

Introduction

In the Name of Allāh, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

Praise to Allāh Who knows the inner thoughts, Who tests the conscience, Who encompasses everything; His is the power and dominance over everything; blessings and salutations to the one who brought the glad tidings, the warner, the shining light, Muhammad, the master of messengers, and upon his progeny, the good ones, the pure.

The human heart, whereby man is granted distinction over all creation, is like a mirror: It is affected by what it receives of contemptible effects of ugly norms of conduct and wrongdoings. If the effects are praiseworthy, the heart's mirror becomes clearer, shinier, more illuminating, so much so that in it the reality of the truth becomes glittering, the truth about what is hidden from the beings becomes revealed, and the truth of the matter sought in the creed becomes obvious.

It is to such an intellect that the Master of the Faithful, peace be with him, refers when he says the following: "O servants of Allāh! The one who is the most loved by Allāh from among His servants is one who is assisted by Allāh against his own self (*nafs*), so he is somber, outfitted with fear, the light of guidance shining in his heart," till he says, "So he, with regard to conviction (*imān*), is like sun rays."

This is the heart that, upon the mention of Allāh, the most Exalted, the most Great, becomes fearful, and when His verses are recited, they increase its conviction and in it remembrance settles. Allāh Almighty has said,

"... Indeed, in the remembrance of Allāh do hearts find rest" (Qur'ān, 13:28).

If the effects are contemptible, they are like a dark smoke that rises to the heart's mirror, and it keeps piling up time and over again till the entire page of the heart is blackened, so it is totally dark. It becomes stamped with predomination, veiled from Allāh Almighty. The most Praised One has said,

"But the stain of the (ill) that they do is on their hearts! Truly they will be veiled from (the light of) their Lord that Day" (Qur'ān, 83: 14–15).

The Almighty has also said,

"Is it not a guiding (lesson) to those who inherit the earth after its (previous) residents, that, if We so willed, We could punish them (too) for their sins, and seal up their hearts so that they could not hear?" (Qurʿān, 7: 100).

Thus, He makes a connection between hearing and stamping on the hearts, stamping with the sins. Al-Kulaini, may Allāh be pleased with him, cites on p. 273, Vol. 2, No. 20, of his work *Al-Kūfi*, Zurārah citing Abū Ja'far, peace be with him, saying, "Every servant of Allāh has a white spot in his heart. When he commits a sin, blackness will enter into the white spot. If he repents, the blackness disappears, but if he keeps committing sins, the blackness keeps spreading till it covers the entire whiteness. Once it covers the whiteness, this individual will never go back to righteousness" It is the meaning of this verse:

"But the [black] stain of the (ill) that they do is on their hearts" (Qurʿān, 83: 14),

and perhaps the meaning of this narrative may bring to memory this verse:

"Thus does Allāh seal up the heart of every arrogant and obstinate transgressor" (Qurʿān, 40:35).

So, think about it and ponder. He, peace be with him, is also quoted as having said, "Hearts are of three types: a heart that is turned upside down, knowing no good: It is the heart of an apostate (*kāfir*), a heart that has a black spot, goodness and evil in it wrestle with each other; whichever wins overtakes him, and an open heart; in it there is a lamp that shines; its light never goes out till the Day of Judgment: It is the heart of a believer." He says "till the Day of Judgment" because this heart does not disintegrate when the body disintegrates; obedience to Allāh polishes the heart, while disobeying Him blackens it."

So, if the deeds are righteous and the rituals accepted, they have to bear an impact on the clarity of the heart, its *noor* and shine. The soundness of deeds, especially the rituals, has to meet the condition of being complete in their parts and meeting their conditions as well as undertaken exclusively for the sake of seeking nearness to Allāh Almighty.

If the deed lacks these conditions, when it lacks some of its parts or conditions, or if it is insincere, it may not instill *noor* into the heart, nor does it bear any impact on the heart's clarity and shine. When we see in ourselves and in our hearts that performing the rituals is not having any effect on our hearts, when we sense no *noor* for them within nor any effect without, although most or all of our worship meets the first condition, being inclusive of the parts and outwardly conditions, i.e. outwardly sound..., yet they lack the *noor*..., it is so on account of their lacking sincerity for Allāh Almighty; otherwise, why do not we put an end to committing what is abominable and detested?

Why do the springs of wisdom not flow from our hearts although the sacred tradition determines that they must flow in forty days according to his statement, peace be with him, "One who is sincere to Allāh for forty mornings, the springs of wisdom flow from his heart to his tongue"? And why is Satan playing

games with us, interfering in all our affairs, although he had made a pledge to Allāh Almighty not to tempt the sincere ones:

"Then, by Your might, I will put them all in the wrong, except Your servants among them, the sincere and purified ones" (Qur'ān, 38:82-83)?

This is only the outcome of our deeds being conjoined with insincerity. And I do not mean, when I mention sincerity being absent from our deeds, the high levels of sincerity that are among the characteristics of the friends of Allāh, those who are near to Him, for we have no share of such sincerity..., but I mean the lowest of its levels, that is, it contains no pretension which nullifies the deeds. If we sift through our deeds and rituals, we will find out that Satan has penetrated most of them and spoiled our deeds, as we will, God willing, explain.

Any deed undertaken in order to make a show is null and void according to the Sharī'a and has no bearing, no impact, no effect. We have to correct our deeds from this side and rid them of pretension for it is *shirk* in Allāh Almighty in adoration according to his statement, peace be with him, "Every form of pretension is shirk (polytheism)."

Since *shirk* has many branches, and since Satan and the *nafs* in this regard have hidden traps which nobody except a discerning critic can detect, this summary is written to seek benefit from statements by scholars of the hereafter and professors of ethics, especially the greatest professor, Imām al-Khomeini, may Allāh preserve his shade, pleading to the Master, the most Great, to make it exclusively for the sake of pleasing Him and not to let Satan has any share in it so it may be a means for salvation and a tool for forgiveness; surely Allāh grants success; surely He provides help.

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