



12 Harvey Road, Cambridge.

May 24. 1913.

Dear Professor Goldziher,

Many thanks
for your kindness in sending
me your instructive notice of
Massipon's Kitāb al-Tawāsim.

This book I have not yet
seen but I hope that a copy
will soon reach me. The
text (to judge from the extracts
which Massipon published last
year) is very obscure, & the

Persian commentary leaves many difficulties unexplained, but M's edition is a most valuable piece of work on account of the great number & variety of sources which he has utilised. I confess that the results of his research have led me to doubt whether the task, on which I have long been engaged, of collecting materials for a general history of Sufism is not altogether premature in the present state of our knowledge - whether it is desirable to attempt a synthesis based on facts that cover only a small part of the enormous mass of materials, which no single student could hope to survey in the course of a lifetime, even if they

were accessible to him. My present idea is to publish a series of studies in early Sufism, partly biographical & partly doctrinal; and this I look forward to doing as soon as my edition of the *ḡā'ib* (of which about a third is already printed) has appeared. Lately I have been studying the *Mawāḡif* of al-Niffari - an extremely interesting work on speculative mysticism - of which there are MSS. in the Bodleian & the India Office Library. The author uses a terminology which (so far as I know) is peculiar to himself; thus the term *ḡā'ib* takes the place of *ḡā'ib*, and so

writer. In this treatise p^{is} ,
is the lowest stage, then comes
 سُؤْفَرَة , then سُؤْفَر , then
 سُؤْفَرَة . Is it not possible that
~~the~~ the sentence referring to the
 سُؤْفَرَة of the Mutazilites & the
Sufis makes a distinction between
philosophy & theology, between a
 سُؤْفَر founded on reason & one
founded on faith? At any rate,
the exaltation of p^{is} above
 سُؤْفَر is just the opposite of the
view commonly held by Sufi
writers.

I feel that I ought not to conclude
this letter without expressing something
of the gratitude which a pupil owes
to his teacher. I have learned much
from others - Robertson Smith, Nöldke,
& de Goeje & Broune - but not so much
from them as from your books & writings.
Yours sincerely
Reginald A. Nicholson.