

## THE THREE CHARACTER CLASSIC FOR MOSLEMS

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AT THE beginning of creation—before heaven, earth or anything, there was a supreme being called the true God, who controlled the whole heaven; ordered the whole universe; divided light from darkness; evolved heaven and earth; set the foundations of mountains and rivers; called into life grass and trees; ordained calamity and fortune; gave brilliancy to the sun and moon; and energized the birds, beasts and the fishes of the sea. When all was finished, he then created man; endowed him with wisdom; instilled him with a soul; and man became the essence of creation. Then He sent down the Holy One to preach the great doctrine, teaching man to understand the great truth. Only when the truth is understood is man a man; when it is misunderstood man is no better than a bird. You little children on the verge of understanding, study the simple, do not think into the deeper things. Learn to be filial and obedient to your parents and teachers. Learn to act properly before your elders and the young and to distinguish between the higher and the lower. Understand the principles of benevolence and culture; practice good manners and propriety; be careful in word and deed; watchful concerning wrong doing. When you have made a little progress (in the truth) then I will teach you the great doctrine. When it is hard to explain the great truth I will use parables.

The origin of the truth comes from the true God, but it is to be revealed by man. The first principle of understanding the truth is to read the doctrine. In the morning be watchful and fearful; in the evening vigilant and

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pious. Matter is not God. There is only the true God and Mohammed is His prophet. The most important thing about the doctrine is to read the holy book (Koran), wherein are the holy commandments, the meaning of which is clear. Everything has its essence and the essence of the holy book is Islam. When the doctrine enlightens, truth prevails; when the doctrine is obscure, lies prevail. The truth brings blessedness; heresy, harm, evil follow falsehood. A superficial knowledge of the doctrine leads to lack of worship, as a lazy person causes the ruin of his own house. The holy one (Mohammed) says: "Worship is like a pillar which, when erect, supports the house; when taken away the house collapses." The beauty of the doctrine is purity; good behaviour purifies the body as auditing does one's wealth.\* The rule of the doctrine is to know the right and the wrong; if a thing is right, approach it; if it is wrong, forsake it. The way of the doctrine exists between fear and hope; fear of sinning against God, and hope of God's mercy. The importance of the doctrine is to think of God constantly, from morning until evening, without interruption. The *surface*† of the doctrine is to know at least what shame is, for a knowledge of shame is a branch of the doctrine. The fruit of the doctrine is to observe fasting, for fasting eliminates inner strife. The seed of the doctrine is constant learning and practice, for only those who are learned are noble in conduct. Little children, you must listen carefully; cultivate learning and follow God's commandments; for everyone must follow regardless of sex, indifferent to age. The leaf of the doctrine is to practice watchfulness when alone, for the doctrine may be likened to a naked body and watchfulness ought to be taken as its raiment. The Koran says: "If you are careful you shall be prosperous," for what comes after (the journey to eternity) depends upon watchfulness as a fund.‡ The marrow of the doctrine is to know the destination; when the destination is known, the start is already made. The root of the doctrine is honesty in thought; if your thoughts

\* Text is obscure here.

† Chinese = skin.

‡ Lit. watchfulness is the expense account for this journey.

are sincere you assist all efforts.\* The dwelling place of the doctrine is the heart of man, and the heart of the Moslem is the temple of God. You are in the doctrine and the doctrine is in you. Should man ask, you can give this as an answer. "I live in the doctrine, and the doctrine is within me without the least uncertainty or partiality."

Should any man ask you for the doctrine in its numerous aspects, you answer: "It has five aspects:—1. What I follow is the doctrine of the deity. 2. What I protect is the doctrine of the holy one. 3. What I listen to is the doctrine of the Moslem. 4. What I cast off is evil doctrine. 5. What I watch for is heresy." The body of the doctrine is to believe in the heart, the members of the doctrine being actions in life. Cultivate in man the doctrine of heaven and diligence in the five aspects. Exhaust the principles of the way of life and promote the five principles of man. Doctrine is like light in a man's heart so that man may know God, who is invisible. When you have already explained the doctrine do not think that is the end; you must expound clearly so that you may know God's principles. God is omnipresent; without substance, form or shape, comparison or standard. There is only one God and He is the only power, God of God, King of Kings; moves or rests at will; causes life or death; from the beginning until now there has been no change. If asked "Why are you a Moslem?" answer: "I am a Moslem by the grace of God." If again asked "When did you begin?" answer: "At the time of the contract." "What is meant by the time of contract?" Answer: "When in the presence of God I received His teaching." He asked me: "Am I God?" I answered: "Yes, You evolve everything that has life and bestow food and raiment." Those who are disobedient falsely answer "no." All heresy begins from here. Oh! Little Children, you should realize this! These words of instruction should be carefully remembered. Look upward to heaven and examine what is on the earth; between heaven and earth, man is the noblest work. The worth

\* Lit. you assist 10,000 ways or fashions.

of man consists in his having a soul. The soul serves as a reflector of God and a mirror of life.

God commands you to do five things: (1) To think of Him constantly and to avoid evil thoughts; (2) Worship five times daily in order to get rid of the cares of the world; (3) To observe the annual and monthly fasts in order to check human desires and lusts; (4) The rich must contribute of their wealth in order to act benevolently; (5) To worship at the mosque, and to examine the sincerity of your intentions. These five things are not to be considered easy, either to the saints or the common people, the foolish or the wise. When a child reaches the seventh year he must be taught in this. To teach good manners is the duty of parents and teachers. Upon reaching the fifteenth year he must himself take the responsibility and work it out without shifting it to any one else.

The observance of worship is the first commandment, as the root of all actions is to walk in the true way, the key to heaven, the screen to passion, the spring that washes away sin, and the lamp that lightens up the tomb. As to the rule of worship there are six outward ceremonies: (1) Use clean water; (2) Wear clean clothes; (3) Stand on holy ground; (4) Rest at the proper time; (5) Agree in heart and mind; (6) Face toward Mecca. In addition there are six other ceremonies which are the inner processes of worship: (1) Begin with the adoration of God; (2) Keep the body upright; (3) Chant the true doctrine; (4) In bowing retain a horizontal back; (5) Next let the head strike the ground; (6) Lastly conclude with kneeling. In all worship keep order and silence. If you make a mistake in worship you must have a washing; if you skip one of the ceremonies you must have a bathing. You must know that there are four regulations for washing:\* (1) Wash the face beginning from the hair as far as the lower chin, then come to the ears; if you have a heavy beard you must wash inside of it; (2) Wash the hands as far as the breast and armpits; (3) Brushing the head constitutes one of the four; (4) Wash the feet as far as the ankle bone. You must be careful; not lazy or

\* *Wudhū'* (Arabic).

indifferent. You again must know that there are ten rules for bathing:\* (1) Wash the hands to the wrist joints; (2) Call on the name of Allah; (3) Brush the teeth; (4) Flush out the mouth; (5) Clean the nose; (6) Wash behind the ears; (7) Wash the evacuating organs; (8) Wash the beard; (9) Clean the finger nails; (10) Every organ must be washed three times. These rules must be followed rigidly to avoid confusion. There are eighteen things which will ruin a washing: namely those of the bowels, (1) Stool, (2) Worms, (3) Wind; those from the kidneys: (4) Urine, (5) Incontinency of urine, (6) Blood, (7) Gonorrhoea, (8) Smegma, (9) Overflow of discharge; those which can be easily seen: (10) Blood and (11) Pus, (12) Eczema, (13) Vomiting; those which are hidden: (14) Those who are mentally unbalanced, (15) Those who are faint, (16) Those who are intoxicated, (17) Those who cry out in the middle of worship, (18) Those who sleep resting against anything. After finishing the ceremony of washing you come to the bathing of the body. The occasions of bathing are twelve in number: Five are commanded by God; four are holy practices; one is a standard ceremony; and two are optional. (1) After masturbation, (2) After intercourse of husband and wife, (3) After nocturnal pollution, (4) After menstruation, (5) After delivery. The above mentioned bathings are commanded by God. (6) On the great day of gathering, (7) On the usual meetings, (8) On the day of contract, (9) At the time of fasting. These four occasions are designated as holy practices. The standard ceremony: (10) Bathing of the dead body. (11) When the child is young, (12) Or when the obstinate is converted; bathing or not is optional. The ceremony of bathing has three regulations: (1) Flush out the mouth, (2) Cleanse the nose, (3) Bathe the whole body, not missing any part. Having passed through confinement, follow the same regulations. At the time of confinement do not do seven things: (1) Do not worship, (2) Do not fast, (3) Do not give alms, (4) Do not bow toward Mecca, (5) Do not enter the mosque, (6) Do not hold the Koran, (7) Do not read the rules. With the

\* *Ghual* (Arabic).

exception of these, nothing is prohibited. When the woman is clean she must wash and bathe.

All of God's commandments have two ceremonies: (1) the primary ceremony, (2) and the secondary ceremony. The primary ceremony is the business of all men. When it is neglected it has its bad results; for example, fasting and worship, charitable aid and assistance, going up into the mosque for worship, studying and practicing. The secondary ceremony demands a comprehensive responsibility which, if followed, others are not concerned; such as: the funeral ceremony; consoling mourners; answering salutations; visiting the sick.

From of old until now there have been 124,000 saints and the doctrine has only partially been revealed. When our great saint Mohammed came the doctrine was expounded in full, and at that time there was a great revival. After the saint returned to heaven, virtuous men came after him such as: Abu Bekr, Omar, Othman, Ali. These four saints succeeded one another in generation. After the four saints, there lived the four scholars or wise men. At the head of this class stand the Caliphate [?]. These four scholars have been respected by different classes of people, each class respecting one. There is to be no confusion (about this class respect) so as to be one in belief. The teachings of the four scholars are all about the holy doctrine. There is the difference of simplicity and depth, with a slight mystery involved. What the scholars taught they received from the saints; what the saints taught they received from the four angels.\* In the angels of God are the germs of knowledge, and what God has hidden, man cannot understand. The doctrine is inexhaustible, its working principle eternal. If you are intelligent you can understand all things. Little children, you must learn this thoroughly! The beginner may stop here.

\* Lit. four waiters upon God.