

A Brief Consideration of the Spiritual Path

It may possibly be imagined that the claim that Islam has expounded the mystical way by means of intimations and symbols is unfounded and amounts to chasing false ghosts. However, sufficient meditation upon Islamic teachings and formulations, and a weighing of these against the agitated and ecstatic states of the Islamic mystics, will prove the opposite and will show that hidden within themselves and by allusion these teachings elucidate all of the stages of perfection which are traversed on the mystical way, although a true and detailed comprehension of these states is only possible through mystical intuition.

The travellers on the spiritual path, who as a result of their natural and primordial readiness have surrendered their hearts to the infinite Beauty and Perfection of the Truth, worship God only out of love, not out of hope for reward or fear of punishment, for to worship Him in order to gain Paradise or to avoid hell is in fact to worship that very reward and punishment in place of God.

As a result of the divine attraction which has engulfed their hearts, and more particularly as a result of having seen that God has revealed the verse

"Therefore remember Me, I will remember you" (Qur'an 2: 152)

and hundreds of other Qur'anic verses where the remembrance of God is spoken of, wherever and in whatever state they happen to be the mystic travelers are occupied with His remembrance: "

"Such as remember Allah, standing, sitting and reclining." (Qur'an 3: 191).

And when they hear the messages of the Beloved,

"Lo! in the heavens and the earth are portents for believers" (Qur'an 45: 3),

"And there is not a thing by hymneth His praise" (Qur'an 17: 44),

And

"And whither so ever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance" (Qur'an 2: 115),

they understand that all existent things are mirrors, each displaying the unique Beauty of the Truth in accordance with the possibilities of its own being. Other than their quality of being mirrors they have no existence in themselves.

Hence such men look to every phenomenon with love and eagerness and have no object other than to contemplate the Beauty of God. And when they hear God's messages

"O ye who believe! Ye have charge of your own souls. He who erreth cannot injure you if you are rightly guided (Qur'an 5: 105)

and

"Thou, verily, O man, art working towards thy Lord a work which thou wilt meet (in His presence)" (Qur'an 84: 6),

they understand that by the nature of creation itself they are bound within the framework of their own souls, and other than the way of their souls there is no road open to them to reach God.

Whatever they see or find in the expansiveness of the world they see and find in themselves. It is here that man understands that in fact he is cut off from all places and things and other than he himself and his God there is no one else.

Even if such a person is in the midst of a hundred thousand people he is alone, and if others see him in the midst of a crowd, he sees himself in a spiritual retreat far away from everyone else, no one being with him but God. It is then that he looks at himself and sees all things within himself, and he understands that he himself is also only a mirror in which the unique Beauty of God is manifested, and that he has nothing but God.

When he has remembered God in this fashion and has cleansed his heart and emptied it of vanity and frivolity, the remembrance of God becomes firmly fixed within his soul and he enters among the ranks of the people of certainty (*al-yaqin*) and God's promise.

"And serve thy Lord till the inevitable (al-yaqin) cometh unto thee" (Qur'an 15: 99)

is fulfilled. The doors of the kingdom of the heavens and the earth open to him and he sees that all things are possessed absolutely by God.

"Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those possessing certainty." (Qur'an 6: 75).

The person endowed with such a vision will behold the three stages of Divine Unity. First the Unity of God in His Acts will be revealed to him. He will see with certainty that it is God who directs the Universe and all that it contains, and that the innumerable causes and agents which are at work in the world,

whether theirs be the activity of free will or of necessity, are all painted upon the canvass of creation by His all-powerful Hand. Cause and effect and the relationship between the two—each is brought into being and executed by the One.

"And unto Allah belongeth the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth." (Qur'an 45: 27).

Secondly the Unity of God's Names and Qualities will be disclosed to him and he will see without intermediary that every quality of perfection which appears in the world, and likewise every quality of beauty and of majesty, whether life, knowledge, power, might, grandeur or whatever, is a glimmer from the infinite Source of Light which is the Truth, and that these qualities shine forth through the variegated windows which are the existences of things with the distinctions they possess.

"Allah's are the fairest names. (Qur'an, 7: 180).

Finally in the third stage of Divine Unity he will behold that all of these varied qualities are the manifestations of an infinite Essence, and that in reality each of them is identical with every other and all are identical with the Essence Itself.

"Say: Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Almighty." (Qur'an 13: 16).

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