Smith argues that being a true mystic, al-Ghazālī was aware of the all-pervading presence of God and he was actively seeking for a conscious relation with Him.³²⁴ This state was not really emphasised, or rather was ignored by the majority of jurists and society of his time. It refers to a state when one's action and recital or speech are in the same state as one's heart and mind, and vice versa.³²⁵ It also constitutes the state of reverent mindset—to use Highland's term—which requires sincerity, thoughtful of the consequences of action, remembrance of God and one's real duty.³²⁶ Accordingly, Muslims should always be conscious and involve themselves in their actions, recitals, and thoughts. They should try their best to bring their hearts, the inner self, to be present in their religious observance. This state of course is not an easy task. It first needs a deeper knowledge and understanding of what one is doing, and some parts of this aspect are already addressed in the previous discussion of the inner knowledge. Therefore, Muslims should try to understand the real meaning, significance, and purpose of any good deed that they are going to perform, so that they can begin to appreciate it and are conscious in their performance, thus able to elevate an outward ritual practice to a spiritually fruitful act.

Another important aspect of knowledge is the knowledge of God (*ma'rifatullāh*). It is only when one realises the greatness of God, His attributes, rewards and punishment, as well as His grace, love, and mercy that one begins to realise the importance of His commands. Nevertheless, the presence of the heart and mind will not be easily achieved by mere knowledge, it needs constant training. Al-Ghazālī invites readers to train their

³²⁴ Margaret Smith, "Al-Ghazālī on the Practice of the Presence of God," *Muslim World* 23, no. 1 (1933): 17.

³²⁵ See *Iḥyā'*, I.4, 161-163; *Iḥyā'* 4, 44-49; *Revival*, I.4, 141-142.

³²⁶ See further James Highland, "Guidance, Tolerance, and the Reverent Mindset in the Thought of al-Ghazzali and Symeon," *The Muslim World* 94, no. 2 (2004), 262-264.

souls and their minds through the performance of good deeds and cultivation of good character, as well as through recollection of God and contemplation. He realises that at the first stage this would be difficult, but if always repeated a deed will become easier, and eventually will produce a good effect on the soul, thus producing a good character.³²⁷ To achieve this state, al-Ghazālī systematises the principle of opposition (*al-ta'arruḍ*). He realises that the majority of men cannot control their lustful desires, and therefore, they incline towards bad things and are not attracted to good deeds, or perform them inattentively. According to the principle of opposition, he suggests that men should practise the opposite character or deed of their lustful desires, and they should practise it repeatedly until it becomes easy.³²⁸

Al-Ghazālī also systematises the principle of the mean (*al-wasaṭ*), especially in ethics. This principle proposes that the middle state between the two extremes is the best. Quasem has observed that this principle is Qur'ānic, and it was first applied by Aristotle who was then followed by the Greek moralists and the Muslim philosophers.³²⁹ He maintains that the right means (*al-wasaṭ al-ḥaqīqī*) is a standard principle which is ascertained by the *Sharī'ah* and reason.³³⁰ In ethics, the right means between stupidity and wickedness is wisdom. Courage is the right means between rashness and cowardice. And temperance is the right means between greed and annihilation of desire. In relation to good deeds, the right means could be applied to the middle state between the two extreme practices of ignoring good deeds and pure ritualistic performance. It could also be applied to the middle state between a mere outward or exoteric observance and absolutely inward or esoteric observance. In this relation, the doctrine of the means proposes that both of these dimensions should be observed and balanced at all times. This is indeed among the objectives of al-Ghazālī's mission.

There are many examples which substantiate al-Ghazālī's emphasis on the presence of the heart and mind in performing good deeds. This is especially evident in his discussions of those good deeds which mainly consist of invocations and recitations

³²⁷ E.g., see *Iḥyā'*, IV.1, 46-47; *Revival*, IV.1, 46. See also Smith, "Al-Ghazālī on the Practice of the Presence of God," 18-20.

³²⁸ For instance, if a man finds that he is miserly and does not like to practise almsgiving, he should start to give money in charity. Although at the first stage he may do it with difficulty, and without sincerity, later on when this practice is repeated over time it will become easier. This principle is applicable to other kinds of good deeds and moral actions. He believes that this principle is the practical medicine to many vices or bad deeds as well as to sluggishness in performing good deeds. See *Iḥyā'*, III.2, 60-64; *Revival*, III.2, 55-57; 9, 274-275; IV.1, 16, 44-45; *Alchemy*, 754.

³²⁹ Quasem, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Good Character," footnote no. 9, 231.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

of the Qur'ānic verses, such as the ritual prayer, Qur'ān-recitation, praise or recollection of God, and supplication. In all these kinds of good deeds, Muslims should always try to understand their outward and inward actions and recital, and be present spiritually and mentally. They should always be conscious and realise that God is always present, and to actively engage in their deeds and recital. They should also be mindful, and experience or respond to the content of the recitation.³³¹

As regard the actions involved in prayer, al-Ghazālī explains where, when, and how the heart should be present. For instance, when covering the outer body, Muslims should realise that they need to cover their inner body especially when they want to face God. This is because God does not see the outer garment, but He sees the inner garment of the heart or the soul. Therefore, Muslims should be covered with the garment of fear, shamefacedness, remorse, and the likes. When turning to the *qiblah* outwardly, their inner self should turn away from the world to God. When performing bowing and prostration outwardly, their inner self should also bow and prostrate humbly before God.³³²

The presence of the heart and mind is not only required in those deeds that consist of recital, indeed it is always required in all kinds of good deeds, but might differ in degree. Certainly, those deeds that consist of recital will require more degree of the presence of the heart and mind. Nevertheless, since al-Ghazālī maintains that every good deed has its own inner meaning or inner dimension, the presence of the heart and mind should always be related to it. For instance, as stated above, al-Ghazālī maintains that almost every act performed in pilgrimage has its own inner meaning. Accordingly, the pilgrims should always be present and conscious of their state so that they can appreciate and experience the real meaning and objectives of deeds performed. They should realise that they are visiting God, the Owner and the Creator of themselves and of all creatures, and He is the Greatest King of all kings. This visit is like a slave visiting the greatest emperor in order to receive blessing. Therefore, they must try their best and hope that they may obtain a glimpse of God, and that their pilgrimage will be accepted.³³³

Likewise, the presence of the heart and mind is also required in performing almsgiving, fasting, and other kinds of good deeds. To mention briefly, in almsgiving,

³³¹ For instance, one should feel fear when reading verses that contain threat and punishment; should feel ashamed and humble when mentioning God's attributes and greatness, should hope and feel joy when rewards and Paradise are mentioned, etc. See *Ihyā'* 4, 60-70. For his view that unmindful recitation deserves punishment, see *Ihyā'*, I.8, 274-275; *Ihyā'* 8, 29-33; *Revival*, 8, I.8, 211-212; *Alchemy*, 330.

³³² For more discussion on this see *Ihyā'*, I.8, 274-275; *Ihyā'* 8, 29-33; *Revival*, 8, I.8, 211-212.

³³³ *Ihyā'*, I.4, 165-171; *Ihyā'* 4, 54-70; *Revival*, I.4, 144-147.

Muslims should give the money attentively and with pleasure because they should realise that they are fulfilling the command of God; that they are proving their witness (*shahādah*) by giving away the wealth that they love for the sake of God; and that they are purifying themselves from miserliness and doubtful or even sinful things that may involve their livelihood.³³⁴

As for fasting, Muslims should not be unmindful and satisfied with just abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relationships. Al-Ghazālī considers this as the lowest grade of fasting, the fasting of the general public (*ṣawm al-‘umūm*). Indeed, for al-Ghazālī, like other kinds of good deeds, fasting also is an active act of worship which requires the presence of the heart and mind. Thus, Muslims should always be conscious that they are performing the most beloved devotional act to God. They should actively guard all their limbs from committing any bad deeds. At a higher level, namely, the fasting of the elite among the select few (*ṣawm Khuṣūṣ al-khuṣūṣ*), they should *fast* their heart from all things other than God, and therefore, should be in presence with their God at all times. The thought of anything other than God will break their fast. This is the fast of the heart, the highest level of all fasting.³³⁵

6.4.2.3. Humbleness and Adoration of God

Since good deeds relate man and God, the servant and the Creator, Muslims should observe two inner preconditions that exemplify their respective states, and they could be represented by humbleness or humility (*al-tawādhū‘*) and magnifying or adoration (*al-ta‘zīm*). The former is directed towards man, the latter towards God. As a servant, man should have a sense of humbleness or humility. Adoration, glorification, magnification, and the like are to be devoted to God. For al-Ghazālī, this twofold inner precondition should always be cultivated in life especially when performing the prescribed devotional acts. This is especially pertinent in prayer and pilgrimage where there is direct communication and communion, or personal relationship between the servant and God. But, it can also be applied to other kinds of good deeds, such as the prescribed almsgiving (*zakāh*) and voluntary charity (*ṣadaqah*), Qur’ānic-recitation, recollection, and even in all everyday activities, such as eating, drinking, and working. The consciousness of God should always be cultivated and maintained in all of these activities. Only when a person

³³⁴ For further discussion of inner preconditions of almsgiving, see *Iḥyā’*, I.5, 212-221; *Iḥyā’* 5, 16-55.

³³⁵ For further discussion of inner preconditions of fasting, see *Iḥyā’*, I.6, 234-237; *Iḥyā’* 6, 23-32.

is conscious of God's presence, and understands the reality of his action, will they humble themselves in awe or adoration of God.³³⁶

Al-Ghazālī's discussion of the presence of the heart and mind in prayer as analysed above already necessitates humbleness and adoration, where Muslims should realise that they are in the state of worshipping God in every act and recital. Thus, they should be humble in all actions and recitals. They are also encouraged to recite additional Qur'ānic verses and praises and to perform supererogatory acts in prayer as an act of adoration of God. The action of bowing and prostrating are examples of a state of humility and submission to God, in which the latter is its highest degree. In prostration, Muslims put their faces—which is the dearest and noblest part of their body—on the ground or dust, which is considered as the humblest thing on the earth. They should perform this in the humblest way they could, where their inner self should also be in a state of humility and adoration of God.³³⁷

It is evident that the state of humility and adoration of God is also required even in those deeds that do not comprise recital of the Qur'ān or praises of God. An example of this is almsgiving, where it only involves an act of giving a certain amount of money on certain conditions and time. Outwardly, this kind of good deed requires a mere brief physical action, namely, the giving away of a certain amount of wealth, and no recital or praise is required. But, al-Ghazālī realises that this ordinary conception is incorrect, and indeed, is the root that reduces the spirit of devotional act to a mere ritual or habitual practice. In fact, the ignorance of the reality of almsgiving also leads to arrogance, pride, and ostentation. Because of this he reminds readers to understand the real meaning and purpose of almsgiving, for humbleness and adoration would not be possible without this realisation.

As indicated briefly above, the reality of almsgiving is that it is an act to prove one's faith in God, when a person gives away certain wealth or money that he loves for God's sake. Hence, the test or hardship contained in almsgiving is the need to *sacrifice* or spend the wealth not according to carnal desire, but according to God's will. In fact, it is also an act of the inner purification of the soul, especially from vices or diseases of the heart. In addition, it is also an act of expressing gratitude for God's countless gifts. All of

³³⁶ For instance, see al-Ghazālī's discussion of the inner preconditions of prayer in *Iḥyā'*, I.4, 161-163; *Iḥyā'* 4, 44-49.

³³⁷ See *Iḥyā'*, I.4, 169; *Iḥyā'* 4, 64-65.

these inner meanings suggest that almsgiving indeed gives benefit to the giver, and therefore, it should be performed humbly and with adoration of God.

In order to remove show and ostentation, al-Ghazālī recommends that almsgiving should be performed secretly.³³⁸ In order to remove pride and to cultivate humbleness, he discloses another inner dimension of almsgiving. He argues that the givers should not feel proud by thinking that they are the benefactors by giving almsgiving or charity. They neither should look down on its recipients, nor should they tell others about their alms or charity.³³⁹ On the other hand, they should realise that they are just fulfilling God's command, and that they are indeed only *mediators* decreed and entrusted by God in order to fulfil the right of the receivers, which has been given through them. In this way, the money is certainly the right of the receivers, and not their properties. Far from deserving the status of the benefactors for themselves and being proud of their gifts, they should highly regard the receivers and consider them as the real benefactors. This is because by receiving their alms or charity, the receivers have helped them in many ways. The receivers help them in fulfilling their obligation towards God, and thus freed them from the wrath of God. The receivers also indirectly help them in purifying their souls from vices and filth.

Thus, al-Ghazālī argues that the receivers' hands deserve to be on the upper level where they deserve to pick up the gifts or charity from the givers. The giver on the other hand should give it with humility and sincerity, and asking prayer from the receivers for their blessing and safety from God.³⁴⁰ They should always glorify, praise, and be grateful to God for His gifts, and for helping them fulfil their obligations.

Al-Ghazālī considers humility and adoration as among the common preconditions that are applicable to all kinds of good deeds which might differ in degree, and they should also be cultivated in daily activities. They represent the relationship between the servant and God. As every good deed performed accordingly is considered as a devotional act (*'ibādah*), therefore, this relationship should be cultivated and maintained throughout the performance.

³³⁸ *Iḥyā'*, I.5, 215-216; *Iḥyā'* 5, 32-35; *Revival*, I.5, 168.

³³⁹ *Al-Arba 'īm*, II.2, 50; *Jalan Pintar*, II.2, 30-31.

³⁴⁰ *Al-Arba 'īm*, II.2, 50; *Jalan Pintar*, II.2, 31.

6.4.2.4. *Fear (or piety) and Love*

Al-Ghazālī also systematises the other state of mental feelings towards God as well as establishing a personal relationship with Him through the performance of good deeds in traditional Islam. This can be represented by his view of piety (*al-taqwā*) or fear (*al-khawf*) and love (*al-maḥabbah*) of Allah. It is evident that he considers them as among the common inner preconditions that should be observed in performing any good deed. However, love is the highest in degree and it is observed by the lover of God. Theoretically, general Muslim society is already familiar with the concept of fear of God, and indeed, it is regarded as the most central concept in religion. Conventionally, Muslims perceive that *al-muttaqūn*, which is traditionally understood as those who fear God or as piety, as being the highest and ideal state of God’s servant. They believe that men are mere slaves, and because of this conception they could not realise the possibility of establishing a personal relationship with God. Accordingly, as Simon Van Den Bergh has observed, the love of God is not only unfamiliar within traditional Islam but is also not accepted and even opposed to some degree.³⁴¹

Al-Ghazālī agrees that Muslims should fear God, but he strongly believes in the possibility of establishing a personal relationship with God as represented in the concept of love of God. Indeed, this is among his primary goals as it is of Sufism. In addition, his view of *taqwā* or *al-muttaqūn* is not limited to the traditional understanding, but he develops the theory of fear of God further, proposing that there are several kinds and stages of fear and piety.³⁴² Smith has observed that the highest form of fear according to al-Ghazālī is “not the fear of chastisement, nor even sin, but only the servant’s fear lest he should be debarred for ever from the contemplation of the Eternal Beauty.”³⁴³ With regard to piety, Quasem argues that al-Ghazālī believes in the existence of outward and inward piety, the latter being higher and noble in degree.³⁴⁴ Moreover, al-Ghazālī maintains that there are several other spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*) or stages of Muslims after *taqwā* or *al-muttaqūn*, such as *al-ṣiddīq* (pl. *al-ṣiddīqūn*: those who are truly sincere or truthful) and *al-muqarrab* (pl. *al-muqarrabūn*: those who are brought near).³⁴⁵ All of these suggest that his understanding of fear and piety is dynamic and beyond the

³⁴¹ Simon Van Den Bergh, “The ‘Love of God’ in Ghazālī’s *Vivication of Theology*, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1, no. 4 (1956): 305.

³⁴² For al-Ghazālī’s view on this, see *Iḥyā’*, IV.33, particularly the second part on fear, 155ff; *Iḥyā’* 33, 25ff; *Jalan Pintar*, IV.2, 185.

³⁴³ Quoted in Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 166. See *Iḥyā’*, IV.3, 167-168; *Iḥyā’* 33, 52-53.

³⁴⁴ Quasem, “Aspects of al-Ghazālī’s Conception of Islamic Piety,” 135-148.

³⁴⁵ See *Iḥyā’*, IV.33, 156; *Iḥyā’* 33, 28; *Revival*, IV.33, 122-123.

traditional view, and that there are still other higher spiritual stations, from which personal and intimate relationship with God could be made possible.

In *Iḥyā'*, al-Ghazālī discusses fear and hope together as among his mystical virtues, and this forms his most celebrated theory of ethics. Although it is true that all the ethical items that he discussed should be observed in every stage of life, in the context of this current analysis, hope together with shame are best categorised as the common primary inner conditions that should be observed after completing any good deeds.

In ethical and mystical aspects, al-Ghazālī considers action on account of hope and love as higher in degree than action on account of fear.³⁴⁶ But in his discussion of good deeds, he strongly advises readers to cultivate the feeling of fear of God. In this context he is discussing the initial spiritual stations (*awā'il al-maqāmāt*) that are mainly addressed to the general Muslim society as well as novices who want to traverse the spiritual path to God.³⁴⁷ The degree of fear depends on one's knowledge of God's power, rewards, and punishments, as well as of his own defects and sins.³⁴⁸ Thus, the more a person has *knowledge* of these elements, the more his fear increases.³⁴⁹ In this regard, he acknowledges that the Prophet is the person who fears God most, for he was the one who knew God better than any other men.³⁵⁰

In discussing ritual prayer for instance, al-Ghazālī advises readers to fear God and to be in the state of awe (*al-hībah*) of Him.³⁵¹ He argues that awe is “an expression for fear [*khawf*] whose source is magnifying [*al-ta'zīm*],” he continues “for whoever does not fear is not called full of awe....”³⁵² This indicates that fear or piety is the foundation of magnifying and awe. As demonstrated above, Muslims should also have fear when they recite the Qur'ān, especially when the recital is about God's punishment, wrath, Hell, and the like. In discussing the details of the inner preconditions of almsgiving (*zakāh*), he makes the quality of God-fearing (*al-atqiyā'*: those who fear God)³⁵³ with some other criteria as the first out of six qualities of the receivers.³⁵⁴ The importance of fear in fasting is already highlighted by the Qur'ān (2:183) where it states that fasting is prescribed so that God-fearing or piety may be attained. As will be discussed further in the following

³⁴⁶ *Iḥyā'*, IV.33, 144; *Iḥyā'* 33, 6-7; *Revival*, IV.33, 114. See also Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 166.

³⁴⁷ *Iḥyā'*, IV.33, 155; *Iḥyā'* 33, 26.

³⁴⁸ *Iḥyā'*, I.4, 162; IV.33, 155-156; *Iḥyā'* 4, 45-46; *Iḥyā'* 33, 26-27; *Revival*, I.4, 142.

³⁴⁹ See *Iḥyā'*, IV.33, 155-156; *Iḥyā'* 33, 26-27.

³⁵⁰ See *Iḥyā'*, IV.33, 156; *Iḥyā'* 33, 27.

³⁵¹ *Iḥyā'*, I.4, 161-162; *Iḥyā'* 4, 44-45; *Revival*, I.4, 141-142.

³⁵² *Iḥyā'*, I.4, 162; *Iḥyā'* 4, 45; *Revival*, I.4, 142.

³⁵³ Also translated as the pious.

³⁵⁴ *Iḥyā'*, I.5, 219; *Iḥyā'* 5, 48; *Revival*, I.5, 171.

discussion, to this al-Ghazālī adds that the state of God-fearing should be observed even after completing the fasting and other kinds of good deeds, such as fear that God would not accept their deeds.

As regards love, it is not only the most important inner precondition especially to those who wish to attain the higher eternal happiness, but the highest spiritual station on the path to God, and the ultimate goal of Sufis and those who really want to establish a personal intimate relationship with God.³⁵⁵ This state is achieved when one does anything absolutely for the love of God, neither for rewards, nor for the avoidance of punishment. Indeed, al-Ghazālī admonishes those who do good deeds in order to get rewards from God or to avoid His punishment. For him, true lovers will do any good thing absolutely out of sincere love, and desire nothing in return for their piety and good deeds. Thus, in one of his letters to kings and government officials, he writes:

Those who try to get any recompense and reward for their piety from God, the Mighty, the Glorious, in this world or in the Hereafter in the form of Paradise are not true lovers. Those who have surrendered their will to God, they have undoubtedly nothing to do with Paradise and its comforts. Their only object is nothing but the friends. The only true mystic motive is the love which desires not the gifts of God, but God Himself and which cannot rest until it is transformed to the Divine thought.³⁵⁶

This stage of performing good deeds out of pure love is certainly highly mystical. It could be argued to be too ideal for general society at large. But, as I have argued, al-Ghazālī addresses different levels of people, namely, those who simply seek Paradise and those who want to establish an intimate relationship with God. The latter kind of person should understand the reality and advance the quality of their good deeds, and one of its inner preconditions is the performance of good deeds with love, which is also the ultimate degree of sincerity. In the mystical aspect, al-Ghazālī maintains that when an intimate relationship with God is attained, there is no more need for fear and hope, for love is the highest spiritual station among them.³⁵⁷ He argues that constancy of vision of God is the goal of the spiritual stations, and in such a state, fear and hope are considered as factors that could distract the lover from viewing his beloved (God). This distraction will cause

³⁵⁵ For analyses of al-Ghazālī's conception of love in mystical aspect, see Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, Chap. 12, 173-197; Simon, "The 'Love of God,'" 305-321; 'Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy*, Chap. 11, 174-185.

³⁵⁶ *Letters Gh.*, 11:58. See also 12:67.

³⁵⁷ *Iḥyā'*, IV.33, 155; *Iḥyā'* 33, 25; *Revival*, IV.33, 121.

deficiency of vision, or in other words, it is regarded as the veil towards attaining the real goal.³⁵⁸

Al-Ghazālī's formulation of love of God as the highest inner precondition of good deeds, embraces and transcends all the inner preconditions discussed above. Its sources are not limited to Islamic tradition, but as some scholars have observed, there are influences from Greek philosophy, especially Neo-Platonism.³⁵⁹ He acknowledges that the idea of love of God is a universal, eternal and divine truth, transcending any particular religious and philosophical traditions.³⁶⁰ When a person has been imbued with the love of God, he will reflect this in performing good deeds to the best of his ability, and is ready to sacrifice dear things for the beloved. Such deeds come out of a pure and single motive, done consciously and attentively. Such a person will perform many other supererogatory deeds—such as the night vigil prayer (*tahajjud*) and recollections—especially in solitude with his beloved. He will not feel difficult or bored in performing them, for difficulty and tiredness have been removed from them and replaced with pleasure. His heart and mind are always in the state of remembrance of God, and he is always trying to please God, the only beloved which has grasped and filled his heart.³⁶¹

Al-Ghazālī's emphasis on love can be also found—either explicitly or implicitly—in his discussions of different kinds of good deeds. For instance, he argues that the reason for being unmindful in prayer is because of the love of things other than God. As long as a person does not love God more than any other things, he will not be able to abstain from remembering those things that he loves in prayer.³⁶² In almsgiving, al-Ghazālī already recalls that it is prescribed in order to prove one's love of God, namely, by giving away some wealth that one loves for the sake of God. Complete loyalty to God is required, and love of things other than God should be banished from one's heart.³⁶³ Likewise, many actions in pilgrimage also require love and obedience, especially those actions whose wisdom cannot be grasped by reason.³⁶⁴ Indeed, pilgrimage itself is a higher form of expression of love of God, where the pilgrims leave behind all of their families and worldly life, and put their trust totally in God, and start their journey to Him. In fact, al-Ghazālī maintains that among the primary objectives of devotional acts is to

³⁵⁸ See *Iḥyā'*, IV.33, 155; *Iḥyā'* 33, 25-26; *Revival*, IV.33, 121.

³⁵⁹ See Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, Chap. 8, 105-132; Simon, "The 'Love of God,' 305-321.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 321.

³⁶¹ For more discussion, see *Iḥyā'*, IV.36, 329-338; *Revival*, IV.36, 277-289.

³⁶² *Iḥyā'*, I.4, 161; *Iḥyā'* 4, 44; *Revival*, I.4, 141.

³⁶³ *Iḥyā'*, I.5, 212-213; *Iḥyā'* 5, 25-29; *Revival*, I.5, 166-167.

³⁶⁴ See for instance *Iḥyā'*, I.7; 265-267, 269-270; *Iḥyā'* 7, 104-108, 117-118; *Revival*, I.7, 203-205, 207.

remember God, and the end of remembrance of God is to instil and maintain the intimate love of God. In discussing the praise or recollection of God, he realises that there are different stages of love of God, as well as the degree of difficulties faced by different people in turning their minds towards God. For that reason he advises readers to perform repeatedly recollection as well as other form of good deeds, until their desired effects and fruits are achieved.³⁶⁵

6.4.2.5. After Completing Good Deeds: Shame, Hope, and Trust in God

While the majority of jurists emphasise the observance of the outer preconditions of good deeds, I argue that al-Ghazālī maintains that the inner preconditions should always be cultivated even after one has completed his religious observances and other kinds of good deeds (e.g., ethical conduct). Indeed, they should always be practised until they become a physical and spiritual habit which will produce good character or virtues in oneself. This is evident in his view that the right observance of good deeds is the only means to attain spiritual ends, such as inner qualities or virtues, as well as intimacy with and constant love of God. Since he regards the inner dimension of good deeds as the essence, its observance should therefore always be continued. There are at least three common inner preconditions that should be observed at the end of the performance of any good deed, namely, shame (*al-ḥayā'*), hope (*al-rajā'*), and trust (*al-tawakkul*) in God. But this does not mean that they are only relevant at the end of any good deed. Likewise, it also does not suggest that the other inner preconditions are not applicable at this stage. Fear for instance, is also required in this state, but might be observed in a different aspect. In fact, al-Ghazālī maintains that all the inner preconditions should always be observed and nurtured at all stages of religious observance, however, shame, hope, and trust have their special relevance at the end of the performance of good deeds.

Thus, al-Ghazālī maintains that after completing good deeds, Muslims should feel ashamed of many deficiencies in their good deeds, and therefore, they should fear lest their deeds are not accepted. But they should also have hope in God that He may pardon them and accept their good deeds. Therefore, after they have done what they could, they should put their hope and trust in God. By proposing these inner preconditions after completing good deeds, al-Ghazālī has continued and extended the relationship between man and God. He strongly believes that the spiritual relationship should not

³⁶⁵ See for instance, *Iḥyā'*, I.9, 301-302; *Iḥyā'* 9, 21-25; *Revival*, I.9, 236-237.

come to a halt at the end with the end of any good deed, but it should always be nurtured and maintained throughout one's life.

To mention some examples, in discussing the inner preconditions of prayer, al-Ghazālī argues that after completing prayers Muslims should have shamefulness which is based on “the feeling of deficiency and the supposition of guilt.”³⁶⁶ They should feel ashamed of their various deficiencies of their prayers, such as failing to retain the presence of the heart or being unmindful of the meaning of the recital. Al-Ghazālī recommends supererogatory prayers (*nāḥīlah*, pl. *nawāḥīl*) as an antidote to *recompense* the deficiencies in their prescribed prayers.³⁶⁷ In discussing fasting, he also maintains that Muslims should fear lest their fasting will not be accepted by God.³⁶⁸ This state is universal, and therefore is applicable to all kinds of good deeds.³⁶⁹ Nevertheless, in all situations he advises readers to have hope and trust in God that He may accept all their deeds and forgive their sins and deficiencies. Muslims should not despair, but they should have a positive view of God's mercy, and leave the final decision to God.³⁷⁰ Hence, Muslims should always be conscious of God, and retain their spiritual relationship with Him even after they have completed good deeds.

Al-Ghazālī offers to traditional Islam unique consideration of the theoretical and practical aspects of the psychology or inner dimension of good deeds. He injects spirituality not only into a potentially arid body of theology as observed by McDonald,³⁷¹ but also into the practice of jurisprudence, formal religious observance, and some other disciplines of knowledge. Therefore, he is not only able to rediscover deep spirituality which has been neglected by the majority of Muslims—especially after the second century of Islam—but he also bridges the gap between various classes of people, fills in the lack of the spirituality, unites the heart (spirituality) and the mind (reason), harmonises and combines Sufism and the formal religious observance, and thus balances the unequal observance of the outer and inner dimensions of good deeds.

Like his interpretation of inner knowledge, his exposition of inner preconditions is also practical and indeed critically important to Muslims in this modern time. In fact, some of his views especially those on beautiful inner qualities are also applicable to the

³⁶⁶ *Iḥyā'*, I.4, 162; *Iḥyā'* 4, 45; *Revival*, I.4, 142.

³⁶⁷ *Jalan Pintar*, II.1, 28.

³⁶⁸ *Iḥyā'*, I.6, 235-236; *Iḥyā'* 6, 28; *Revival*, I.6, 185.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ For further analysis, see al-Ghazālī's discussion of hope and *tawakkul* in *Iḥyā'*, IV.3 & 5; *Iḥyā'* 33 & 35.

³⁷¹ Macdonald, “The Life of Al-Ghazzālī,” 72.

non-Muslim. This is because he is addressing not merely Muslims, but indeed a soul which transcends time, place, and race. His exposition of the psychology or inner dimension of good deeds can be considered as among his spiritual models devoted to humanity in order to awaken their souls and start their journey towards God. It is a practical model that Muslims should follow if they wish to improve the quality of their good deeds, and desire to attain a higher degree of eternal happiness. He develops a way which he believes can remove the rust and dust from good deeds, and therefore, can lead man to attain spiritual joy in their performance. He not only explains his views, but also draws a safe path based on his personal spiritual experience that all classes of people can traverse without deviation. His approach of combining the role of the mind and the heart does not contradict the Shari‘ah, in contrast, he firmly believes that it is the essence of Islamic teachings.

This helps demonstrate his great contribution in harmonising Sufism with the traditional Islam. He discloses the spiritual aspects of religious ritual and practices and presents them in a way that is understandable and practicable to different groups of people. Indeed, this contribution is among his enduring legacies to the Islamic world in particular, and to humanity in general.

Al-Ghazālī has attained a great abiding success that no other Muslim scholar before or after him has ever achieved in different sciences.³⁷² He was an extraordinary thinker and exceptional scholar of various disciplines of knowledge. Perhaps it can be claimed that he was not only successful in rediscovering the spiritual dimension of Islam and synthesising Sufism with the traditional Islam, but he is indeed the shining pearl of Islamic spirituality, the spirit or heart of Islam.

³⁷² For al-Ghazālī’s great status and achievements, see for instance Watt, introduction to *Faith and Practice*, 13; al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 191; Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 215, etc.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Both Augustine and al-Ghazālī have bequeathed great and abiding contributions through their analysis of the inner dimension of good deeds, focusing not just on faith, but on intention, inner meaning and inner preconditions. For Augustine this is formulated in terms of the will, while for al-Ghazālī emphasis is placed on the heart. In their different ways, they both explore inner meaning and inner preconditions of good deeds, essential in their view for the improvement of the soul, and thus for enhancing the relationship between man and God. Both Augustine and al-Ghazālī place great emphasise on the observance of this kernel of good deeds, without which they would appear only as outward actions that are devoid of real value. Some aspects of these issues will be analysed in this chapter, beginning with a brief comparison of the general position and approaches of Christianity and Islam to good deeds, and their relationship to faith. Next, it compares aspects of the thought of Augustine and al-Ghazālī that are related to good deeds. This includes their theological foundations, their general views of faith and good deeds, their spiritual insights and goals, as well as their analyses of the inner dimension of good deeds.

While in both Christianity and Islam faith has always been recognised as important alongside good deeds, however, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī introduce a psychological element into their understanding of good deeds. They believe that professions of faith alone are not enough, as the worth of any activity depends on inner disposition. Nevertheless, the necessary inner dimension of good deeds is not simply faith (as traditionally emphasised in both Christianity and Islam), but a disposition of what Augustine calls the will, or al-Ghazālī the heart. In this respect both thinkers deepen the psychological dimension of their respective theological traditions and religious observance, providing new depth of teaching, in the framework of their respective religious traditions.

Thus, despite the evident doctrinal differences between their religious traditions, Augustine's focus on the will as underpinning the spiritual value of good deeds can be usefully compared to that of al-Ghazālī on the heart. Each thinker is interested in the psychology of good deeds, prioritizing the notion of intention in their own way. While Augustine's thought has been much studied by Christian scholars, just as that of al-

Ghazālī has been much studied by Muslims, understanding of both common ground and differences between these two thinkers is potentially of great value in deepening interreligious understanding.

7.1 Faith and Good Deeds in Christianity and Islam

The Biblical and Qur'ānic concepts of faith are not confined to a passive intellectual assent, but they require an active participation or commitment from a believer, signified in proper performance of good deeds. Since both Christianity and Islam have their own history, development, and theology, there are differences in their theological frameworks and degree of emphasis on the question of faith and good deeds. In Christianity faith centres on Christ's salvific work in redeeming mankind from sin. This doctrine is absent in Islam, which focuses more on faith in an absolute monotheistic concept of God known as *Tawḥīd*. Indeed, Islam rejects the Christian doctrine of the identity of Jesus Christ as both Son of Man and as the eternally begotten Son of God (the Qur'ān, 5:72-73, 116-117), for this contradicts the foundation of *Tawḥīd* which teaches that God is unique and one in His essence, attribute, action, and power. Islam teaches that Jesus was among the righteous prophets (the Qur'ān, 3:45-48; 5:75) as well as one of the five *Ulul 'Azmi*-Prophets (Arch-Prophets) (the Qur'ān, 33:7; 42:13). There is, therefore, no concept of "Christ's salvific work" in Islam. Jesus is revered in Islam more for his message in calling people back to the One God. Islam teaches that the performance of good deeds should be devoted directly to God, and therefore, the concept of mediator, such as Christ, the church or priesthood is not acceptable in Islamic theology. As such, some specific types of good deeds are different, particularly those in the form of specific observances, such as sacramental practices in Christianity.

Christianity responds to the potential legalism of the Jewish tradition by devoting much emphasis to faith or the spiritual dimension of religious observance. In the New Testament, this approach is demonstrated by Jesus and Paul, where both are reacting against empty ritualism and legalism, whether of contemporary Jews or Judaizing Christians. Both criticise those who are purely dependent on the Law or pious action. Nevertheless, they do not reject the necessity of good deeds. In fact, they attempt to explain the right way good deeds or religious Law should be performed, emphasising their inward observance. They believe that too much dependence on outward observance can diminish the essence of good deeds, which is spiritual and conducive to spiritual development. Such action reduces the spiritually fruitful dimension of good deeds to mere

physical motion of outward performance. Because of this, both Jesus and Paul censure those who depend on the sufficiency of good deeds or religious observance alone. In another context, when faith has already been internalised, then good deeds cannot be overlooked. This is signified in James' contention that "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."¹

Islam similarly warns against the danger of empty legalism, or reliance only on faith, and seeks to restore the balance between outward and inward observance, as shown by its emphasis on both faith and good deeds. Many Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic traditions as well as commentaries support this contention, indicating that both faith and good deeds are the essential requirements of being a Muslim, and that there are various great rewards and severe punishments for both good and evil deeds respectively.

In both religions, the relationship between faith and good deeds has generated several interpretations, generating both controversies and heresies. These alternate interpretations are mainly related to the relationship and connection of faith and good deeds to salvation. In the New Testament, different positions on this issue are represented by Paul and James. In the time of Augustine, they are exemplified by those movements such as Manichaeism, Donatism, and Pelagianism. This issue was again exacerbated and reached its culmination in the 16th century, resulting in the schism between Protestantism and Catholicism.

In the early centuries of Islam, this issue captured the attention of the Khārijites, Murji'ites, and Mu'tazilites, each being regarded as heretical by mainstream thinkers. In al-Ghazālī's time, there were other groups whom he calls the "seekers after truth," some of whom he perceived as holding inaccurate or misleading interpretations on the issue. As a Sunnite scholar, al-Ghazālī was opposed to the Shī'ite doctrine of the Ismā'īlites, whom he described as the Bāṭinites. Indeed, there is a slight difference of opinion on the issue in the Sunnite tradition itself, as represented by the view of the Ḥanafites and the other three schools of law (the Mālikites, Shāfi'ites, and Ḥanbalites). All of these demonstrate that the issue of faith and good deeds is not only important in capturing the attention of many groups, but is also complex in generating different interpretations, some of which developed into controversies and heresies.

Although differing in theological framework and degree of emphasis, it cannot be doubted that both Christianity and Islam perceive good deeds as essential to the

¹ James 2:14.

perfection of one's faith. In fact, this analysis suggests that the concept of faith in both Christianity and Islam is dynamic in requiring good deeds. Nevertheless, the Biblical and Qur'ānic accounts of the nature and different dimensions of good deeds are rather general. This provides an opportunity for different interpretations. Augustine and al-Ghazālī are among the leading scholars who attempt to understand, practise, and share what they believe is the essence of the Biblical or Qur'ānic concept of good deeds.

7.2 The Theological Foundations of Augustine and al-Ghazālī: A Comparison

Augustine and al-Ghazālī were writing within the context of their religious traditions. Both introduce a psychological element that goes beyond outward performance of good deeds or external professions of faith. While there are significant differences on their theological frameworks, they share profound similarities especially on their sophisticated analyses of the psychology of good deeds as well as their spiritual insights into certain issues, and both devotedly attempt to synthesise them into their religious traditions. As will be examined further below, the most notable differences are that Augustine's theology accords a central role to Christ as the means for returning to God, whereas al-Ghazālī's is focused on the principle of *Tawḥīd* (the Absolute Oneness, Primacy, and Unity of God). Augustine places great emphasis on man's corrupted nature and deformed free will which necessitate absolute need for divine grace. Al-Ghazālī by contrast is concerned more with the impure heart that needs to be purified and beautified which forms a crucial step in spiritual journey back to God. In short, Augustine's analysis of human nature, at least in his later writings against the Pelagian heresy, became more pessimistic than that of al-Ghazālī, as he responded to various heresies. Despite these differences, they both share profound similarities particularly on the spiritual aspect of the relevant issues.

Both Augustine and al-Ghazālī are considered as among the most prominent proponents and defenders of their religious traditions, systematising certain theological and spiritual doctrines. Their thoughts about good deeds evolved significantly after engaging with different interpretations and most importantly after an experience of spiritual transformation.

Augustine was living during the formative period of Latin Christianity, the first century without persecution of Christians, when orthodoxy was not clearly specified, and when there were still a wide range of interpretations concerning what constituted orthodox belief. As a bishop he saw his role as a defender of orthodoxy and he felt

different interpretations and heresies to be the challenge to his authority. Al-Ghazālī on the other hand was writing at a time of great diversity of interpretation, with Islam being mostly understood and practised in purely ritual and legalistic approaches, and with Sufism having evolved quite separately from intellectual reflection. Although Islam was already long established, he observed that the essence of Islamic teachings had mostly diminished during his time, and therefore, there was a need for a revival. As a Sunnite Scholar, he was opposed to Shī‘ite doctrine, and opposed their views. He came to see his primary role, however, not as reacting to heresy (like Augustine), but in creating a synthesis between Sufism and traditional ritual practices. Nevertheless, he still devoted his time to criticise views that he disagreed with, especially those of the Bāṭinites.

Thus, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī maintain that widespread *dry* or even misleading interpretations and practices in their time have mostly reduced religion to either pure esotericism, or pure ritualism and legalism. Because of this, they—especially Augustine—responded critically to some of them, defending what they believed as the orthodox position and right interpretations of the issues. Nonetheless, they were also not satisfied with certain views and practices found within their own contemporary traditions. Hence, they both delved deep into the psychological aspect of the issues that they addressed, looking for the satisfaction of their minds and hearts. They observed that there was something missing or diminishing, namely, the inner or spiritual dimension of religious life and the spiritual relationship with God. Their fervent searching for these spiritual elements and truth paved the way to the evolution of their thoughts and interest in the psychological foundation of good deeds. Both of them underwent spiritual transformation, through which they attained what they believed to be the knowledge of the reality of things. Both thinkers evolved in their ideas, both before and after experiencing moments of profound spiritual transformation.

Against the Manichean fatalism, Augustine offered positive views of free will and good deeds. In the later Pelagian controversy, however, he focused more on the inner or spiritual dimension of relevant issues, developing his mystical views of deformed free will and the soul’s absolute need for God’s grace.

Al-Ghazālī’s thinking about good deeds similarly evolved both before and after his seclusion. Initially, there were no significant differences between al-Ghazālī and other jurists, with the exception that Ghazālī’s discussions are much more systematic and extensive. Starting from his seclusion phase, however, Ghazālī focused more on Sufism, offering a profound spiritual insight into relevant issues. He emphasised the real meaning

of *Tawhīd* which asserts that God is alone in all actions (*munfarid bi al-af'āl kullihā*), and that the whole life should be devoted to Him alone. His goal was totally spiritual and other-worldly, oriented towards spiritual union with God. Both Augustine and al-Ghazālī were convinced that it was God who endowed them this spiritual realisation and they believed that they should share their spiritual insights with their respective communities and readers. Therefore, they actively engaged in their societies and religious activities, breathing into them the warmth of spirituality.

Although both share profound similar spiritual insights, each was writing within a particular context. As an active bishop and pastor often overburdened with controversy, Augustine's spiritual transformation developed through a series of debates with several groups. Most of his writings, therefore, are apologetic or polemic in nature. Al-Ghazālī on the other hand underwent spiritual transformation through seclusion, abandoning his prestigious position and luxury life to be a detached spiritual thinker. Since Augustine was actively engaged in social and religious activities, and involved directly in different controversies, he did not have enough time to systematise his thought on good deeds. He was busy defending views which were extremely contested at the time. In contrast, freed from social and political pressures, al-Ghazālī was able to produce extensive systematic treatises on various issues including on good deeds. Although differing in context, each of them breathes fruitful spiritual insight into relevant issues in their own ways.

In order to furnish their thoughts, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī resort to various sources. As several scholars have observed, Neo-Platonism is by far the most influential foundation of Augustine's thought.² Although al-Ghazālī is critical of philosophy, he still synthesises certain ideas from Greek philosophy—particularly those of Aristotle—into his discussion, especially in ethics.³ Both firmly believe in the authenticity of their respective religious scriptures and traditions, and they offer some unique and profound interpretations of those relevant sources. Augustine draws on both the Old and New Testaments, attempting to synthesise the two. His relevant interpretations depend heavily on Paul and are also influenced by Ambrose. Although al-Ghazālī follows his own

² Leff, *Medieval Thought*, 35. See also Garvey, *Saint Augustine*; Highland, "Alchemy;" Alfred Warren Matthews, "The Development of St. Augustine from Neoplatonism to Christianity 386-391 A. D.: A Study of Augustine's Intellectual and Spiritual Development from His Conversion to his Ordination as a Presbyter of Hippo" (PhD thesis, St. Andrews University, St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland, 1958). For an analysis of the place of Platonism in Augustine's Trinitarian theology, see Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, esp. 13-20.

³ Frick argues that Neo-Platonism also plays a significant role in al-Ghazālī's autobiography (*Munqidh*). Van Den Bergh on the other hand observes that there are certain influences of Stoicism and Neo-Platonism in al-Ghazālī's conception of love of God. See Frick, "*Ghazālī's Selbstbiographie*;" Van Den Bergh "The 'Love of God';" Highland, "Alchemy."

spiritual path—as Smith has observed—he is still indebted to some prominent thinkers or spiritual masters, such as al-Junayd⁴ (830-910 CE), al-Makkī (d. 996 CE), al-Muḥāsibī (781-857 CE), and al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1108/1109).⁵ His sources are not limited to the Qur’ān and sound Prophetic traditions, but he also furnishes his discussion with other types of Prophetic traditions, various reports, and some other sources. Nevertheless, what is more important is that both Augustine and al-Ghazālī underwent radical spiritual transformations and utilised their personal spiritual experiences as the primary source and approach to relevant discussions. This led them to personalise and internalise the discussion of good deeds, infusing into them their personal spiritual insights.

Firmly believing in the authenticity of the Biblical narrative and Paul’s views regarding Adam, Augustine developed further and formulated certain doctrines, such as Original Sin and grace, offering a sophisticated analysis of what underpins them, namely, an acute awareness of the psychological drama of the human condition. Indeed, as Wetzel has affirmed, the story of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, as narrated in Genesis, is Augustine’s favourite *drama*.⁶ He uses it to justify his formulation of interrelated doctrines of Original Sin, deformed will, and absolute need for divine grace through Christ. His analysis focuses very much on human psychology and/or the inner self particularly on the importance of the will and its corruption through Adam’s fall or Original Sin, and the essential role of Christ in providing an opportunity for the soul to return to God. This justifies the absolute need for divine grace in whatever condition. Kenney has observed that Augustine’s books (particularly the *Confessions*) involve a deep reorientation of contemplation of the inner self which leads to inner journey towards God.⁷ A key objective for Augustine is to eliminate spiritual pride that can pave the way towards recognition of Divine Transcendence. Thus, Augustine emphasises man’s weaknesses and helpless state as a way to acknowledge God’s grace through Christ. His later theology relates almost all doctrines and theological issues to Christ and divine grace. Christ is considered as the central determining factor of various kinds of good deeds as well as theological doctrines, and grace as the essential element towards that

⁴ Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Junayd al-Khazzāz al-Qawārīrī, popularly known as Junayd al-Baghdādī, was one of the most famous of the early Persian Muslim scholar, Sufi, and even considered as the *Imām* of the world of his time.

⁵ See further, Margaret Smith, “The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1936): 65-78.

⁶ Wetzel, “Augustine on the Will,” 26:348-351.

⁷ Kenney, “Mystic and Monk,” 22:289.

realisation. Therefore, good deeds should be able to lead Christians towards the acknowledgement of divine grace through Christ.

Within the framework of Islamic theology, which is *Tawḥīdīc*, whereby the One and Absolute God is the centre of all issues, and all good things should be devoted to Him alone, al-Ghazālī focuses on the importance of an intimate relationship to God. This theological framework is Qur'ānic, and is the core essence of Sufism. Thus, good deeds should be done for the sake of God alone, such as to please Him or to attain nearness to Him. At a higher spiritual level, the performance of good deeds should reflect an intimate relationship with God, and therefore, they should be performed sincerely and attentively. Following Islamic teaching, al-Ghazālī does not offer any negative view about Adam and Eve, and therefore, their story does not play any great role in his theological formulations, as it does for Augustine. Al-Ghazālī believes that human beings are born in *fiṭrah*, namely, a good and pure state which inclines man towards goodness. The nature of human beings is therefore good, and all of them are given free will to carry their tasks. Nevertheless, like Augustine, al-Ghazālī also acknowledges the weakness of man, but not as *drastically* as Augustine. Although al-Ghazālī believes that man is naturally inclined to goodness (*fiṭrah*), he does maintain that there are lower or bad qualities (i.e., the beast, brutish, and satanic qualities) in man which indicate that—in addition to good inclination—there is also an instinctual inclination towards wrong desires. This concept could be compared to Augustine's thought of concupiscence which is regarded as evil quality and the real cause of vices or bad deeds. Yet, there are still significant differences relating to the theological foundation of the concept of sin or lower quality between Augustine and al-Ghazālī. For instance, while Augustine explains it as resulting from the effect of Original Sin still remaining after baptism, al-Ghazālī regards it as among human natural lower qualities that should be controlled, which has no relation to the *disobedience* of Adam and Eve. Because of these conceptions, both of them affirm that no one is free from sin or evil deeds, except Jesus or (in Islamic perspective) the prophets. This justifies the need for divine intervention, in the form of divine grace.

If in his later phase Augustine focuses on man's corrupted nature and deformed free will as always in need of grace, al-Ghazālī in his later period focuses on the impure heart and the need for its purification and beautification (i.e., with praiseworthy character) as the foundation of his *Tawḥīdīc* theology. Among the core assumptions of Augustine's thought is his belief in the grave consequences of the disobedience of Adam and Eve (e.g., Original Sin, the ruined relationship between human and God, deformed nature and

deformed free will), restored through Christ's salvific work, but still in need of redeeming grace. Al-Ghazālī on the other hand focuses on the heart or soul as the real essence of man and his deeds. He sees most of the ethical and spiritual problems come not from outside, but from within one's heart. He believes that man has free will and therefore is able, and indeed is compelled, to purify his heart or soul from its spiritual diseases (e.g., blameworthy character, vices, and evil deeds or sins). Therefore, he places a great importance on the need for purification and beautification of the heart. He argues that the right performance of good deeds should be able to accomplish this noble task. Thus, unlike the mature Augustine, al-Ghazālī has a more optimistic view of human nature, contending that man is born with a good nature and is able to work out his own happiness, a view once defended by the young Augustine in his Manichaean debate. Nevertheless, he also maintains that man needs God's help or grace, yet, the degree of his emphasis is not as radical as that of Augustine. What is drastic in al-Ghazālī's theology is the urgent and essential need for the purification of the heart or the soul from bad character and vices as well as its beautification with good character, good deeds, and other beautiful or lordly qualities. He insists that these are essential preconditions towards the realisation of the essence of religious life.

Another interesting point is that Augustine carefully employs a Biblical account which might suggest that God created Adam in His *likeness*, always interpreted as a reflection of God's beautiful attributes. Although this concept is not present within traditional orthodox Islam, and may be perceived as an anthropomorphic doctrine, al-Ghazālī is aware of some Prophetic traditions on this concept, and both he and Augustine believe that it is not to be interpreted literally. Unlike certain literal and anthropomorphic interpretations of this concept, Augustine's interpretation relates it to the inner spiritual substance of man, particularly the mind. Sufis including al-Ghazālī believe that this concept indicates that man is a great reflection of the wonderful arts of God's creation, where the spiritual heart plays a central role, such as that man can know God through knowing his reality (e.g., his own nature and heart).

Although the particular interpretation of this concept is different, there is a profound similarity in the thought of Augustine and al-Ghazālī. They argue that the concept indicates that there are *quasi-divine* beautiful qualities in man which should be nurtured. They are described as virtuous, lordly or angelic qualities, good character, inner

self, pure heart, or mind.⁸ They contend that although man is composed of different elements and qualities, he is able to develop his own self and progress towards attaining spiritual union with God. This is because man was initially created in a good condition, but later was polluted with vices—according to al-Ghazālī—or corrupted by Original Sin—according to Augustine. With this conception in their minds, therefore, they advise readers to purify their own selves from vices, to control lower qualities, as well as to nurture the good ones. Among other ways to achieve this state is through right observance of good deeds that retains the balance between outer and inner dimensions. Realising the lack of inward observance in the life and practices of their contemporary societies, therefore, they focus their discussion on the inner spiritual dimension of good deeds, addressing their deeper meaning, real purpose, and certain inner preconditions. They both insist that only through the balanced observance of outer and inner dimensions can good deeds be conducive to spiritual growth and able to nurture divinely beautiful qualities, reflecting the perfect attributes of God.

Being spiritually transformed, they both develop deep interest in the psychology of religious observance, and internalise their discussions of good deeds, addressing what they see as their neglected inner dimensions. They analyse the psychological state of man and his nature in relation to God, establishing their own different state and nature. They both acknowledge that man is a weak creature who is in need of divine grace, and God is all-powerful who is free to help (or not to help) any man. They also believe that the acknowledgement of man's weakness is conducive to spiritual growth, for it will open the way towards the realisation of the sovereignty of God and the necessity of grace. For Augustine, it is also the affirmation of the necessity and adequacy of Christ through his salvific work.

Another important similarity is that both Augustine and al-Ghazālī maintain that the realisation of man's nature and his religious psychological state is a practical spiritual approach to eradicate the self-centredness or self-pride,⁹ as well as vices or sins. They assert that those states or vices are harmful to spiritual growth and can become barriers towards establishing an intimate relationship with God. For instance, Augustine argues that those who put trust in man or in his deeds could render Christ dead in vain,¹⁰ and this state is among the factors that lead to pure ritualism or legalism, a position that he

⁸ *Creed*, 2, 546; *Reply to Faustus*, XXIV.2, 441; *Holy Trinity*, XII.7.10, 245.

⁹ I.e., selfishness, self-egoism, self-existence, or self-sufficiency independence of divine intervention.

¹⁰ See also Gal. 2:21; Rom. 4:5.

earnestly refuted. Al-Ghazālī contends that this state and other kinds of vices and sins bring harmful effects to the heart or soul,¹¹ which is the centre of spirituality, a position shared by Augustine.¹² In terms of their approaches on this, although both place quite similar great emphasis on it, Augustine is bolder than al-Ghazālī. This is perhaps because Augustine is involved directly in debates with those he perceived as adopting the views of legalist Jews and Judaizers relying on good deeds. He believes that this legalistic attitude would negate the sufficiency of God’s grace and Christ’s salvific work which could render “Christ is dead in vain.”¹³

In summary, Augustine and al-Ghazālī theorize the psychological element which they introduce into their religious traditions in different ways. While Augustine speaks about the primacy of will, al-Ghazālī speaks about the primacy of the heart. Augustine’s theology was shaped by his understanding of Paul’s notion that corruption of the human will was part of the human condition, what he calls “Original Sin.” Only through the grace of Christ can man return to God. In Islam by contrast, theology is *Tawhīdic*, oriented towards spiritual union with One and Absolute God. For al-Ghazālī, this spiritual union can be realised through the balanced observance of both inner and outer dimensions of good deeds, achieved through a pure heart. Because of that al-Ghazālī earnestly invites readers to purify and beautify their hearts, an important spiritual practice in Sufism.

Although differing in degrees of emphasis, both acknowledge the weakness of man and the necessity of divine intervention, particularly in the form of God’s grace. Augustine’s emphasis on this is greater than al-Ghazālī. This is because of his doctrine of Original Sin and his sense of human sinfulness. These conceptions further contribute to different views of man’s nature, in that Augustine offers a more pessimistic view than that of al-Ghazālī.

Yet even though both Augustine and al-Ghazālī employ different theological frameworks, they share profound similarities in spiritual insight. Both are concerned with spiritual growth, leading towards establishing an intimate relationship with God, the eternal happiness.¹⁴ They believe that the theological frameworks that they employ are

¹¹ E.g., they will darken or pollute one’s heart. See *Alchemy*, 743; *Iḥyā’*, III.2, 60; *Iḥyā’*, IV.I, 45; *Revival*, III.2, 54; IV.1, 53-54.

¹² *Baptism*, I.16, 568.

¹³ Gal. 2:21. See also Rom. 4:5.

¹⁴ For a comparative analysis of the concept of happiness in relation to eternal reward according to Augustine and al-Ghazālī, see Shaw, “City or Garden,” 233-324. For a comparison between al-Ghazālī and Aquinas, see Farina, “Moral Goodness,” 154-205.

not only conducive to such a purpose, but also *reveal* the essence of their religious teachings. Other aspects are analysed further below.

7.3 The General Views of Faith and Good Deeds

Augustine and al-Ghazālī offer dynamic views of good deeds and their relationship to faith, arguing that a constant performance of good deeds (and avoidance of evil deeds) is a necessary complement to an active faith. This is exemplified in their views that faith consists of theoretical and practical aspects, or inner and outer dimensions. They advise readers to retain a balance between these aspects or dimensions, and criticise those whom they perceive to hold extreme views of overemphasising or being indifferent to one over the other. For both, faith alone is not sufficient, but the notion of good deeds without faith is certainly rejected. Augustine insists that faith needs to be accompanied by hope and love, and it must be furnished with good deeds. Without them—especially love—faith profits nothing.¹⁵ This suggests that they are an indispensable part of a true faith. Al-Ghazālī shares quite a similar view. Nevertheless, his analysis of the relationship between faith and good deeds is more comprehensive, yet complex in certain contexts. This is because he is analysing different contexts or usages of faith in relation to others' interpretations, attempting to grasp their true meaning. He regards good deeds as a “superaddition” (*mazā'id*) of faith, just as limbs give perfection to man's body. His argument that the gift of imperfect or handicapped servant to a king—as the allegory of imperfect religious observance—is considered as a form of humiliation indicates that imperfect faith and good deeds are not sufficient, and indeed, are still at risk.

The emphasis placed by Augustine and al-Ghazālī on good deeds cannot be doubted in that they both encourage readers to observe religious duties, to lead a good life, and to inculcate or practise moral actions. Warning against a tendency in their societies to focus purely on external observance and ethical conduct, they are both concerned with their inner spiritual dimensions, which they regard as their essence. They believe that good deeds are not mere rituals or commands, but are the means towards the spiritual journey to God, filled with spiritual mystery and wisdom. Just as man consists of physical body and soul, they both maintain that good deeds also have the outer and inner dimensions. Al-Ghazālī's discussions of this issue, however, are much more detailed and systematic than those of Augustine. His analyses of different kinds of good

¹⁵ *Enchiridion*, 8, 361.

deeds always cover both the outer and inner dimensions. This systematic approach provides al-Ghazālī enough space to analyse relevant issues in more details.

Augustine on the other hand, tended to produce many of his writings in response to different controversies, and therefore, did not have enough opportunity to systematise his analyses scattered in different treatises. Notwithstanding, both al-Ghazālī and Augustine offer profound spiritual insights into relevant discussions of good deeds. In addition to outward observance, they highlight the need to observe the inner dimension of good deeds, through which the soul can effectively relate to God. Therefore, the right performance of good deeds should contribute to strengthening an intimate relationship between man and God.

In their time, realising widespread misunderstanding of the practice of good deeds, they urge readers to have deeper understanding of their real meaning and purpose. They also explain some inner preconditions that should be observed when performing good deeds. These will be analysed further below.

7.4 The Spiritual Insight and Goal

Claudia Reid Upper rightly argues that “[i]n this combination of rationality and mysticism al-Ghazālī can, perhaps, be compared to St. Augustine who similarly gave his mystical experience orthodox interpretations.”¹⁶ Both Augustine and al-Ghazālī were concerned with spiritual attainment, the highest degree being the spiritual union with God. Among other ways, this is attained when the soul has already established within itself lordly qualities. Because of this they focus on the improvement of the soul or the inner self, the essence of man and the centre of spirituality. They both agree that the goodness of the soul depends on how *near* is its spiritual distance to God. The nearer or closer the soul comes to God, the more decency and higher grade of happiness it will attain and vice versa. In order to achieve a higher spiritual state, they internalise the discussions of good deeds, and they invite readers to internalise their performances. They maintain that without observing the spiritual dimension, good deeds are less effective, and could be useless or even counter-productive. Realising the importance of this, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī earnestly try to *rediscover* the essence of good deeds that they observe have been generally ignored after the early centuries of their religious traditions. They formulate or systematise certain relevant doctrines and spiritual methods or concepts

¹⁶ Upper, “Al-Ghazālī’s Thought,” 23.

within their own religious frameworks that can help readers understand the reality of religious life. Augustine formulates the doctrine of the consequence of Original Sin, the deformed will, and man's absolute need for prevenient grace especially through Christ. Al-Ghazālī systematises the concept of wayfarer, namely, spiritual journey to God (*fanā'*; self-absorption, self-dissolution, or self-annihilation) and the concept of intimate relationship with God. He also formulates the doctrine of the soul or the heart, its diseases and the method of its purification and beautification.

Since both Augustine and al-Ghazālī regard the right performance of good deeds with spiritual realisation as the key towards the attainment of such a spiritual state, they do not believe that good deeds, especially those pertain to religious deeds, as mere outward observance of physical motion. In fact, both of them remind readers not to be content with the normal performance of good deeds, and they even remind them of the risk of gaining rewards or avoiding punishments as the only reason for their performances, for such actions are not really conducive to spiritual growth, and do not reflect an intimate relationship with God.

In order to open the way towards realising the essence of good deeds, both of them invite readers to contemplate their essence or reality, through learning their real inner meaning, significance, and purpose. Although Augustine does not really focus on a detailed discussion of good deeds, he explains to readers the meaning and real purpose of some contents of the Jewish Law and the new Christian dispensation, and attempts to synthesise them. Even though his discussion of good deeds is not systematic, his analysis is profound, filled with spiritual insight. He internalises the discussion of good deeds by relating them to Christ and divine grace. He also gains spiritual inspiration from different great figures or sources, such as Paul, Ambrose, and Neo-Platonism. Although Neo-Platonism is not part of Christian tradition, he believes that there are some concepts and spiritual inspiration that he can utilise in a Christian perspective. As Leff has observed, there are strong affinities between Neo-Platonism and Christianity, in that "the whole emphasis of Neoplatonism was upon essentially spiritual, immaterial nature of reality."¹⁷ In fact, Neo-Platonism provided Augustine with a way to return to Christianity, and its influence on him is significant, even if it did not offer salvation in itself.¹⁸

¹⁷ Leff, *Medieval Thought*, 35.

¹⁸ See Chapter 4, part 1, *The Background and Context of Augustine* and Chapter 2, *Biographical Studies, Publications and Scholarly Research on Augustine*.

Al-Ghazālī's approach is much more extensive and systematic. He analyses particular parts of primary religious observances as well as ethical conduct and customary practices, breathing into them his spiritual insight. His systematic analysis of right knowledge and action is the important key towards this realisation. In most cases, he explains the reality or inner meaning, significance, and purpose of good deeds that he discusses. In addition, he also proposes and systematises some of their inner preconditions. His analysis is profound, relating each good deed and the various actions involved in it to spiritual dimension and the divine realm.

Although differing in matters of theological framework, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī emphasise the need to observe the inner dimension of good deeds which they regard as their essence. By offering an analysis of the inner dimension of good deeds, they were both able to revitalise and transform potentially arid practices implemented through duty, and relate them to a divine end. Nevertheless, both work within their own different religious frameworks. Augustine establishes his discussion to Christ, contending that Christ has laid down an exemplary model. He is described as a person with the qualities of utmost humility, sincerity, and total obedience and love. Following Jesus, Augustine is critical of pure ritualism and legalism, and is concerned with establishing an intimate relationship with God through the realisation of the real essence of the Law and human weaknesses, as well as other religious practices and moral actions.

Affirming the revelation, al-Ghazālī on the other hands relates his discussion to what he believes as the real understanding of *Tawhīd*, acknowledging that in reality God is the only agent of all actions and all actions should be devoted directly to Him. He reminds readers to realise that good deeds are among the means towards journeying to God. They are one of the essential *provisions* of a wayfarer or traveller in the path of God, which can also prevent him from worldly greed, leading towards spiritual attainment and eternal happiness.¹⁹ Good deeds should be able to strengthen the relationship between man and God, for they are the reflection of one's understanding, fear, and love of Him. The more one knows God, the more one will be engaged in his performance. In addition, al-Ghazālī sometimes allegorises good deeds as a gift which is presented by a servant to a great king. A defective gift is only considered as a humiliation which deserves punishment. Because of this, he advises readers to be mindful and to observe certain inner

¹⁹ *Iḥyā'*, III.6, 220-221; *Revival*, III.6, 168.

preconditions in performing good deeds. This conception also leads him to argue that each kind of good deed including the smallest customary action has its own significance and will be questioned by God. He believes that this spiritual state of good deeds was observed by the early generations of Muslims (the *tābi'ūn* and the *tābi' tābi'ūn*) and the prominent Sufis, but has been widely ignored from time to time. In addition to the Prophet, the Companions, Jesus, as well as some early prominent scholars and Sufis are among his favourite references and models.

In summary, there are certain significant differences and profound similarities between Augustine and al-Ghazālī on the spiritual aspect of good deeds. The differences can be found in their formulations of certain relevant doctrines and spiritual methods which are mainly related to their different theological frameworks. For instance, as already examined above, Augustine's spiritual insight and goal are oriented towards Christ as the path back to God, whereas al-Ghazālī's spiritual insight and goal are oriented towards focus on the unity of God alone, a *Tawhīdic* theology. Writing within different situations and contexts, al-Ghazālī's discussion of relevant issues is much more systematic than that of Augustine. Nevertheless, both of them are interested in the psychological aspect or inner dimension of the issues, offering profound spiritual insights into their discussions. They believe that good deeds contain spiritual dimensions and therefore they urge readers to understand their inner meaning, significance and real purpose. Their central objective is to rejuvenate good deeds and transform them as the way to journeying to God, leading towards establishing an intimate relationship with Him. Accordingly, for both, good deeds are never an end in themselves, as they are only part of a broader process of personal transformation of returning to God, whether conceived through Christ, or through attending to the revelation offered by the Prophet, or through the realisation and observance of their inner spiritual dimension.

7.5 The Inner Dimension of Good Deeds

The inner dimension of good deeds is thus the real focus of both Augustine and al-Ghazālī. Although there are differences in the degrees of explanation and systematisation of the discussions of good deeds and their related issues, they both insist that there should be a balance between outward and inward observances. Al-Ghazālī's analysis on this is extensive as compared to Augustine, because he also explains the details of the outward observance before analysing the inner dimension of good deeds that he addresses. This is mainly because he was already a systematic jurist and prolific writer before his spiritual

transformation. The majority of his books that he produced after embracing Sufism are meant to provide reference and guidance to various levels of readers (both a wider public and educated elites, such as theologians, philosophers, mystics, and others). Augustine, on the other hand, only began to write on Christianity in his early years of conversion as a response to Manichaean critics of Christianity. Besides his extensive sermons (not considered here, but an important part of his output), his major treatises are written in response to different debates, generally focusing on a wider audience than a spiritual elite. Regardless of their different contexts, they both advise readers to strive for better and higher degrees of performance and spiritual realisation. This leads them to focus on the psychology or inner dimension of good deeds, connecting it with the inner self or soul and God. Realising that this spiritual realisation was lacking in their time, they were earnest to share their spiritual insights with their contemporary societies and readers.

As mentioned briefly above, without denying that there are some significant differences in their analyses—particularly in theological framework—Augustine and al-Ghazālī share profound similarities in their insights into the inner dimension of good deeds. They invite readers to understand the reality or the essence of good deeds through analysis of their deeper meaning, real purpose, and sometimes the significance of relevant good deeds that they address. Augustine applies this approach to his analysis of the Old Jewish Law, where he attempts to synthesise it with the New Christian *Law* (teachings). He explains his understanding of the inner meaning and real intention of the Old Law and the significance of the New *Law*. Al-Ghazālī always furnishes his discussions of relevant kinds of good deeds with an analysis of these three aspects—the deeper meaning, the real purpose, and significance. He also applies the same approach to his discussion of ethics and customary practices.

Another important similarity is that both offer an analysis of some inner preconditions that need to be observed when performing good deeds, such as right motive or intention, humbleness or humility, fear, and love. They maintain that a mere observance of outer preconditions can lead to pure ritualism and legalism. Since they insist that the performance of good deeds is among the ways to relate to God, there should be certain manners that need to be observed as signified in their views of the inner preconditions of good deeds. Al-Ghazālī's analysis of inner preconditions is systematic and detailed, because he devotes special section on this topic (*al-shurūṭ al-bāṭinah*) in each of his discussions of different kinds of good deeds. Augustine on the other hand only

offers limited expositions to some of them. Nonetheless, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī urge readers to observe certain inner preconditions in performing good deeds.

Both Augustine and al-Ghazālī place great emphasis on inner purification and right motive or intention. They affirm that God sees the inner self, and therefore, they insist that good deeds should come from a pure heart, which is the essence of man, and it should be directed to God, the real essence of beings and the highest good which is also the source of all good things. Accordingly, they emphasise the need to purify the inner self and to furnish it with virtue or lordly qualities. They urge readers to inculcate the right motive or to be sincere in intention, namely to perform good deeds for the sake of God. At a higher spiritual level, they invite readers to perform all good things for the love of God, rather for reward or out of fear of punishment.

To perform good deeds with love is thus the central concern and highest form of inner preconditions in the analyses of both Augustine and al-Ghazālī. This level represents an intimate spiritual relationship between man and God, and is the objective of spiritual journey. Although they realise that this stage is difficult to achieve, they encourage readers—especially those who want to attain a higher spiritual stage or higher degree of eternal happiness—to strive for it. Augustine contends that love is the completion of faith and hope, the end and fulfilment of all commandments. Al-Ghazālī also acknowledges that it is the highest spiritual station, involving no further need for fear and hope. Thus, in the thought of both Augustine and al-Ghazālī, love transcends all other kinds of inner preconditions. When this stage is attained, a person will perform good deeds continuously and at his best without needing to be reminded of any reward or punishment, for his heart is imbued with love of God, the source of all good actions and good will.

Other inner preconditions that capture the attention of Augustine and al-Ghazālī are humility, hope in God, and fear of Him. These qualities, although inferior to love, are important for the majority of Christians and Muslims. They are the prerequisite that should lead to love. Thus, both Augustine and al-Ghazālī assert that man should always be humble before God especially when he is performing religious observance. This is achieved when a person understands his weak nature as a dependent creation and acknowledges the great nature of God. Because of this, they place emphasis on explaining the weak nature or the lower qualities of man in their own ways. Augustine's approach on this is drastic as compared to al-Ghazālī, because he relates it to the radical consequences of Original Sin, contending that human nature and will have been deformed

and now are totally dependent on God's grace. Firmly believing that human beings were born in *fiṭrah* (a good and pure state), al-Ghazālī on the other hand relates it to different lower qualities in man²⁰ and the impure heart. Thus man should purify and beautify his heart in order to nurture the good quality in his soul.

When a person realises the great nature of God, His beautiful attributes, countless rewards, and severe punishments, he will be able to inculcate hope in God and fear Him. However, some of Augustine's and al-Ghazālī's views of these qualities—which form other inner preconditions of good deeds—are unique. For instance, Augustine's conception of fear is not identical to fear of punishment as generally understood, but it extends to a personal intimate relationship with God. His conception of fear proposes that a person should not only fear God, but also should be fearful of separation from Him. This conception suggests that when performing something, a person should be mindful and fear lest his deeds will cause this separation. Augustine identifies this fear as what is meant in the Bible, the fear which perfects charity.²¹

With regard to hope, Augustine argues that man should only trust and hope in God alone, not in man or in the religious Law. He reminds readers that putting trust and hope in anything other than God will only nurture the fleshly self and pride, the state of self-deception that he earnestly criticises.²² As argued above, Augustine places great emphasis on this. He criticises the legalist attitude that would negate the sufficiency of Divine grace and Christ's redemption of humanity.

Al-Ghazālī extends hope and fear together with some other qualities to the end of the performance of good deeds. His conception of fear is also not limited to fear of punishment, but fear that good deeds are not accepted by God. At a higher level, it is a fear lest one is expelled from the contemplation of Eternal Beauty, a view that is quite similar to Augustine's. Because of this, man should be ashamed of many deficiencies in their good deeds, and be careful and mindful in his activity or performance, especially when it relates to prescribed religious observance. Accordingly, he urges readers to inculcate the presence of the heart and mind when performing good deeds. This later inner precondition of the presence of the heart and mind is not really highlighted by Augustine.

²⁰ I.e., the qualities of the beasts of prey (*al-sab'iyah*), brutish qualities (*al-bahmīyah*), demonic qualities (devilish or satanic qualities; *al-shaiṭāniyah*).

²¹ *Holy Virginity*, 39, 633-634.

²² See *Spirit & Letter*, 17, 236; 21.XIII, 239-240.

Nevertheless, Augustine does urge readers to purify their hearts and to have good motives or intentions.

As regards hope, al-Ghazālī, like Augustine, also contends that hope and trust should be directed only to God. A person should not only hope for God's rewards, but should also wish for God to pardon his sin and defects, and accept his good deeds. Al-Ghazālī maintains that a spiritual relationship with God should not end with the completion of any good deed, but should be always nurtured and strengthened. Thus, by proposing certain inner preconditions at the end of the performance of good deeds, he continues and extends the spiritual relationship between man and God beyond a mere performance of good deeds.

There are of course some other inner preconditions of good deeds that are addressed either directly or indirectly by both Augustine and al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī's discussion of this is much more systematic and extensive. But it cannot be doubted that both of them offer profound spiritual insights in their own ways into those issues relevant to good deeds, especially on their psychological or inner aspect. Their central concern is with the essence, specifically the inner spiritual dimension of good deeds that can bring positive effects to the soul and is conducive to spiritual journey to God. Since they address the spiritual element of the issues, some of their views are applicable and practical to other religious traditions, and even to humanity at large.

CONCLUSION

As observed in the first two chapters, there are not many studies which directly compare issues related to good deeds according to Christianity and Islam in general, and Augustine and al-Ghazālī in particular. While there is much literature on individual thinkers, there is still very little of a comparative nature, and therefore, comparative study of the issue of good deeds according to these two thinkers is still underdeveloped. Researchers working on one religious tradition, are often little informed about similar issues within another religion. As argued before (Chap. 1), comparative study of the attitudes taken towards good deeds is also relevant to the present time when more and more people tend to see and value things materially, physically, and outwardly, developing not only materialism and selfishness, but also stereotypes and prejudice towards those different from themselves. While many people have only stereotyped impressions towards those different from themselves, we need to go beyond by promoting deeper knowledge of the great thinkers of both religions. This research is among the efforts to remedy these deficiencies, attempting to promote interreligious understanding and thus contributing to the emerging field of comparative theology. In addition, by focusing on inner dimension of good deeds, we can find many commonalities between different faiths, and this can be a remedy for, or at least can reduce, current tensions between different religions who, in most cases, only focus on theological differences. This is because history shows that adherents of different faiths become less violent when they focus more on spiritual dimensions.

To be precise, this research examines the attitudes taken towards good deeds in Christianity and Islam, with particular reference to Augustine and al-Ghazālī. Although Christianity and Islam differ in their approaches, both agree that good deeds are an important part of religion. Both Augustine and al-Ghazālī have left great and abiding contributions through their analyses of the psychology or inner dimension of good deeds (e.g., inner meaning and inner preconditions), essential in their view for the improvement of the soul, and thus for enhancing the relationship between man and God. There are significant differences on the theological frameworks employed by Augustine and al-Ghazālī. Despite these differences, they share profound similarities on some related issues, particularly on spiritual aspect of good deeds.

From the analysis of their scriptures, it is evident that although differing in approach both Christianity and Islam agree that faith should be accompanied with good deeds, and indeed both insist that faith without good deeds is insufficient. Moreover, the Biblical and Qur'ānic concept of faith is dynamic, requiring an active performance as exemplified in the fulfilment of certain duties or prescribed actions.

Although Augustine and al-Ghazālī acknowledge that faith is the primary foundation of being a believer, they also firmly defend the necessity of good deeds, affirming their close relationship with faith. However, they are not satisfied with the *dry* understanding and practices of good deeds within their contemporary society, which they saw as reducing the spiritually fruitful dimension of good deeds to a mere outer ritual, leading to pure ritualism and legalism. In their own ways, they both explore inner dimension of good deeds, placing great emphasise on the need for the balanced observance of their outer and inner dimensions. Because of this, both—especially Augustine—offer critical analyses of different interpretations that they disagree on, and even engaged directly in debates concerning the relevant issues.

Both underwent spiritual transformation and utilised their personal spiritual experiences as the primary source and approach to their discussions of good deeds and other related issues. Both regard life as the journey of the soul towards God, and consequently, both propose that good deeds—especially religious devotion—should be viewed as among the practical and spiritual paths that are conducive to such a journey. To express their spiritual insights, however, they employ different theological frameworks which are in harmony with their religious traditions. There are significant differences between them on this point. Augustine follows closely Paul's interpretations of various relevant issues and formulated several doctrines based on them as well as on his own interpretation and experience. He also resorts to other sources outside his religious traditions, such as Neo-Platonism. Augustine's theology emphasises the primacy of Christ as the path through which the soul may return to God. His teaching about the consequences of Adam's sin, namely, the corrupted nature of man's will and his continuing need for grace are all part of his theological framework. This is in accordance with Christian teaching about the soul returning to God through Christ.

Following the teachings of Islam, al-Ghazālī's theology on the other hand is based on the Absolute Oneness, Primacy, and Unity of God—a *Tawhīdic* theology—for whom all good things should be done, leading towards establishing an intimate relationship with Him. To furnish his discussions, he resorts to various sources, including

philosophy, weak prophetic traditions, reports from prominent scholars and Sufis, and even from so-called Christian sources to some extent.²³ However, there are no concepts of Original Sin or a mediator—such as Christ in Christianity—in his theology. He affirms that all human beings are born in *fiṭrah*, namely, a good and pure state. In fact, following Islamic teachings, he firmly believes that Jesus was among the five *Ulul ‘Azm*-Prophets (Arch-Prophets), who do not have divine nature (i.e., as the Son of God) as held by Augustine and Christianity.

Both Augustine and al-Ghazālī delve deep into the psychology of man and the inner dimension of good deeds, which they believe is their real essence. Augustine presents man’s nature in more a pessimistic view than al-Ghazālī. He argues that even though the guilt of Original Sin has been wiped away in baptism, man’s nature and will still bear the mark of Original Sin, and therefore, are still in absolute need of God’s grace, without which no man are able to will and do good things. Firmly believing that the human state is good and pure, al-Ghazālī on the other hand maintains that all men are able to purify their hearts and performing good deeds. Nevertheless, in relation to God, both acknowledge the weakness of man and the need for God’s grace. Yet, the degree of emphasis is different, as Augustine’s approach is radical as compared to al-Ghazālī. This is in part because they were writing in different contexts. Augustine was an active bishop who directly involved in different debates. He focused on answering those views that undermine the sufficiency of God’s grace and Christ’s salvific work. Al-Ghazālī on the other hand was a detached thinker who focused more on the improvement of the soul. However, it has been acknowledged that both Augustine and al-Ghazālī are the first thinkers from their respective religious traditions who speak of the psychology of man in such profound ways. Augustine focuses on the primacy of will, and al-Ghazālī on the primacy of the heart. These themes are central in their discussions of good deeds, and it is evident that the themes play an important role in the achievement of their spiritual goals.

Since both Augustine and al-Ghazālī regard good deeds as the practical and spiritual path of journeying to God, they both earnestly invite readers to understand their

²³ There are several attempts to prove that al-Ghazālī refers frequently to Christian sources (e.g., some quotations of Jesus and Paul) to the extent arguing that he has been influenced by Christian teachings, or that he resorts to Christian sources because he could not find a satisfactory explanation from Islam. However, as I have argued in Chapter 2, these claims are inaccurate. For some other studies, see Morris S. Seale, “A Biblical Proof Text in al-Ghazālī,” *The Muslim World* 54, no. 3 (1964): 157-159; S. M. Zwemer, “Jesus Christ in the Ihya of al-Ghazali,” *The Muslim World* 7, no. 2 (1917): 144-158.

inner dimensions which they regard as their essence, demonstrated in their analyses of the need to know their real meaning, significance, and purpose. They also elucidate some inner preconditions that need to be observed when performing good deeds. There are significant similarities between their views on these issues. Both believe that all of the above aspects are essential requirements in transforming good deeds from mere outward observance, or from pure ritualism and legalism to spiritually fruitful practices which are conducive to spiritual growth, and personal journey towards establishing an intimate relationship with God.

Nevertheless, Augustine and al-Ghazālī analyse good deeds and some other related issues in different ways. Being overburdened with controversy and responsibility, Augustine's analyses of good deeds are rather occasional and found scattered in his treatises. This has been the greatest challenge of the current research. On the other hand, being trained as systematic theologian and thinker, as well as freed from socio-political encumbrances, al-Ghazālī's analyses are systematic, encapsulated in his celebrated works, especially *Iḥyā'*. Nonetheless, as established above, both of them breathe spirituality into their discussions, and thus leave abiding spiritual inspiration to readers. Through their sophisticated analyses of the psychology or inner dimension of good deeds, they are able to elevate an outward ritual practice to a spiritually fruitful act, paving a way towards enhancing the relationship between man and God. The emphatic reading and understanding of their writings and spiritual insights will not only provide an understanding of their enduring theoretical teachings outside the confines of a single religion, but will also inculcate greater mutual interreligious understanding and toleration.

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