

Introduction by the Author

In the Name of God, the AllCompassionate, the All-Merciful

*Every heart that is not aflame is no heart;
A frozen heart is nothing but a handful of clay.
O God! Give me a breast that sets ablaze,
And in that breast a heart, and that heart
consumed with fire.* 1

There is a shared commitment to love and compassion among all great religions of the world. The virtue of love is universally recognised. However, it is sometimes understood in different ways within different traditions. In Islam, the concept of love is one of the most important concepts. This fact manifests itself in Islamic philosophy, theology, mysticism and ethics; indeed, in some aspects, it plays the most crucial role. For example, in defining the Islamic point of view on the relation between God and the whole universe in general, and between God and mankind in particular, love has the most significant place. Love is so central in Islam that it is seen as "the firmest handhold of faith" and "faith is nothing but love for the sake of God and hate for the sake of God". God has created the world out of love. We, treat human beings with love and asks them to love.

In the present work, I have tried to elaborate on the significance and the doctrinal foundations of love in Islam. I have studied both Divine love (for Himself, for all beings and for mankind) and human love (for God and for fellow humans). Of course, this short study can be considered just as an introduction to the subject of love.

To understand the Islamic point of view, my study has involved considerably scriptural exegesis. I have greatly relied on the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* as the primary sources of Islamic thought. The *Sunnah* can be regarded as the application of the Qur'anic teachings to the problems of life as exemplified in the

Prophet's deeds, sayings and approvals (of the deeds or sayings of others in his presence). The *Sunnah* of the Prophet is narrated by Muslims generation after generation, especially by his household, *ahlul-bayt*. I have also referred to some masterpieces of great Muslim mystics, philosophers, theologian and poets on the subject of love. What I have done in this work has been to discover a generally accepted picture of love in Islam. Unless otherwise mentioned, I have tried to refer to common points and what is acceptable to all Muslims. Indeed, in principle, there seems to be not much difference between different scholars on the subject at issue.

I have to say that there have been many works completely or partly dedicated to this subject. However, there is still more to be said on this important and vital issue, especially for English readers. The present work enjoys access to original Islamic sources in Arabic and Persian, while considering available literature on the subject in English as well. In any case, I hope this study can make a useful contribution to the field of Islamic studies.

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Knowing God and getting close to Him that I felt I would no longer be able to continue my ordinary life. Despite all the plans that my parents and I had previously made for me, I decided to start a completely new life. I left my city and moved to the city of Qum, in which one of the main Islamic seminaries exists for more than one thousand years. I devoted my life to knowing more profoundly about Islam and, more importantly, to get closer to God. Although I am not happy with the success that I have made, I am quite confident that I have made the best decision for myself and I have chosen the brightest way, the path of love.

I would like here to thank all who read and made comments on the draft of the present work. I would like also to thank my husband and children for their encouragement, love and support throughout the period of my research for this work. And at last but not least, I would extend my feelings of deep gratitude to God in place of His every favour upon us and upon all His servants, past and still remaining.

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London, February 2001

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