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THE BOOK OF
TRUTHFULNESS
(KITĀB AL-ṢIDQ)

BY
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Ibn Mas'ūd : 'O son of a slave's mother ! Be not overanxious : whatever is destined will be, and whatever thou art given for sustenance thou wilt eat'.¹ The Prophet said to Ibn 'Abbās (the story is a long one) : 'So if thou canst work for God with acquiescence, in sure faith, it is well : if not, then in enduring patiently what thou hatest is great good'.² Note that the Prophet called him to the higher of the two states. A certain philosopher has said : 'When a man has achieved perfect abstinence, trust, love, faith and shame, then his acquiescence is true'. This is our view also : otherwise, acquiescence may manifest in men at different times and on different occasions, according to the degree of their faith, and from it they return to patience. A certain man has said : 'Acquiescence is a small thing. The believer's succour is patience'."

I said : "Expound to me the saying of the philosopher, 'The acquiescent man meets calamities with cheerfulness and gladness'." ³

He replied : "When a man is truthful in his love, there springs up between him and God a partnership of surrender. Suspicions depart from his heart, and he is content with the excellent choice of Him Whom he loves : he abides in His excellent dispensation, and tastes the food of existing through Him. His heart is filled with joy, bliss and gladness, and this prevails over the pain of calamities and hateful affliction. The name of affliction becomes as it were a lock to him, from which he seeks to emerge when great troubles come upon him : for sometimes he takes delight in his realization, namely, that God sees him in his affliction, and sometimes he realizes that God has recollected him, and therefore afflicted him, because He was not heedless of him, for all His omnipotence, undertaking to amend his affairs. For it may be that God sees him complaining unto Him, as a lover complains to his beloved ; or else he laments to

¹ Non-canonical.

² Non-canonical.

³ Cf. above, 'acquiescence is meeting calamities with hope and cheerfulness'.

God; or else he yearns that God may see him acquiescing in Him. So says (21b) God: 'O thou soul at rest, return unto thy Lord, well pleased and well pleased with'.¹ Intelligent men hasten to acquiesce with God in this world, before they pass into the next, and therefore depart from acquiescence to acquiescence. In this sense God says: 'God is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him: He has made ready for them gardens'.²

We have mentioned some of the outward qualities of the acquiescent man, so much as it was possible to mention in a book: but over and beyond these remain greater qualities. God is [our] help.

15. TRUTHFULNESS IN LONGING.

Next is Truthfulness in Longing after God. It is related that the Prophet used to say in his prayers: 'I ask of Thee, O God, the enjoyment of the life after death, of gazing on Thy face, and longing to meet Thee'.³ It is related that Abū'l-Dardā' used to say: 'I desire death, longing for my Lord'. It is related that Ḥudhayfah⁴ said: 'At death a friend comes in need: if a man regrets, he shall not prosper'. Shahr ibn Ḥushab⁵ is stated to have said: 'Mu'adh⁶ was afflicted with ulcers in his throat, and he said, Strangle me, if Thou wilt, for, by Thy might, I truly love Thee'.

'Ali ibn Sahl al-Madā'inī⁷ used to arise, when [men's] eyes were reposing in sleep, and call out in an anguished voice: 'O Thou, from the thought of Whom the hearts of His creation are distracted by the consideration of the regret which will come upon them when they meet Him! O Thou, from the longing

¹ Q. lxxxix, 27-28.

² Q. ix, 101.

³ Nasā'ī, *Sahw* ch. 62.

⁴ Died 36 h.

⁵ Died 100 h.

⁶ Ibn al-Ḥārith, one of the *ahl al-suffah*.

⁷ So emended: probably the same traditionist as is mentioned by al-Khaṭīb, *Ta'rikh Baghdād* XI, p. 429; Ibn Ḥajar, *op. cit.*, VII, p. 330.

for Whom the hearts of His servants are unmindful, though His hands were outstretched towards them before ever they knew Him ! ' Then he would weep, until his neighbours wept because of his weeping. Then he would cry out : ' Would that I knew, my Master, how long Thou wilt imprison me ! Raise me up, my Master, unto Thy fair promise : for Thou knowest what violent longing hath stirred me, and how long I have waited for Thee '. Then he would fall fainting, and continue so until he stirred to perform the morning prayer.

Al-Ḥārith ibn 'Umayr¹ used to say every morning : ' I have come to a new day, and my heart and soul are intent on loving Thee, my Master, and yearn to meet Thee : hasten then that meeting, before the black night cometh upon me '. In the evening he said the like : and so he continued for sixty years. (22a).

The man who longs after God is disgusted with this world, and with remaining therein : he desires death, and the ending of his span and lot. It is peculiar to him, that he seeks to be estranged from created things, and keeps himself alone in solitude and isolation : his occupation is with trepidation, yearning, grief, distress, sorrow ; with the violence of his love his breast is choked, and blushing and incoherence overcome him when the Beloved's name is mentioned, in Whom he rejoices ; his thoughts are pure, his zeal is quickened, and joy stirs in his bowels as he seeks to meet [Him]. Astonishment comes upon him, surprise, and bewilderment, at the very thought of attaining his expectation of the Expected One, so that he utterly forgets all his portion in this world and the next, except the vision of Him for Whom he longs. Yes, then at that time he is confronted with a fear that is indeed fear—that he will not attain his Beloved, but may be cut off from Him, and barred from reaching Him, and veiled from Him. Then he fears lest any accident befall him, while he is yet in the abode of affliction : long seem the

¹ al-Baṣrī, see Ibn Ḥajar, *op. cit.*, II, p. 153.

days and nights to him, until he shall depart from this world whole, and in a manner pleasing to his Lord.

These are some of the qualities of those who long [after God], so much as can be mentioned : but over and beyond these remains the greater part of their description. God is [our] help.

16. TRUTHFULNESS IN INTIMACY.

Lastly comes Truthfulness in Intimacy with God, and with His recollection and nearness. A certain philosopher has said : ' Intimacy with God is finer and sweeter than longing : for if a man longs, there is a slight interval between him and God by reason of his longing, whereas the intimate is nearer to God '. So it is related that Gabriel came to the Prophet in the form of a man, and questioned him concerning resignation and faith, and then concerning good works. The Prophet said to him : ' Thou shalt worship God as though thou seest Him : for even if thou seest Him not, yet He sees thee '. Gabriel replied : ' Thou hast spoken truly '.¹ It is also related that the Prophet said to Ibn 'Umar : ' Worship God as though thou seest Him, for even if Thou seest Him not, yet He sees thee '. (22*b*) In this he indicates God's nearness, and that He is overwatching him : and from God's nearness emerge in every state the true realities of things. If a man's station is fear, then through God's nearness he is affected with trepidation, terror, and fright, for he knows that He sees him ; but if his station is love, then through the realities of God's nearness he is affected with joy, pleasure, and delight, for he knows that He sees him ; he therefore hastens to seek His pleasure and proximity, so that He may see him panting with eagerness, desiring to be near to Him, and to love Him exceedingly.

If a man is patient, then, at the time of his affliction and calamity, when he is made to endure for his Master's sake things which will bring his reward nearer to him, he hearkens to the

¹ See p. 18, n. 2.

words of God : ' Truly God is with those that are patient ',¹ and ' But wait thou patiently for the judgment of thy Lord, for thou art in Our sight '.² Then it is easy for him to practise patience, and to shoulder his burden. In like manner the people of every station worship God in nearness, for they have certain faith : these are they who scarcely arrive and scarcely return.³ As for the common people, they act only according to what they know of God's commands and prohibitions : their hope is weak, and they are confused, and have no certain realization.

An example of truthfulness in intimacy is afforded by the story of 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr.⁴ He asked 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar to give him his daughter's hand, while the latter was circum-ambulating the Holy House of God. Ibn 'Umar did not answer him, or give him any reply. After this 'Abdullāh meeting him said to him : ' Thou spakest to me during the procession, but we were imagining that God was before our eyes '. With the intimate it is as though he beholds that for which the longer longs.

It is said that 'Abdul-Wāhid ibn Zayd al-Baṣrī⁵ said to Abū 'Āsim the Syrian : ' Dost thou not long for God ? ' The other replied : ' No. A man only longs for one who is absent : when the absent one is present, for whom shall he long ? ' 'Abdul-Wāhid said : ' His longing is ended '. It is related that Dāwud al-Ṭā'i,⁶ one of the Muslim leaders, (23a) concerning whose veracity and uprightness there is no doubt, also said : ' A man only longs for one who is absent '. A theologian has said : ' They only said this because of the reality of their experience of God's nearness : it is as though they were with Him, for they had with them an attestation which was never absent, and this, coming from God, brought them peace and

¹ Q. ii, 148.

² Q. lii, 48.

³ Sc. all acts of personal initiative cease.

⁴ Died between 91 and 97 h. For the story which follows see Kalābādhi, *al-Ta'arruf*, p. 94.

⁵ Died 177 h.

⁶ Died 162 h.

quiet, and it was a mercy and a repose accorded to them aforetime in this world¹ by God. If it was not this, then what was it that they received of God through His nearness ?'

The mark of the man who is intimate with God and God's nearness is, that he experiences in his heart God's recollection and His nearness to him, and does not lose this experience at any time or in any place, whatever his spiritual state may be : God and His nearness come to him before all else. This latter occurs, when the light of God's nearness lodges in his heart : in that light he regards all things, and through that light he is guided to all things. So it is related that 'Āmir ibn 'Abdillāh² said : 'I have never looked at a single thing, without God being nearer to me than it'.

These two are the qualities of the intimate : that he is disgusted with people and mankind [generally], and finds delight in solitude and loneliness. Being in a darkened house, he abhors a light when he sees one : he closes his door, and draws his curtain, and is alone with his heart. He grows familiar with his Lord's nearness, and becomes intimate with Him, taking delight in secret converse with Him : he frees himself from any visitation which might come upon him and spoil his solitude. Yes, then one may see him dismayed even by the shining of the sun, when it enters upon him at his prayers : grievous to him is the company of other men, for they weary him ; to sit with them and meet them is for him a grief and a loss. But when night covers him, and all eyes are sleeping, when every movement is stilled, and the senses of all things are quiet, then he is alone with his sorrow, and his disquietude is stirred : his sighs mount swiftly up, and long he moans, demanding the fulfilment of what his Expectation promised him, and the benefits and loving-kindnesses whereby He has aforetime sustained him. Then he obtains some part of his request, and a portion of his wants is satisfied. (23b).

¹ Sc. before departing to the next world.

² If the same as al-Jarrāḥ, died 18 h. See Ibn Ḥajar, *op. cit.*, V, p. 73.

Moreover, the intimate feels no dismay in places where other men are afraid : alike to him are habitation, wilderness, desolation, society, and loneliness. This is because of the overwhelming sense of God's nearness which comes upon him, and the sweetness of His recollection : these prevail over all other impacts, whether outward or inward.

This is the outward aspect of intimacy, so much as can be mentioned : over and beyond this remain stations of intimacy greater and mightier than may be set down in a book, except that some hint of it may pass in conversation with those who have experienced it. God is [our] help.

EPILOGUE.

Know, O thou that askest concerning Truthfulness and its exposition, that this which I have mentioned to thee is only the outward aspect of Truthfulness, Patience, and Sincerity. This much it is necessary for all men to know and practise, especially disciples who seek to tread the path of salvation. Some there are who have nothing before God but this outward theory and practice : in this they labour, and in this they are truthful, and this brings them indeed to God's mercy and reward, and with God they have much good.

One man is truthful in these stations which we have mentioned, and more : this will bring him in this fleeting world to a high station, and a knowledge of God, and a noble station, so that he will pass on to joy, ease, and bliss in the gnosis of God, having attained nearness to God, and reached a noble rank too fine to be described and expounded. A certain man who knew God said : ' God bestows on His friends a grace which [His] servants cannot comprehend, either in this world or in the world to come '. Hast thou not heard the words of God ? ' No soul knoweth what delight is kept secret for them '.¹ In the Traditions we are told : ' They shall be given what eye hath

¹ Q. xxxii, 17.

God of His servants save those who know'.¹ The Prophet said : ' I have most knowledge of God out of all of you, and of you all I fear Him the most'.² He also said : ' If ye knew what I know, ye would laugh little and weep much, and ye would go forth on the highways boldly unto God'.³ So lived the Prophet : and so lives every man who knows God truly ; though he be near to material things, in every state in which he dwells he is assisted by what he experiences therein, contrary to the use of other men. On this analogy then [understand it] : surely this is eloquent to him who understand and meditates. God is [our] help."

I said : " When does a man become familiar with his Master's decrees, and find satisfaction in His disposition and choice ? "

He replied : " As to this matter, men are in two stations, so do thou understand. The first man only becomes familiar with his Master's decrees (29b), in order so to perform His command as to attain His reward : this is good, and in it is great advantage ; but such a man rises and falls, now is patient now impatient, now pleased now angry, now crosses now reverts ; this indeed brings him to God's reward and mercy, but only with trouble, hardship and labour. The second man becomes familiar with his Master's decrees, and finds pleasure in His afflicting, being satisfied with His good disposition and choice, entirely and without reserve : for he is familiar with his Master and the recollection of Him, loving Him and cherishing Him, and being pleased and content with Him. Can the decree of the Beloved, O questioner, ever be a burden to the lover ? Will he not accept it with joy and delight ? The story runs : ' Until he reckons affliction a blessing, and ease a misfortune'.⁴ In another story we are told : ' The booty of sincere believers is what they have been deprived of in this world'.⁵ It is related that God in one

¹ Q. xxxv, 25.

³ Bukhārī, *Kusūf* ch. 2.

⁵ Non-canonical.

² Non-canonical.

⁴ Non-canonical.

of His books revealed : ' O all ye who turn lovingly unto Me ! Ye shall not be harmed by what ye obtain of this world, for I am your fortress : and ye shall not be harmed by any man's enmity, for I am your deliverance '. If a man stands thus with God in all states and situations, how can it be otherwise with him than as we have mentioned ?

A certain man who knew God, and lived near to Him, has said : ' These people, whose states we have been mentioning, are not satisfied that they should have to contend with affairs as they occur to them, and events as they come upon them, and then, when the events take charge of their hearts, find it necessary to be patient or pleased with them. In their case patience and pleasure are an appositive adjunct ¹ : having required of themselves that they should be truly occupied with God, and wholly taken up with Him, they are not satisfied that passing events should contend with their recollection of God, and even equal it ; ' for God can overcome His affair '.² Moreover, they are servants under God's decree : only on the very rarest of occasions are they overcome, so that they need to confess their weakness to God, (30*a*) and ask Him for help.' Marvel not, therefore, if thou seest aught of this in any of them ; for so the Prophet said : ' Verily I am a man. O God, whomsoever I curse, let my curse be to him a mercy '.³ I heard a man who knew God say : ' It is a proof of a man being strongly attached to his Master, and enjoying real experience of Him in nearness to Him, that he does not notice the varying conditions that pass in him : he looks at them with an inward eye, so that it seems as if they are befalling or happening to someone else '. This is the most perfect way of meeting changing conditions. Understand therefore this point, and meditate upon it, for it will bring thee to the knowledge of repose in God, if God wills.

Repose in God, and tranquillity, are in proportion to the heart's nearness. This is the explanation of the heart reposing

¹ The grammatical terms *tābi'* and *muḍāf* are used.

² Q. xii, 21.

³ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, V, p. 294.