

SUFISM IN THE DRUZE FAITH

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The Druze faith is an Islamic denomination which developed from Ismaili Shiite Islam during the reign of the sixth Fatimid Caliph-Imam al-Hakim bi-amrillah. In fact, about three months after al-Hakim's ascension to the throne (29 Ramadan 386/14 September 996), he appointed missionaries (*du'ṣt al-mudhur*) to herald the *Tawḥīd* movement which was to start about twenty one years later, namely 1 Muḥarram 408/30 May 1017, under his patronage and the leadership of Ḥamza ibn 'Alī who was appointed *imṣm* of the movement.¹ By appointing Ḥamza ibn 'Alī as *imṣm* of a new era (the *tawḥīd* era), al-Hakim was considered by the *muwaḥḥidīn* (the followers of the *tawḥīd* faith) the seal of Imams of the *ta'wīl* era (the era of esoteric interpretation) of the word of God which had been revealed in its exoteric form to the Prophet Muhammad. The followers of the *tawḥīd* faith, erroneously known in history as the Druze (after a certain Nnashtakin al-Darazi who soon was expelled from the Movement), have been known as al-Muwahhidūn, due to their pursuance of the way of *tawḥīd* or *iṣṣn* (roughly spiritual cognizance).

The Arabic word *tawḥīd* means, according to Islamic terminology, the way to the unity of God. This goes back to the Islamic belief that Islam as a religion comprises three ways, the first leading to the second and the second to the third. The first is the way of *islam* (submission), the exoteric way. It deals with the fundamentals of Islam, i.e. carrying out the pillars of Islam in conformity with Islamic law. Hence it is called *sharī'a*. Following the *sharī'a* leads some Muslims to the way of *imṣm* (belief), the esoteric way (*ta'wīl*). It is the inner way, ^T*Marīqa*. It consists of interpreting the divine revelation esoterically. It is achieved by following the teachings of the imams who are in charge of *ta'wīl*, i.e., 'Alī ibn Abī Ḥalīb and his descendants. *Marīqa* is a step further than *sharī'a* (observing the pillars of Islam exoterically). Here knowledge is added to mere submission. Such a belief gives man the opportunity to reach out for truth (*al-ḥaqīqa*) which is the third way, that of

¹ Sami Makarem, *The Druze Faith* (Delmar, N.Y: Caravan Books, 1979), pp. 15ff.

i;san or *taw;īd*. A tradition by the prophet states: "Islām is to witness that there is no other God but God and that Muhammad is the messenger of God, to perform the ritual prayer, to give alms, to fast Ramadan, and to make the pilgrimage to Mecca for him who can find a way thither". When asked about *īman* Muhammad said: "To believe in god, his angels, his books, his messengers, the last day, and to believe in Destiny". Then Muhammad was asked about *ihsan*. He said: "To worship god as if you behold Him; if you do not see Him, He sees you indeed."²

This third way, *i;san* is *taw;īd*, according to the Druze. It calls man to behold his eternal reality where the relative is the real expression of the Absolute. For the Druze *taw;īd* makes a person pursue true knowledge. Man's own self, and consequently everything else, is felt united in the One. The Muwahhid is then consumed in the eternity of the One. The relative is annihilated by the Absolute. The Muwahhid reaches the Sufī state of *fanṣ'* where one's ego is effaced and the state of *baqṣ'* is reached. *Baqṣ'*, as defined by the Sufi Kalabadhī is: "To have one's own human qualities completely annihilated. Only God's remain in existence in him"³.

Only through love can one reach *i;san* or *tawhīd*. For *tawhīd*, according to the Druze, is the unity of one's own intrinsic reality (*sirr*) with that of God. This is what is meant by self-realization (*ta;aqquq*). It is as if the point of the compass (*nuqṭat al-bīkṣr*) returns to where it has started from, and the circle, thus completed, realizes its being the projection (*ibdṣ'*) of the centre of the circle. With such realization, the centre in turn realizes itself by being manifested in the circle. In other words, the circle realizes its circle-ness, by the point of the compass circling around the centre. This movement around the centre is what makes the circle a real circle. The circle, thus realized, is nothing but the centre manifested. Likewise, the centre, i.e. God, is manifested in the circle. Therefore, physical existence is love circling around the beloved. The centre, i.e. God, is manifested in what is existence. For the Druze the attraction of the circle to the centre is love, the attraction of the centre to the circle is divine Grace (*ra;ma*) and the attraction of divine Grace to love is divine compassion (*ra;maniyya*). Al-Jīlī, a 15th century sufi,

² Bashshar 'Awwad Ma'rif and others(ed). *Al-Musnad al-Jami'*, vol.13. Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1413 A.H., pp.484-6. also see Qur'an(49), where the Qur'an differentiates between *Islam* and *Iman*.

³ Kalṣbṣdhī, *al-Ta'arruf*, Beirut, Dṣr al-Kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1980, p.123. "والبقاء... هو أن يفنى عماله ويبقى بما لله".

comes close to this Druze concept when he defines *ra;maniyya* as being the greatest manifestation and the most perfect epiphany..."⁴

Hence, with the union of divine Grace (*ra;ma*) and divine Compassion (*ra;maniyya*) the true name of god is realized in its divine sense, its divine human reflection (*nasut*), and its cosmic manifestation. This is what is meant by the Qur'anic verse: "[in the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ)]. According to the Druze, God reveals Himself from utter divinity (*lahūt*) to the divine form of humanity (*nasūt*) which is manifested to man, the quintessence of the cosmic circle. The centre divine is therefore the intrinsic reality (*sirr*) of the cosmic circle- the cosmic circle being the projection (*ibda'*) of the Centre, the Centre's manifestation, epiphany, reflection. Hence for the Druze, the world (the cosmic circle) is not created by god as such, it is rather god's manifestation (*badw, tajallin*), His expression, so to speak. This is in the origin of Sufism. In his *Fuḫūf al-ikam*, ibn 'Arabī writes: "The world is nothing but god's manifestation; it appears in the various physical forms the existence of which is impossible without Him".⁵ He also writes: "The world is the mirror of God, and God is the mirror of the perfect Man. When one looks at a mirror One sees in the mirror that which exists in the other mirror."⁶

Hence Ibn 'Arabi calls this existence, *al-tajallī al-wujūdi* (existential manifestation);⁷ the Druze on the other hand, call it (*al-badw al-khalq*), the manifestation [known as] creation.

On the other hand when man annihilates his ego and becomes absorbed in the unity of god, he will behold existence in its reality, i.e., a manifestation of god; plurality will vanish and unity will be beheld. He ceases to see the universe in its "plural vision". He now beholds existence in its unity, the very reality of existence. Now he ceases to see as a human being sees. He rather beholds, in his capacity as representing humanity as such (*nasūtiyya*). God for him has no entity by Himself. He is the absolute; *nasūtiyya* is now what characterizes such a beholder not his being merely a man. This is what is

⁴ Abd al-Karim al-Jīlī, *al-Insan al-Kṣmil*, vol.1, Cairo, 1970, pp.45.

⁵ "وإن العالم ليس إلا تجلياً في صور أعيانهم الثابتة التي يستحيل وجودها بدونها"

Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuḫūf al-ikam*, vol.1, ed. By Abu l-ala Afifi, Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabī, 1980, p.81.

⁶ "العالم مرآة الحق والحق مرآة الرجل الكامل، وينعكس النظر في المرآة فيظهر في المرآة ما هو في المرآة الأخرى".

Ibn 'Arabi, *al-Futuhṣt al-Makkiyya*, vol.8, Beirut: Dṣr al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1999, p.213.

⁷ See 'Uḥman l sma'il yahya(ed and ints) "*Kitṣb al-Tajalliyat al-Ilahiyya al-Mashriq*" (March-April 1966), pp 210-211.

called by ibn 'Arabi *at-tajallī al-shuhūdī* and by the Druzes *at-tajalli an-nasūtī* .

Deflection from Absolute unity (the circle's deflection from its centre), towards plurality represented by the ego, is deflection from the course of the cosmic circle controlled by its centre to a course of an unreal circle that has no centre; such a circle is governed by chaos. It is denial of divine Compassion, renunciation of divine Grace, falling in utter disorder. This is what the Druze call *iblṣs*, an arab i.e. word meaning despair and plurality.

As there is no real circle without a centre, there is no centre without a circle. Hence the very existence of the divine centre, i.e., God, is His presence in the cosmic circle, i.e., in the world. In fact since the world is god's manifestation the world is God present, or say the presence of God. This is what the Sufis and the Druze alike call *ḥaḥira* (Presence). God, therefore, is omnipresent. "There is nothing", as Ibn 'Arabi says, "except divine Presence. It is His own essence as well as His attributes and deeds".⁸

True love is, therefore, the reflected image of divine Compassion. In its turn divine Compassion is the reflected image of divine Grace (*raḥma*). Therefore, in order to realize unity of being man has to have his love directed towards divine unity rather than towards plurality. Human love should be directed towards the one. Love of worldly things should be the result of one's love to God. This is what the Druze mean by *zuhd* (detachment). This is in line with the Sūfi saying: "Detachment is not that you possess nothing; it is rather that things do not possess you" (ليس الزهد أن لا تملك شيئاً بل الزهد أن لا يملكك شيء).

Taking worldly things as one's goal in life has its origin in one's ego which deviates man from real love and throws him into self indulgence and, consequently, in discord and animosity. The Druze faith teaches that true love is based on renouncing one's ego. In renouncing your ego you direct yourself to the one. Your love for the absolute is then united with divine Grace (*raḥma*), and consequently divine Compassion (*raḥmaniyya*) is realized. This is because, according to the Druze, divine Grace consumes, in its omnipresence, man's love for his divine origin. Human love would then be annihilated in divine Grace (*raḥma*). When such annihilation takes place nothing

⁸ "ما ثم سوى الحضرة الإلهية، وهي عبارة عن الذات والصفات والفعال" Ibn 'Arabi, *Futuḥt*, vol.3, chapt.90, p 261.

remains in the Muwaḥḥid except God as such. The Muwaḥḥid now beholds this image as purely and lucidly as the extent of the purity and lucidity of his self-realization and emancipation from plurality. He is now consumed by the divine Image he beholds. Such an image will be no less and no more than he can undergo. It is just like one's image in the mirror. "Knowledge for the Sufi", as Ruwaym ibn Ahmad al-Baghdadi said, "is a mirror; when he looks at it, God manifests Himself to him". (المعرفة) God's manifestation is called in both Sufism and Tawhīd *Raḥmaniyya*. Al-Jīlī defines *Raḥmaniyya* as "god's revealing himself through the very meaning of his names and attributes. It is the greatest manifestation and the most perfect and all inclusive epiphany".¹⁰ (هي الظهور بحقائق الأسماء والصفات... واعلم أن الرحمانية هي المظهر الأعظم والمجلى الأكمل الأعمّ).

This *raḥmaniyya*, or the divine human Image is explained by 'Ayn al-Quṣṣṣ al-Hamadhānī as such: "The world, whether terrestrial (عالم الملك) or celestial (عالم الملكوت) is to god's reality as the image inside the mirror is to the image outside the mirror".¹¹ (الداخلة في المرآة إلى الصورة إن نسبة الملك والملكوت في الوجود إلى وجه الحي القيوم نسبة الصورة) (الخارجة). By beholding this divine Image, the Muwaḥḥid reaches utter certitude (يقين) which is translated in the Druze scriptures as *riḥa* (contentment). *Riḥa* leads the Muwahhid to complete submission to God (*taslīm*). For the muwahhid *taslīm* is man's expatriation in God, voyaging (*musafara*) in God or say, swimming (*tasbī*) in the shoreless and bottomless ocean of Unity. Man, as mentioned before, is the very quintessence of this cosmic circle the Centre of which is God. In his most perfect sense and highest stage, i.e., the perfect man (*al-insan al-kamil*) he is the point of compass of this cosmic circle. He is therefore the will of god, His *amr* (*res in latin*; i.e. Gods divine nature that binds the whole circle of existence in its natural course of circling around the divine Centre, i.e. God who, as divine grace, is attracted to its manifestation, The cosmic circle, the universe as such. This is what the Druze understand by the Qur'anic verse: "His *amr* when he wills a thing is to say to it, "Be!" and it is".¹² Existence, therefore, is bound by the divine Will, the *amr* of God, the point of the compass.

⁹ Qushayri, *Al-Risḥla al-Qushayriyya*, Beirut: Dḥr al-Jīl, n.d., p. 314.

¹⁰ Al-Jīlī, *Al-Insan al-Kamil*, vol.1, pp.45-6

¹¹ Ayn al-Quṣṣ al-Hamadhanī, *Zuḥdat al-Haqa'ia*, Tehran: Tehran university press, n.d., p:51.

¹² Yasin (36): 82. "إنما أمره إذا أراد شيئاً أن يقول له كن فيكون"

It follows, that the Qur'anic verse, "In the name of God the Compassionate, the Graceful," points out to the very attributes of this *amr*, the luminous projection of God Who is the "light of heavens and earth" as described in the Qur'an. This necessary projection is the perfect man. He is the first cause of existence. In him lies the real meaning of pure human love which is the reflection of divine Compassion which, in turn, is the reflection of divine Grace. This *amr* of God is the perfect man of the Sufis, the *nous* of the Greeks, the 'Aql *al-Kulli* of the Druze.

By liberating himself from every ego, and, consequently, by following the *amr* of God, man beholds in his purified heart the reflected image of God's Compassion (*ra; m\$niyya*) such a beholding of certitude is the Sufi state (*;\$l*) of *uns*, i.e., intimacy with divine presence.

With such intimacy man emancipates himself from egoism in order to reach freedom of being consumed in divine Compassion.