

## Desperately Seeking Spirituality

...healing the soul from the dhikr of secularism

The notion of the Spirit and Spirituality, and the relationship between spirit and matter, has always been of great intrigue. Nowadays it is not surprising to find both Muslims and non-Muslims talking about the need for spiritual revival, whereby mankind can move closer towards God. These ideas and perspectives stem from the fact that the global society is at an all-time low in every aspect of life. Corruption, immorality, debauchery, and vice, are the order of the day, and to many people, the remedy lies in a spiritual revival.

Although a spiritual revival may seem to be the solution for mankind's current problems, a clear and precise definition of "spirit" or "spirituality" must be presented. Some people claim the spirit is the soul (the Ruh, or the secret of life). Others say the spirit is the "holy ghost," or the spirit is a cosmic force, a "world soul," and each human being receives a piece of the world soul which forms his own "individual soul." The list of definitions are seemingly endless. The lack of a clear and precise definition of the spirit and spirituality creates a significant problem, especially if two people are discussing the notion of spiritual revival, and one envisions a revival based on the "holy ghost" and the other wants to re-unite the "individual soul" with the "world soul."

One of the reasons that both Muslims and non-Muslims are now calling for spiritual revival lies in one of the legacies that some "Muslim" scholars passed on to Christianity and the Western world. During the 13th Century CE. (Christian Era), the Church adopted certain philosophical ideas that were adopted from Jewish philosophers like Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), who had adopted his ideas from "Muslim" philosophers like Ibn Sina (980-1037), Averroes of Cordoba (1126-1198), and Algazel of Baghdad (1059-1111). These "Muslim" philosophers had adopted the philosophy of Aristotle, and to this day people, like Ibn Sina, are considered in Western academic circles to be of the greatest interpreters of Aristotelianism. Although these ideas have gained prominence in today's time, they bore no impact when they were first initiated. Muslims at the onset of such philosophies basically rejected them. Only with our decline did such ideas become prevalent.

Aristotle claimed God is a pure thought, an absolute spirit, and completely immaterial. Material objects gravitate toward this pure form, and in the case of man, his highest nature, his soul-his intellectual or rational aspect-finds its perfection in becoming like God in the realm of pure thought. Aristotle claimed that when the intellectual soul is put into the human body, it seeks to control a vegetative and animalistic soul that was already present in the material body of man. Good deeds are those in which the intellectual soul can elevate, while bad deeds are those in which the material soul dominates. God is pure and God is love, and man's intellectual soul will gravitate toward God only if he spends his time in contemplation and in the doing of good deeds. It is only by doing these things that the soul can ever hope to reunite with the absolute spirit, i.e. God.

Consequently, we find similarities between Christian monks and Muslim Sufis. Both seek isolation from the daily, material life, with the perception that it will advance the intellectual soul. Thus, they spend time chanting and "dhikering", in order to elevate the intellectual soul and reunite with the absolute spirit, or God. Depriving oneself of material luxuries by living in a monastery or a cave is seen as an action that will lead to the upliftment of this soul. Christianity, and its philosophers, have also adopted certain Aristotelian ideas whereby it concerns itself with only those actions and thoughts which will elevate the human soul or spirit toward the absolute spirit, and it does not concern itself with worldly, material actions. Therefore, Christianity sees the origin of the world's problems in man's lower, animalistic, satanic soul dominating his higher spiritual soul. A spiritual revival is thus needed, whereby the human being elevates his higher soul so that it dominates his lower soul. Actions distracting an individual from pursuing this revival, according to this view, are seen as acts that would lead man into an abyss of moral ills. Politics would hence be seen as an evil which should be left aside as it does not contain anything that can contribute to uplifting the soul. Hence, the Christian slogan "Give to Caesar what is due to Caesar, and give to God what is due to God". This idea is known as secularism, or the belief that religion should not enter into the function of the State, or the daily affairs.

To determine the point in which this idea became prevalent among Muslims, we need only to look at the period of the mid to late 19th Centuries, with the advent of "Islamic" Scholars like Jamalid Deen Al-Afghani, his pupil Mohammed Abduh, and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan. These and other individuals are often seen amongst the Muslims as "intellectuals." In fact, they were no more than agents of the British unleashed upon the Muslims as part of the West's intellectual and ideological campaign against the Islamic State. For example, we find Jamalid Deen Al-Afghani making statements to the effect that the Ummah was in need of its own Martin Luther! We find people like Mohammed Abduh stating that Allah curses politics, policy, polity, politicians, and every derivative of the word. These men, and their protégés were used to isolate the Muslim Ummah from its political aqeedah, and to create a situation where the Ummah would only be concerned about its spiritual aqeedah, even though it is known that Islam does not separate between religion and politics. Due to the declined mentality of the Muslims at that time, this new "Islamic" renaissance seeped into and polluted Muslims' mentalities, and nowadays we find the heirs of Afghani, Abduh, et. al. calling for a spiritual revival that is devoid of any material action. The Ummah is now urged to sit down and purify its aqeedah, develop its morals, and leave any significant material action until after the purification and cleansing process is complete. Actually, any such claim is secularizing the concept of Spirituality, and is no different from the call of Christianity.

When we look at the universe, we find that the universe and all that is in it is material. The human being is a material being, composed of matter that is tangible and sensible and is not composed of both spirit and matter. This sensible and tangible matter was created by our Creator, Allah Ta'ala. Here, if the discussion is dealing with the relationship of tangible things with Allah, then the secret of life (Ruh) falls outside the discussion. This is because both animals and humans have this secret of life and all that is known about it is that living things are said to be alive when it is present, and said to be dead when it is absent. However, it remains as part of the unseen and un-sensed, and Allah did not give us any concrete or detailed information about it.

*"And they ask you (O Mohammed) concerning the Ruh ; Say: "The Ruh, its knowledge is with my Lord. And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little." (TMQ Isra :85)*

The topic of discussion is dealing with the nature of this tangible matter with the Unseen, or in other words the nature of this matter with Allah Ta'ala. Accordingly, from this we can define the spirit as: "The realization and acknowledgment by man of the Creator, and the realization of the relationship between himself, and all the universe, with the Creator". That is, when a human being acknowledges the fact that he is created by Allah, he is recognizing the spiritual aspect in his life. It is not correct to include into this definition, what can be called the secret of life (Ruh). This is because we know for a fact that an atheist possesses a Ruh. However, his denial in the existence of Allah Ta'ala means that this has no bearing on his life affairs. In other words, his life does not possess a spiritual aspect since that is only obtained when an individual believes in Allah and in the fact that he was created by Him.

From this definition of spirit, i.e. the realization by man of a Creator, and the realization of the relationship between him and the Creator, we can determine that only those people who adhere to the Islamic Aqeedah can be said to have spirituality. This is because, only the Islamic Aqeedah establishes the full acknowledgment of Allah, and the relationship between the human being and Allah. This relationship is to realize Allah must be obeyed in every single action the human being undertakes. So a Muslim, is being spiritual irrespective of what action he undertakes, as long as this action is based on what Allah and His Messenger have said. Hence, praying, fasting, eating, ruling and governing, waging Jihad, or conducting a business transaction are all considered spiritual deeds if the Muslim who carries them out, does so in the manner that Allah Ta'ala has prescribed.

Therefore, a spiritual revival from this perspective means to adhere to all aspects of Islam regarding the hereafter as well as this life. The spiritual revival means to instill in the mentalities of those being revived that there is no difference between the obligation of praying, and the obligation of

giving the bay'ah to a Khalifah; there is no difference between the obligation of fasting in the month of Ramadan and conducting transactions according to Islamic law; there is no difference between the obligation of refraining from lying and refraining from taking riba. This spiritual revival cannot be from only a moral or religious perspective because Allah is the same God that obligated the five pillars, as well as living under the rule of a Khalifah, and the rules of Islam did not give preference of the five pillars and moral purification over any other Islamic rule. It is only through this spiritual revival that the Muslim Ummah, and mankind as a whole, will be able to move out of the drunken stupor it now finds itself in.

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