

The Devout: The Architect of Our Souls

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Monday, 09 January 2006

Although some people today disdain moral values, the inner depths of the human being, and the importance of the life of the heart and spirit, there is no doubt that the route to true humanity passes through them. No matter what some people may think, the successful application of these dynamics to life offers the only solution that can save the person of the present. People today must be relieved from the social, political, cultural, economic, and various other depressions that are bending them over double, forcing their back into a misshapen twisted form. This deformation has been caused by an onslaught of crises and pressure which have endlessly afflicted the person of today. This vital mission can only be realized by the devout and godly, who never think of themselves, except insofar as they see their own salvation through the salvation of others.

In our view—by which I mean the view of those striving to be truly Muslim—to be saved in the eyes of God depends on the zeal, effort, and perseverance of being a savior. We see that our safety and security in the near and distant future lies in becoming a refuge or sanctuary for other souls, in pumping strength into the willpower of others, and in enlivening the hearts of others; we always want to be among those who face and fight the fire, and who turn their backs on personal or individual interests. The morality of our attitudes and actions is directly related to the consciousness of responsibility, which has been idealized in our spirits.

Such a spirit of responsibility, which almost always exceeds the boundaries of our individuality, forms the nucleus of the order that totally embraces existence and is therefore considered to be the most significant source of universal peace. When this spirit is combined with determined zeal and well-guided willpower, we have achieved the two essentials that are all we need for our salvation. They also speak in an effective voice and an eloquent language that will convey to humanity the spirit and essence or reality it needs.

Those who have turned their backs on existence as a whole and the general order, and who have spent their lives within the dark labyrinth of the ego have never been seen to attain salvation; far from attaining salvation, they have even caused other people, people who held them in high esteem, to perish. The periods in which humanity has made progress have always been those in which we have walked hand in hand with existence. Today, those who plan to walk toward the future should abandon egoism and walk forward wholeheartedly, hand in hand with all things and with every person. Will and ideals will find their true value as long as they are backed by the sincere support of formally constituted bodies, and by closely united zeal, effort, and the collective consciousness. In fact, the only way to become a community while still being an individual, to become a sea while still being a drop of water, and thus to acquire immortality, the only way to make others live and thrive, and to live with them, is to melt away in them and to understand one another, to become friends, fuse, and integrate with them.

From a different perspective, for a person to become a human in the full sense of the word, and to the extent to which we aspire, depends on their being under the command of the heart and on their listening to the soul despite their sensual and bodily concerns and their concern for earning a livelihood ('aql al-ma'ash). That is, in order for humans to know themselves and their surroundings better, they must, to a degree, look at everything and everybody with the eyes of their heart and evaluate and appreciate them with the criteria of the heart. It should not be forgotten that a person who has not been able to preserve the sincerity of their soul and the purity of their heart and who has not been able to remain as pure and clean as a child, no matter how great their mental, intellectual, and emotional wealth, no matter how vast their knowledge, culture, and experience, cannot inspire or inculcate trust in people, nor ever hope to convince them. This is the reason why so many people, except for those who pretend to believe and trust in someone due to fear, duress, and oppression, do not believe or trust certain politicians and those who hold power above logic, reasoning, and heart. Clean souls and pure hearts have always followed pure thoughts and honest acts. Clean hearts, which have preserved their innate purity, as indicated by some blessed words, are considered to be the place that belongs to Him and where He is known, like a hidden or buried treasure. The divine truth can be perceived and felt free from any quantity and quality to the extent of the heavenliness and cleanliness of that place. In fact, those who said "I saw the truth" always mean it in this sense. Carrying a core of tuba al-janna[1] in their hearts, those pure, timeless souls have reached the gardens of Paradise in this world, a place which everybody will probably or certainly see in the Hereafter; thus they have observed the universe in an atom, and are even considered as having reached the horizon of seeing God beyond that.

Indeed, the hero of the heart is, as the Qur'an and the Messenger of God have told us, the person of truth, who sees, thinks, and acts with all the faculties of such a conscience; whose sitting and standing are mercy, whose words and speech are mildness and agreement, and whose manners are politeness and refinement. They are the people of heart and truth who reveal and teach others the secret of knowing and perceiving the Creation from the inside, who can express the true meaning and purpose of the Creation. The ultimate goal of such a devout person is vast and very important, namely to carry every soul to eternal life, to offer everyone the elixir of eternity, and by escaping completely from their self, their personal interests, and their concerns for the future, they are able to be either in the depths of their self and inner world, or to be in the objective world, or to be in their world of the heart or to be in the presence of their Creator, and to observe and retain such significant and diverse relations all at the same time. Despite their own physical and material needs or poverty, they are a keen volunteer and altruist, and are always occupied and preoccupied with planning the happiness of the people around them. They are always developing for the community in which they live projects of peace, prosperity, and welfare, like the beautifully expanding patterns of embroidery. In the face of the sufferings and miseries experienced by their community and the whole of humanity, with a heart similar to one of

God's messengers, they endure palpitations, exasperation, and pangs of conscience.

They therefore struggle with the evil surrounding their own people and the whole world. While fighting it off, they do not engage in describing and reporting vain and idle things, because such description "leads astray and corrupts pure minds," but rather become restless, anxious, and take great pains to produce and implement projects that will resolve matters. They are heroes of Prophet-like resolution who tackle and overcome problems with a very serious love of duty, a very strong feeling of responsibility, and God-consciousness of restraint (ihsan[2]). A hero of resolution soars with the wings of weakness, helplessness, humility, and poverty, is always taut and ready for release, like the string of a longbow, with the joyful zeal of gratitude, and feels deeply the pain of responsibility and accountability for reviving universal harmony and truth. Their responsibility is such that whatever enters an individual's comprehension and conscious willpower never remains outside of theirs: responsibility for the creation and events, nature and society, the past and the future, the dead and the living, the young and the old, the literate and the illiterate, administration and security . . . everybody and everything. And of course they feel the pain of all these responsibilities in their heart; they make themselves felt as maddening palpitations, exasperation in the soul, always competing for their attention. It seems to me that this is the sort of resolve that is attributed to God's messengers, which makes people strive for that which is valued above all values in the eyes of God and which makes them acquire ascension of the soul and closeness to their Lord.

The pain and distress that arises from the consciousness of responsibility, if it is not temporary, is a prayer, a supplication which is not rejected, and a powerful source of further alternative projects, and the note most appealing to consciences which have remained clear and uncorrupted. Every person of spirit has the potential to exceed their own power and that of their community in proportion to the vastness of their pain, and can become a focal point for the strength and power of past and future generations. Let me remind you of the necessity here to differentiate between those who live and those who make others live. What we are always stressing is that it is those who live their lives in sincerity, loyalty, and altruism at the expense of their own selves in order to make others live who are the true inheritors of the historical dynamics to whom we can entrust our souls. They do not ever desire that the masses follow them. Yet their existence is such a powerful, inevitable invitation that all run to them, wherever they are, as if these devout people were a centre of attraction. The future will be the work of these devout people who can represent such a significant mission, showing their responsibility and exhibiting their accomplishments. The existence and continuance of our nation and the nations related to us will be permeated with the thoughts, inspirations, and outcomes of a new civilization and with the vast, reviving dynamism of a rich culture, carried aloft into the future on the shoulders of these devout people. They are the trustees of the sublime truths and the heirs of our historical riches.

What is meant by the heirs of history is to be the heir to all the accumulation—the known and the unknown, the great and the small—of the past, and to make use of and increase that accumulation in order to produce new compounds and a new synthesis; later to convey all these safely to the future generations, the true owners. If the devout do not fulfill the historic task of today and tomorrow, then they will have ruined today and wasted all our tomorrows. This responsibility is such that if the heir is lazy, heedless, negligent, or indifferent to it, or if they search for someone else to assign or transfer it to, or if they even start to long for the higher realms instead of their current task, because they have been attracted by the beauties of the Hereafter, then they will have betrayed the cause and history, and thus destroyed the bridges between us and the future. Rather, for our existence and its continuance, it is necessary, indeed vital, for us to look to the future and consider that the future will be ours, as such a view is extremely important for the function and effectiveness of our action to keep it as a headline above our feelings, thoughts, and plans. The alternative to this is to be disrespectful to our nation, to betray it. It is high time we supported all our institutions in all the fields of science, art, economy, family, morality, and religion, and we reinforced and raised them to the highest levels that they have yet been in history, as is their due. And we are looking forward to the arrival of such people of will, resolution, effort, and zeal. We are not in need of local or foreign grants, favors or ideologies. We need the physicians of thought and spirit who can arouse in all people the consciousness of the value of responsibility, sacrifice, and suffering for others; who can produce mental and spiritual depth and sincerity in the place of promises of passing happiness; who can, with a single attempt, make us reach the point of observing the beginning and the end of creation.

Now we are waiting, looking forward to the arrival of these people who have so much love for their responsibility and cause that, if necessary, they would even give up entering Paradise; people like this, if they have already entered, would then seek ways of leaving Paradise. Like Muhammad, the Messenger of God, who said, "If they placed the sun in my right and the moon in my left to abandon my cause, I would not until God made the truth prevail or I died in the attempt." This is the horizon of God's Messenger. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, a scholar exuberant with the rays that emanate from God's Messenger, bent double by the pain of his cause said, "In my eyes I have neither love for Paradise nor fear for Hell, and if I saw the faith of my people secure, I would be ready now to be burned in hell-fire." Likewise, Abu Bakr opened his hands and prayed in a way that would shake the heavens, "O my Lord, make my body so great that I alone fill up Hell and thus no place may be left for anyone else."

Humanity is terribly in need of people with inner depths and sincerity now, more than anything else, for people who suffer and cry for the sins and errors of others; who look forward to forgiveness and pardon of others before their own; who, instead of entering Paradise and taking their pleasures individually there, prefer to stay in the A'raf[3] and from there try to take all the people to Paradise along with them; and who, even if they enter Paradise, will not be able find time to enjoy the pleasures of Paradise because of their thoughts for others and their concern to save them from the hell-fire.

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[1] Tuba al-Jannah: Name of a tree in Paradise, with flowers and ripe fruit of every imaginable—and unimaginable kind.

[2] Ihsan: a. favor, benevolence, kindness; b. a restraining, keeping clear from sin or impropriety; c. acting and praying as

if seeing God, and being conscious of that He sees you though you do not see Him.

[3]'A’raf: The plain, field, which is in between, or separating, the Paradise and the Hell