

# Sufism

## The Spiritual Culture of Islam

*Islamic mysticism, Tasawwuf, has come to be known as "Sufism" in the west. We reproduce here an article from the "Dictionary of Islam" by T.P. Hughes, as additional material to supplement our ongoing critique and discussion of various aspects of this inner, contemplative discipline of Islam, which we maintain is based on no better authority than the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and the practises of his noble Companions and their pious followers of subsequent generations.*

*In order to retain the original flavour of this old essay, we have tried not to tamper with its original style and language even though on quite a few occasions it was hard to control our desire to make appropriate changes or to paraphrase some of the material for the sake of clarity and brevity. Our purpose in reproducing this article by an eminent Christian missionary (India, 1888) is mainly to assist the non-Muslim, western, secular man on the street, in an unbiased understanding of Islamic teachings. We have used the grammatical "(sic)" to indicate, only at those undesirably prominent occasions, where it is obvious to us that we are not in agreement with the implications of the wording used by the author. - Editor*

**"SUFI**, (The Persian form of the plural being *Sufiyan*). A man of the people called *Sufiyah* who profess the mystic principle of *Tasawwuf*. There is considerable discussion as to the origin of this word. It is said to be derived: (1) from the Arabic *Suf*, "wool," on account of the woollen dress worn by Eastern ascetics; (2) or from the Arabic *Safu*, "purity," with reference to the effort to attain the metaphysical purity (which is scarcely probable); (3) or from the Greek, meaning "wisdom"; (4) or, according to the *Ghiyasul-Lughat*, it is derived from the *Su fah*, the name of the tribe of Arabs who in the "time of ignorance," separated themselves from the world, and engaged themselves exclusively in the service of the Makkah Temple.

It might at first sight appear almost an impossibility for mysticism to engraft itself upon the legal system of the Qur'an, and the Ahadis, with the detailed ritual and cold formality which are so strikingly exemplified in Islam; but it would appear that from the very days of Muhammad, there have been always those who, whilst they called themselves Muslims, set aside the literal meaning of the words of Muhammad for a supposed mystic or spiritual interpretation, and it is generally admitted by Sufis that one of the great founders of their system, as found in Islam, was the adopted son (*sic*) and

son-in-law of the Prophet, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. The Sufis themselves admit that their religious system has always existed in the world, prior to the mission of Muhammad, and the unprejudiced student of their system will observe that *Tasawwuf*, or Sufism, is but a Muslim adaptation of the Vedanta school of Hindu philosophers (*sic*), and which also we find in the writings of old academics of Greece, and Sir William Jones thought Plato learned from the sages of the East.

The Sufis are divided into innumerable sects, which find expression in the numerous religious orders of Darweshes or Faqirs; but although they differ in name and in some of their customs, as dress, meditations and recitations, they are all agreed in their principal tenets, particularly those which inculcate the absolute necessity of blind submission to a *murshid*, or inspired guide. It is generally admitted that, quite irrespective of minor sects, the Sufis are divided into those who claim to be only the *Ilhamiyah*, or inspired of God, and those who assert that they are *Ittihadiyah*, or unionist with God (*sic*).

## I. The Doctrine of the Sufis

The following is a succinct account of the doctrines of the Sufis: -

1. God only exists. He in all things, and all things in Him.
2. All visible and invisible beings are an emanation from Him, and are not really distinct from Him.
3. Religions are matters of indifference: (*sic*) they however serve as leading to realities. Some for this purpose are more advantageous than others, among which is al-Islam, of which Sufism is the true philosophy.
4. There does not really exist any difference between good and evil (*sic*), for all is reduced to Unity, and God is the real Author of the acts of mankind.
5. It is God who fixes the will of man: man therefore is not free [has limited freedom] in his actions.
6. The soul existed before the body, and is confined within the latter as in a cage. Death, therefore, should be the object of the wishes of the Sufi, for it is then that he returns to the bosom of Divinity.
7. It is by this metempsychosis [an instance of transmigration of souls] that souls which have not fulfilled their destination here below are purified and become worthy of reunion with God.
8. Without the grace of God, which the Sufis call *Fayazanu 'llah*, or *Fazlu 'llah*, no one can attain to this spiritual union, but this, they assert, can be obtained by fervently asking for it.
9. The principal occupation of the Sufi, whilst in the body, is meditation on the *wahdaniyah*, or Unity of God. The remembrance of God's names (*zikr*), and the progressive advancement in the *Tariqah*, or journey of life, so as to attain unification with God."

## II. The Sufi Journey

"Human life is likened to a journey (*safar*), and the seeker after God to a traveller (*salik*).

The great business of the traveller is to exert himself and strive to attain that perfect knowledge (*ma'rifah*) of God which is diffused through all things, for the Soul of man is an exile from its Creator, and human existence is its

period of banishment. The sole object of Sufism is to lead the wandering soul onward, stage by stage, until it reaches the desired goal – perfect union with the Divine Being.

The natural state of every human being is humanity (*nasut*), in which state the disciple must observe the Law (Shariah); but as this is the lowest form of spiritual existence, the performance of the journey is enjoined upon every searcher after true knowledge.

The various stages (*manazil*) are differently described by Sufi writers, but amongst those of India (and, according to Malcolm, of Persia also) the following is the usual journey: -

The first stage, as we have already remarked, is humanity (*nasut*), in which the disciple must live according to the Law (*Shariah*), and observe all the rites, customs, and the nature of angels (*malakut*), for which there is the pathway of purity (*tariqah*). The third is the possession of power (*jubrut*) for which there is knowledge (*ma'rifah*); and the fourth is extinction (*fana*) (i.e. absorption into the Deity), for which there is Truth (*haqiqah*).

The following more extended journey is marked out for the traveller by a Sufi writer, 'Aziz ibn Muhammad Nafasi, in a book called *al-Maqsadu 'l-Aqsa*, or the "Remotest Aim," which has been rendered into English by the lamented Professor Palmer (*Oriental Mysticism*, Cambridge, 1867): -

When a man possessing the necessary requirements of fully-developed reasoning powers turns to them for a resolution of his doubts and uncertainties concerning the real nature of the Godhead, he is called a *talib*, a searcher after God."

If he manifest a further inclination to prosecute his inquiry according to their system, he is called a *murid*, or "one who inclines."

Placing himself then under the spiritual instruction of some eminent leader of the sect, he is fairly started upon his journey and becomes a *salik*, or "traveller," whose whole business in life is devotion, to the end that he may ultimately arrive at the knowledge of God.

1. Here he is exhorted to serve God, as the first step towards a knowledge of Him. This is the *first* stage of his journey, and is called *'ubudiyah*, or "service."

2. When in answer to his prayers the Divine influence or attraction has developed his inclination into the love of God, he is said to have reached the stage called *'Ishq* or "love."

3. This Divine Love, expelling all worldly desires from his heart, leads him to the next stage, which is *zuhd*, or "seclusion."

4. Occupying himself henceforward with contemplations and investigations of metaphysical theories concerning the nature, attributes, and works of God, he reaches *ma'rifah*, or "knowledge."

5. This assiduous contemplation of startling metaphysical theories is exceedingly attractive to an oriental mind, and not infrequently produces a state of mental excitement. Such ecstatic state is considered a sure prognostication of direct illumination of the heart by God, and constitutes the next stage, called *wajd*, or "ecstasy."

6. During this stage he is supposed to receive a revelation [not the same level of 'revelation' called *wahy* which is reserved only for the Prophets - 'Inspiration' perhaps would be a more appropriate term in this context.] of the true nature of the Godhead, and to have reached the stage called *haqiqah*, or "truth".

7. He then proceeds to the stage of *wasl*, or "union with God."

8. Further than this he cannot go, but pursues his habit of self-denial and contemplation until his death, which is looked upon as *fana*, "total absorption into the Deity, extinction." To develop this quasi "spiritual life" the Sufi leaders have invented various forms of devotion called *zikh*, or "recitations." These eccentric exercises have generally attracted the notice of travellers in the East, and have been described by Lane, Vambery, Burton, and other Orientalists."

### III. The Perfect Man in Sufi Spiritualism

"The late Professor E.H. Palmer of Cambridge has in his *Oriental Mysticism*, compiled from native sources, given a very correct idea of what may be considered the spiritual side of Muhammadanism, as expressed in the teaching of Muslim Sufis.

The perfect man is he who has fully comprehended the Law, the Doctrine, and the Truth; or, in other words, he who is endued with four things in perfection, viz. 1. Good words; 2. Good deeds; 3. Good principles; 4. The sciences. It is the business of the Traveller to provide himself with these things in perfection, and by so doing

he will provide himself with perfection.

"The Perfect Man has had various other names assigned to him, all equally applicable, viz. Elder, Leader, Guide, Inspired Teacher, Wise, Virtuous, Perfect, Perfecter, Beacon and Mirror of the world, Powerful Antidote, Mighty Elixir, *Isa* (Jesus) the Raiser of the Dead, *Khizar* the Discoverer of the Water of Life, and *Solomon* who knew the language of Birds.

"The Universe has been likened to a single person, of whom the Perfect Man is the Soul; and again, to a tree, of which mankind is the fruit, and the Perfect Man the pith and essence. Nothing is hidden from the Perfect Man; for after arriving at the knowledge of God, he has attained to that of the nature and properties of material objects, and can henceforth find no better employment than acting mercifully towards mankind. Now there is no mercy better than to devote oneself to the perfection and improvement of others, both by precept and example. Thus the Prophet is called in the Qur'an '*a mercy to the Universe.*' [Qur'an 21: 107]. But with all his perfection the Perfect Man cannot compass his desires, but passes his life in consistent and unavoidable self-denial: he is perfect in knowledge and principle, but imperfect in faculty and power.

"There have indeed been Perfect Men possessed of power; such power as that which resides in kings and rulers; yet a careful consideration of the poor extent of man's capacities will show that his weakness is preferable to his power, his want of faculty preferable to his possession of it. Prophets and saints, kings and sultans, have desired many things, and failed to obtain them; they have wished to avoid many things, and have had them forced upon them. Mankind is made up of the Perfect and the Imperfect, of the Wise and the Foolish, of Kings and Subjects, but all are alike weak and helpless, all pass their lives in a manner contrary to their desires; this the Perfect man recognizes and acts upon, and, knowing that nothing is better for man than renunciation, forsakes all and becomes free and at leisure. As before he renounced wealth and dignity, so now he foregoes eldership and teachership, esteeming freedom and rest above everything; the fact is, that though the motive alleged for education and care of others is a feeling of compassion and a regard for discipline, yet the real instigation is the love of dignity; as the Prophet says, 'The last thing that is removed from the chiefs of the righteous is love of dignity.' I have said that the Perfect Man should be endued with four things in perfection; now the Perfectly Free Man should have four additional characteristics, viz. renunciation, retirement, contentment, and leisure. He who has the first four is virtuous, but not free; he who

has the whole eight is perfect, liberal, virtuous, and free. Furthermore, there are two grades of the Perfectly Free - those who have renounced wealth and dignity only, and those who have further renounced eldership and teachership, thus becoming free and at leisure. These again are subdivided into two classes; those who, after renunciation, retirement and contentment, make choice of obscurity, and those who after renunciation, make choice of submission, contemplation, and resignation; but the object of both is the same. Some writers assert that freedom and leisure consists in the former course, while others maintain that it is only to be found in the latter.

"Those who make choice of obscurity are actuated by the knowledge that annoyance and distraction of thought are the invariable concomitants of society; they therefore avoid receiving visits and presents, and fear them as they would venomous beasts. The other class, who adopt submission, resignation and contemplation, do so because they perceive that mankind for the most part are ignorant of what is good for them, being dissatisfied with what is beneficial, and delighted with circumstances that are harmful to them; as the Qur'an says, *'Perchance ye may dislike what is good for you, and like what is hurtful to you.'* [Qur'an 2: 213] For this reason they retire from society equally with the other class, caring little what the world may think of them.

"Fellowship has many qualities and effects both of good and evil. The fellowship of the wise is the only thing that can conduct the Traveller safely to the Goal; therefore all the submission, earnestness and discipline that have been hitherto inculcated are merely in order to render him worthy of such fellowship. Provided he have the capacity, a single day, nay, a single hour, in the society of the wise, tends more to his improvement than years of self-discipline without it. *'Verily one day with thy Lord is better than a thousand years.'* [Qur'an 22:46].

"It is, however, possible to frequent the society of the wise without receiving any benefit therefrom, but this must proceed either from want of capacity or want of will. In order then to avoid such a result, the Sufis have laid down the following rules for the conduct of the disciple when in the presence of his teachers.

"Hear, attend, but speak little.

"Never answer a question not addressed to you; but if asked, answer promptly and concisely, never feeling ashamed to say, 'I know not.'

"Do not dispute for disputation's sake.

"Never seek the highest place, nor even accept it if it be offered to you.

"Do not be over-ceremonious, for this will compel your elders to act in the same manner towards you, and

give them needless annoyance.

"Observe in all cases the etiquette appropriate to the time, place and persons present.

"In indifferent matters, that is, matters involving no breach of duty by their omission or commission, conform to the practice and wishes of those with whom you are associating.

"Do not make a practice of anything which is not either a duty or calculated to increase the comfort of your associates; otherwise it will become an idol to you; and it is incumbent on every one to break his idols and renounce his habits."

## IV. Renunciation

"This leads us to the subject of Renunciation, which is of two kinds, external and internal. The former is the renunciation of worldly wealth; the latter, the renunciation of worldly desires. Everything that hinders or veils the Traveller's path must be renounced, whether it relate to this world or the next. Wealth and dignity are great hindrances; but too much praying and fasting [of a non-obligatory kind] are often hindrances too. The one is a shroud of darkness, the other a veil of light. The Traveller must renounce idolatry, if he desire to reach the Goal, and everything that bars his progress is an idol. All men have some idol which they worship; with one it is wealth and dignity, with another overmuch prayer and fasting. If a man sit always upon his prayer-carpet, his prayer-carpet becomes his idol. And so on with a great number of instances.

Renunciation must not be performed without the advice and permission of an elder. It should be the renunciation of trifles, not of necessities, such as food, clothing, and dwelling-place, which are indispensable to man; for without them he would be obliged to rely on the aid of others, and this would beget avarice, which is 'the mother of vice.' The renunciation of necessities produces as corrupting an influence upon the mind as the possession of too much wealth. The greatest of blessings is to have a sufficiency, but to over-step this limit is to gain nought but additional trouble.

"Renunciation is the practice of those who know God, and the characteristic mark of the wise. Every individual fancies that he alone possesses this knowledge, but knowledge is an attribute of the mind, and there is no approach from unaided sense to the attributes of the mind, by which we can discover who is, or who is not, possessed of this knowledge. Qualities

however, are the sources of action; therefore a man's practice is an infallible indication of the qualities he possesses; if, for instance, a man asserts that he is a baker, a carpenter, or a blacksmith, we can judge at once if he possesses skill in these crafts by the perfection of his handiwork. In a word, theory is internal, and practice external, the presence of the practice, therefore, is a proof that the theory too is there.

"Renunciation is necessary to the real confession of faith; for the formula 'There is no God but God,' involves two things, negation and proof. Negation is the renunciation of other Gods, and proof is the knowledge of God. Wealth and dignity have led many from the right path, they are the gods the people worship; if then you see that one has renounced these, you may be sure that he has expelled the love of this world from his heart, and completed the negation; and whosoever has attained to the knowledge of God has completed the proofs. This is really confessing that 'there is no God but God'; and he who has not attained to the knowledge of God, has never really repeated the confession of faith. Early prejudices are a great stumbling-block to many people; for the first principles of Monotheism are contained in the words of the Hadis: 'Everyone is born with a disposition [for the true faith], but his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.' The Unitarian also say, that the real confession of faith consists in negation and proof; but they explain negation by renunciation of self, and proof by acknowledgment of God.

"Thus, according to the Sufis, confession of faith; prayer and fasting contain two distinct features, namely, form and truth; the former being entirely inefficacious without the latter. Renunciation and the knowledge of God are like a tree; the knowledge of God is the root, renunciation the branches, and all good principles and qualities are the fruit. To sum up, the lesson to be learnt is that in repeating the formula, the Traveller must acknowledge in his heart that God only always was, God only always will be. This world and the next, nay, the very existence of the Traveller, may vanish, but God alone remains. This is the true confession of faith; and although the Traveller before was blind, the moment he is assured of this his eyes are opened, and he seeth."

## V. Helps to Devotion

"The Sufis hold that there are three aids necessary to conduct the Traveller on his path.

"1. Attraction (*injazab*);

2. Devotion (*ibadah*);

3. Elevation (*'uru*).

"Attraction is the act of God, who draws man towards Himself. Man sets his face towards this world, and is entangled in the love of wealth and dignity, until the grace of God steps in and turns his heart towards God. The tendency proceeding from God is called Attraction; that which proceeds from man is called Inclination, Desire and Love. As the inclination increases, its name changes, and it causes the Traveller to renounce everything else becoming a Kiblah, to set his face towards God; when it has become his Kiblah, and made him forget everything but God, it is developed into Love.

"Most men when they have attained this stage are content to pass their lives therein, and leave the world without making further progress. Such a person the Sufis call Attracted (*majzub*).

"Others, however, proceed from this to self-examination, and pass the rest of their lives in devotion. They are then called Devoutly Attracted (*majzub-i-Salik*). If devotion he first practised, and the attraction of God then step in, such a person is called an Attracted Devotee (*Salik-i-majzub*). If he practise and complete devotion, but is not influenced by the attraction of God, he is called a Devotee (*Salik*).

"Sheikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi, in his work entitled '*Awarifal Ma'arif*', says that an elder or teacher should be selected from the second class alone; for although many may be estimable and righteous, it is but few who are fit for such offices, or for the education of disciples.

"Devotion is the prosecution of the journey, and that in two ways, to God and in God. The first, the Sufis say, has a limit; the second is boundless; the journey to God is completed when the Traveller has attained to the knowledge of God; and then commences the journey in God, which has for its object, the knowledge of the Nature and Attributes of God, a task which they confess is not to be accomplished in so short a space as the lifetime of man.

The knowledge wisest men have shared of Thy great power  
and Thee is Less, when with Thyself compared, than one  
drop in a sea.

"The Unitarians maintain that the journey to God is completed when the Traveller has acknowledged that there is no existence save that of God; the journey in God they explain to be a subsequent inquiry into the mysteries of nature.

"The term Elevation of ascent (*'uru*) is almost

synonymous with Progress."

## VI. The Intellectual and Spiritual Development of Man

"Every animal possesses a vegetative spirit, a living spirit, and an instinctive spirit; but man has an additional inheritance, namely the Spirit of Humanity. Now this was breathed by God into man directly from Himself, and is therefore of the same character as the Primal Element: *'And when I have fashioned him and breathed My spirit into him.'* [Qur'an 15:29]. The Sufis do not interpret this of the Life, but of the Spirit of Humanity, and say that it is frequently not attained until a late period of life, thirty or even eighty years. Before man can receive this Spirit of Humanity, he must be furnished with capacity, which is only to be acquired by purifying oneself from all evil and immoral qualities and dispositions, and adorning oneself with the opposite ones. Sheikh Muhiy-uddin ibn al 'Arabi, in his 'Investigations'[*Fusus*], says that the words *'and when I have fashioned him,'* refer to this preparation, and the rest of the sentence, *'and breathed My spirit into him,'* refers to the accession of the Spirit of Humanity.

"Two conditions are therefore imposed upon the Traveller; first, to attain Humanity, second, to acquire capacity.

"There are three developments of character that must be suppressed before man can attain to Humanity; the animal, the brutal [cruel, like a brute/beast] and the fiendish [devilish]. He who only eats and sleeps and gives way to lust, is mere animal; if besides these he give way to anger and cruelty, he is brutal; and if in addition to all these he is crafty, lying, and deceitful, he is fiendish.

"If the Traveller is moderate in his food, rest, and desires, and strives to attain a knowledge of himself and of God, then is the time for acquiring capacity by freeing himself from all that is evil and base, and adorning himself with the opposite qualities; after that by prayer he may obtain the Spirit of Humanity. Some one has truly said that there is none of the perfection, essence, or immortality of man, save only among such as are 'created with a godly disposition.' When the Traveller has once been revived by the Spirit of Humanity, he becomes immortal, and inherits everlasting life. This is why it has been said that 'man has a beginning but no end.'

"If when he has attained this Spirit of Humanity, he is earnest, and does not waste his life in trifling, he soon arrives at the Divine Light itself. For 'God guideth whom He pleaseth unto His Light.' The attainment of this light

is the completion of Man's upward progress, but no one can attain to it but those who are pure in spirit and in their lives. Mohammed asserted that he himself had attained it, 'To the light have I reached and in the light I live;' now this light is the Nature of God; wherefore he said, 'who seeth me seeth God.' [*Nur-i-Muhammad*]

"The germ that contains the Primal Element of Man is the lowest of the low, and the Divine Light is the highest of the high; it is between these extremes that the stages of man's upward or downward progress lie. *We have created man in the fairest of proportions, and then have thrown him back to be the lowest of the low, save only such as believe and act with righteousness; and verily those shall have their reward.* [Qur'an 95:4]. This reward is said by the Sufis to be defined by the word *ajrat [ujrat]*, 'reward,' itself. This word contains three radical letters [in Arabic]" *Alif, Jeem* and *Ray*: the *Alif* stands for *Iadah* = 'return', the *Jeem* for *Jannah* = 'Paradise,' and the *Ray* for *Ruyah*, that is 'those who have handed down the faith.' Their acting righteously is their return to the Nature of God, for when they have finished their upward progress and reached this they are in Paradise, and in the presence of their God. He therefore is a man, in the true sense of the word, who being sent down upon earth strives upward towards Heaven. These aspirations are indispensable to man; he might by the Almighty Power of God exist without all beside, even had the Heavens and the elements themselves never been; but these things are the aim and want of all.

"It has been said that the Primal Element or constructive spirit as well as the Spirit of Humanity proceed direct from God. They are therefore identical, and are both included by the Sufis in the one term Concomitant Spirit. Now this Spirit, although distinct and individual, comprehends and governs the entire Universe. The Simple Natures are its administrators and exponents; of these Seven Sires beget, and the Four Mothers conceive from the incarnation of this spirit in them, and their offspring is the triple kingdom, Mineral, Vegetable, and Animal. And so it is with the Lesser World of Man.

"Now this Spirit hath two functions, external and internal; the external is revealed in the material generation just alluded to, the internal abides in the heart of man. Whosoever purifies his heart from worldly impressions and desires, reveals this internal function of the Spirit within him, and illumines and revivifies his soul.

"Thus the Spirit at once comprehends the Universe and dwells in the heart of man."

## VII. Of the Upward Progress or Ascent of Man

"When Man has become assured of the truth of Revelation, he has reached the stage of Belief, and has the name of *Mumin* 'Believer.' When he further acts in obedience to the will of God, and apportions the night and day for earnest prayer, he has reached the stage of worship, and is called an '*A'bid* or 'Worshipper.' When he has expelled the love of this world from his heart, and occupies himself with the contemplation of the mighty Whole, he reaches the next stage, and becomes a *Zuhid*, or 'Recluse.' When in addition to all this he knows God, and subsequently learns the mysteries of nature, he reaches the stage of Acquaintance, and is called '*Arif*, 'One who knows.' The next stage is that in which he attains to the love of God, and is called a *Wali* or 'Saint'. When he is moreover gifted with inspiration and the power of working miracles, he becomes a *Nabi*, 'Prophet'; and when entrusted next with the delivery of God's own message, he is called an 'Apostle,' *Rasul*. When he is appointed to abrogate a previous dispensation and preach a new one, he is called '*Ulu' Azm*, 'One who has a mission.' When this mission is final, he has arrived at the stage called *Khatm*, or 'the Seal.' This is the Upward Progress of Man. The first stage is the 'Believer,' the last the 'Seal'.

"After separation from the body, the soul of Man returns to that Heaven which corresponds to the stage which he has attained; thus the Believer at last dwells in the first or lowest Heaven, the Seal in the Heaven of Heavens; for it will be noticed that the stages of upward progress correspond to the number of degrees in the Heavenly Spheres, namely, seven inferior and two superior.

"The metaphysicians say that these stages and degrees do not in reality exist, but that the Heavenly Intelligence which corresponds to the degree of intelligence attained by Man, attracts and absorbs his soul into itself after separation from the body. Thus every one who has attained intelligence corresponding to that of the highest sphere, his soul returns thereto; and he who has attained intelligence corresponding to the lowest sphere, his soul in like manner returns to that; those who have not attained intelligence corresponding to any of those will be placed in Hell, which is situated below the lowest sphere.

"As each of the Heavenly Spheres is furnished with knowledge and purity in proportion to its position, the rank of Man's soul in the future state will, according to

this last account, be in proportion to his degree of knowledge and purity of life while upon the earth.

"The Unitarians say that man's Upward Progress has no end, for if he strive for a thousand years, each day will teach him something that he knew not before, inasmuch as the knowledge of God has no limit. So Mohammed says, "He who progresses daily is yet of feeble mind."

"The religious account says that the soul of every man returns to an individual place after separation from the body. This the metaphysicians deny; for how, say they, can the soul of a man return to a certain place when it has not originally come from a certain place? The soul of man is the Primal Spirit, and if a thousand persons live, it is the same spirit that animates them all; and in like manner, if a thousand die, the same spirit returns to itself, and is not lessened or diminished. The sun is the lord of the sensible world, and exponent of the attributes of the Primal Spirit. The Primal Spirit is the lord of the invisible world and the exponent of the Nature of God.

"When the heart of man has been revived and illumined by the Primal Spirit, he has arrived at Intelligence; for Intelligence is a light in the heart, distinguishing between truth and vanity. Until he has been so revived and illumined, it is impossible for him to attain to intelligence at all. But having attained to intelligence, then, and not till then, is the time for attainment of knowledge for becoming Wise. Intelligence is a Primal Element, and knowledge the attribute thereof. When from knowledge he has successively proceeded to the attainment of the Divine Light, and acquaintance with the mysteries of nature, his last step will be Perfection, with which his Upward Progress concludes.

"But dive he ever so deeply into the treasury of mysteries and knowledge, unless he examine himself and confess that after all he knows naught, all that he has acquired will slip through his hands, and leave him far poorer than before. His treasure of today should as much exceed the treasure of yesterday as an ocean exceeds a drop; but this can never be, unless he, leaving all else for contemplation and self-examination, have freedom and leisure to learn how poor he really is, and how much he needs the saving help of God.

"One class of Unitarians explain the Upward Progress of Man thus. They say that every atom of existent beings is filled with light;

Arise and look around, for every atom that has birth  
Shines forth a lustrous beacon to illumine all the earth;

but that man walks abroad in darkness, blinded by the lusts of life, and laments the want of light that would,

were he but aware of it, involve him in the glorious sheen of brightest day:

" 'Twere well to catch the odours that about our senses play,  
For all the world is full of blasts to bear the sweets away.

What they mean is this, that all existent beings are compounded of two things, darkness and light, which are indistinguishably blended together. The light belongs to the Invisible, and darkness to the Sensible world; but the two are intimately connected, and the former exercises a paramount influence upon the latter. The object of man, according to them is to separate the light from the darkness, that its nature and attributes may be understood, and in this consists his Upward Progress.

"Although the light and the darkness can never be entirely separated, for the one is as it were the veil of the other, the light can be made to prevail, so that its attributes may become manifest.

"Now it is possible to separate thus far the light from the darkness in certain cases; in the bodies of men and animals, for instance, there are certain organs always at work, whose sole object is this separation. Thus, when food is introduced into the stomach, the liver receives the cream and essence of it and transmits it to the heart; the heart, in like manner, extracts the essence of this, which is the life, and transmits it to the brain; lastly, the brain extracts the essence of this, and transforms it into the elixir or life, the real light of all.

"The elixir evolved by the brain is the instinctive spirit, and, is, as it were, a lamp in a lantern; but it gives forth after all but a flickering and cloudy light, and man's object should therefore be to strengthen and purify it by Renunciation and Contemplation, until it give forth the true light which is the Spirit of Humanity. When man has attained to this, he necessarily becomes free from all that is evil, and is adorned instead with every good and noble quality.

"The body of man is like a lantern, the Vegetative Spirit is the lamp, the Animal Spirit is the wick, the Instinctive Spirit the oil, and the Spirit of Humanity the fire that kindles all. *'Verily its oil would almost shine even though no fire kindled it.'* [Qur'an 24:35] In other words, the Instinctive Spirit should feed and supply the Spirit of Humanity, as the oil feeds and supplies the flame in a lamp. The Traveller must aim at completing this lamp, so that his heart may be illumined, and he may see things as they really are. When the Spirit of Humanity a *'light upon light'* [Qur'an 24:35] has kindled the Instinctive Spirit, God *'guideth whom he pleaseth to His own light.'* (idem), that is to the divine light of

His own nature, reaching which the Traveller's Upward Progress is complete; for *'from Him they spring, and unto Him return'*"

## VIII. Sufism adapted to Muhammadanism

"A clear and intelligible exposition of the principles of Sufism, or Oriental Spiritualism, is given by Muhammad al-Misri, a Sufi of the Ilhamiyah school of thought, in the following categorical form (translated by Mr. J.P. Brown, in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*). It represents more particularly the way in which this form of mysticism is adapted to the stern and dogmatic teaching (*sic*) of Islam.

*Question* - What is the beginning of at-Tasawwuf?  
*Answer* - *Iman*, or faith, of which there are six pillars, namely, (1) Belief in God, (2) in His Angels, (3) in His Books, (4) and in His Prophets, (5) in the last Day, and (6) in His decree of good and evil.

*Q* - What is the result of at-Tasawwuf?

*A* - It is not only the reciting with the tongue these pillars of faith, but also establishing them in the heart. This was the reply made by the Murshid Junaiyd 'l-Baghdadi, in answer to the same question.

*Q* - What is the distinction between a Sufi and an ordinary person?

*A* - The knowledge of an ordinary person is but *Imanu-i Taqlidi*, or "a counterfeit faith," whereas that of the Sufi is *Iman-i-Tahqiqi*, or "true faith."

*Q* - What do you mean by counterfeit faith?

*A* - It is that which an ordinary person has derived from his forefathers, or from the teachers and preachers of his own day, without knowing why it is essential that a man should believe in these six articles for his soul's salvation. For example, a person may be walking in the public streets and find a precious jewel which, perhaps kings had sought for in vain, and rulers who had conquered the whole world had sought for and yet had not found. But in this precious jewel he has found that which is more effulgent than the sun, when it is so bright that it obscures the lesser light of the moon; or even he has found an alchemy which can convert copper into gold. And yet, perhaps, the finder knows not the value of the precious jewel, but thinks it a counterfeit jewel, and one which he would give away even for a drink of water if he were thirsty.



*Q* - What is the establishment of faith?

*A* - The establishment of faith consists in a search being made for the true origin of each of these six pillars of faith, until the enquirer arrives at *al-Haqiqah* "the Truth." Many persons pursue the journey for ten, or twenty, or thirty, or even forty years, and wandering away from the true path, enter upon the path of error, and hence there are known to be seventy-three ways, only one of which is the way of Salvation. At last, by a perfect subjection to the teaching of the *Murshid*, or guide, they find out the value of the lost jewel which they have found, and their faith becomes manifest, and you might say that, with the light of the lamp, they have reached the sun. They then find out that the *Tariqah*, or journey of the Sufi, is consistent with the *Shari'ah* or law of Islam.

*Q* - In matters of faith and worship, to what sect are the Sufis attached?

*A* - (To this reply the author says, speaking, of course, of his own people, that they are chiefly of the Sunni sect. But he does not notice that mystic doctrines are more prevalent amongst the Shi'ahs.)

*Q* - When Bayazid al-Bistami was asked of what sect he was, he replied, "I am of the sect of Allah." What did he mean?

*A* - The sects of Allah are the four orthodox sects of Islam. (Here our author departs from true Sufi teaching.)

*Q* - Most of the Sufis, in their poems, use certain words which we hear and understand as showing that they were of the Metempsychosians. They say, "I am sometimes Lot, sometimes a vegetable, sometimes an animal, at other times a man." What does this mean?

*A* - Brother, the prophet has said: "My people, in the future life, will rise up in companies" - that is, some as monkeys, others as hogs, or in other forms - as is written in a verse of the Qur'an, Surah [78:18]: "*Ye shall come in troops,*" which has been commented on by al-Baizawi, who cites a tradition to the effect that, at the resurrection, men will rise up in the form of those animals whose chief characteristics resemble their own ruling passions in life; the greedy, avaricious man as a hog; the angry, passionate man as a camel; the tale-bearer or mischief-maker as a monkey. For though these men, while in this life, bore the human form externally, they were internally nothing different from the animals whose characters are in common with their own. The resemblance is not manifest during the life, but becomes so in the other existence, after the resurrection. Let us

avoid such traits; repentance before death will free us from these evils. The Prophet said with regard to this: "Sleep is the brother of death. The dying man sees himself in his true character, and so knows whether or not he is, by repentance, freed from his ruling passion of life. In like manner, he will see himself during his slumbers, still following in the path of his passions." For instance, the money-calculator, in sleep, sees himself engaged in his all-absorbing occupation; and this fact is a warning from God not to allow himself to be absorbed in any animal passion or degrading occupation. It is only by prayerful repentance that anyone can hope to see himself, in his sleep, delivered from his ruling carnal passion, and restored to his proper human, intellectual form. If in your slumbers you see a monkey, consider it as a warning to abandon or abstain from the passion of mischief; if a hog, cease to seize upon the goods of others; and so on. Go and give yourself up to an upright *Murshid*, or spiritual guide, who will, through his prayers, show you in your slumbers the evil parts of your character, until one by one they have passed away, and have been replaced by good ones - all through the power of the name of God, whom he will instruct you to invoke (*zikr*); at length you will only see in your slumbers the forms of holy and pious men, in testimony of that degree of piety to which you will have attained. This is what is meant by that expression of certain poets, referring to one's condition previous to the act of repentance, when the writer says, "I am sometimes an animal, sometimes a vegetable, sometimes a man"; and the same may be said by the Sufis, in application to themselves, as of any other part of creation, for man is called the *akhiru 'l-maujudat* or "the climax of beings": for in him are comprised all the characteristics of creation. Many mystical books have been written on this subject, all showing that man is the larger part, and the world the smaller part, of God's creation. The human frame is said to comprise all the other parts of creation; and the heart of man is supposed to be even more comprehensive than the rainbow, because, when the eyes are closed, the mental capacity can take in the whole of a vast city; though not seen by the eyes, it is seen by the capacious nature of the mind. Among such books is the *Hauzu 'l-Hayat* or the "Well of Life," which says that if a man closes his eyes, ears, and nostrils, he cannot take cold; that the right nostril is called the sun and the left the moon; that from the former he breathes heat, from the latter cold air.

*Q* - Explain the distinctive opinions of the Sufis in *at-Tanasukh*, or the Transmigration of Souls.

*A* - O Brother! Our teaching regarding *al-Barzakh* [Qur'an

23:102] has nothing whatever to do with *Tanasukh*. Of all the erring sects in the world, those who believe in Metempsychosis, or Transmigration of Souls, is the very worst.

*Q* - The Sufis regard certain things as lawful which are forbidden. For instance they enjoin the use of wine, wine-shops, the wine-cup, sweethearts; they speak of the curls of their mistresses, and the moles on their faces, cheeks, etc, and compare the furrows on their brows to verses of the Qur'an. What does this mean?

*A* - The Sufis often exchange the external features of all things for the internal, the corporeal for the spiritual, and thus give an imaginary signification to outward forms. They behold objects of a precious nature in their natural character and for this reason the greater part of their words have a spiritual and figurative meaning. For instance, when, like Hafiz, they mention wine, they mean a knowledge of God, which figuratively considered, is the love of God. Wine, viewed figuratively, is also love: love and affection are here the same thing. The wine shop, with them, means the *murhidu 'l kamil*, or spiritual director, for his heart is said to be the depository of the love of God; the wine-cup is the *Talqin*, or the pronunciation of the name of God in a declaration of faith, as: "There is no God but Allah!" or it signifies the words which flow from the *Murshid's* mouth respecting divine knowledge, and which, when heard by the *Salik*, or "one who pursues the true path," intoxicates his soul, and divests his heart of passions, giving him pure spiritual delights. The sweetheart means the excellent preceptor, because, when anyone sees his beloved, he admires her perfect proportions, with a heart full of love; the *Salik* beholds the secret knowledge of God which fills the heart of his spiritual Preceptor, or *Murshid*, and through it receives a similar inspiration, and acquires a full perception of all that he possesses, just as the pupil learns from his master. As the lover delights in the presence of his sweetheart, so the *Salik* rejoices in the company of his beloved *Murshid*, or preceptor. The sweetheart, is the object of a worldly affection, but the preceptor of a spiritual attachment. The curls or ringlets of the beloved are the grateful praises of the preceptor, tending to bind the affections of the disciple; the moles on her face signify that when the pupil, at times, beholds the total absence of all worldly wants on the part of the preceptor, he also abandons all the desires of both worlds - he perhaps even goes so far as to desire nothing else in life than his preceptor; the furrows on the brow of the beloved one, which they compare to verses of the Qur'an, mean the light of the heart of the *Murshid*; they

are compared to verses of the Qur'an, because the attributes of God, in accordance with the injunction of the Prophet: "Be ye endued with divine qualities,' are possessed by the *Murshid*.

*Q* - The *Murshids* and their disciples often say: "We see God." Is it possible for anyone to see God?

*A* - It is not possible. What they mean by this assertion is that they know God, that they see His power; for it is forbidden to mortal eyes to behold Him, as is declared in the Qur'an [6:103] "*No sight reaches Him; He reaches the sight - the subtle, the knowing.*" The Prophet commanded us to "adore God, as thou wouldst didst thou see Him; for, if thou dost not see Him, He sees thee." This permission to adore Him is a divine favour, and they say that they are God's servants by divine favour. 'Ali said: "Should the veil fall from my eyes, how would God visit me in truth?" This saying proves that no one really sees God, and that even the sainted 'Ali never saw Him.

*Q* - Can it possibly be erroneous to say that, by seeing the traces of anyone he may be beheld?

*A* - One may certainly be thus seen. When any person sees the brightness of the sun, he may safely say that he has seen it. There is another example, namely: Should you hold a mirror in your hand, you see a figure in it, and you may therefore say that you see your own face, which is really an impossibility; for no one has ever seen his own face, and you have asserted what is not strictly correct.

*Q* - Since everyone sees the traces of God, as everyone is able to do, how is it that the Sufis declare that they only see Him?

*A* - Those who make this statement do not know what they see, for they have never really seen Him. A person who has eaten of a sweet and savoury dish given to him but of which he knows not the name, seeks for it again with a longing desire after it, and thus wanders about in search of what has given him so much delight, even though he be ignorant of what it really was. So are those who seek after God, without knowing Him, or what He is.

*Q* - Some Sufis declare: "We are neither afraid of Hell, nor do we desire Heaven" - a saying which must be blasphemous. How is this?

*A* - They do not really mean that they do not fear Hell, and that they do not wish for Heaven. If they really meant this, it would be blasphemous. Their meaning is not as they express themselves; probably they wish to say "O Lord, Thou who createdst us and madest us what we are,

Thou hast not made us because we assist Thy workings. We are in duty bound to serve Thee all the more devotedly, wholly in obedience to Thy holy will. We have no bargaining with Thee, and we do not adore Thee with the view of gaining thereby either Heaven or Hell!" As it is written, in the Qur'an, [9:112] : "*Verily, God hath bought of the believers their persons and their wealthy, for the Paradise they are to have,*" which means that His bounty has no bounds, His mercy no end; and thus it is that He benefits His faithful servants. They would say: "Thou hast no bargaining with anyone; our devotion is from the sincerity of our hearts, and is for love of Thee only. Were there no Heaven, nor any Hell, it would still be our duty to adore thee. To Thee belongs the perfect right to put us either in Heaven or in Hell, and may Thy commands be executed agreeable to Thy blessed Will: if Thou puttest us in Heaven, it is through Thine excellence, not on account of our devotion; if Thou puttest us in Hell, it is from out of Thy great justice, and not from any arbitrary decision on Thy part; so be it for ever and for ever!" This is the true meaning of the Sufis when they say they do not desire Heaven or fear Hell.

*Q* - Thou saidst that there is no conflict between the *Shari'ah*, "law," and the *Haqiqah*, "truth," and nothing in the latter inconsistent with the former; and yet these two are distinguished from one another by "a something" which the *Ahlu l'Haqiqah*, "believers in the truth," conceal. Were there nothing conflicting, why should it be thus hidden?

*A* - If it be concealed, it is not because there is a contrariety to the law, but only because the thing hidden is contrary to the human mind; its definition is subtle, and not understood by everyone, for which reason the Prophet said: "Speak to men according to their mental capacities, for if you speak all things to all men, some cannot understand you, and so fall into error." The Sufis, therefore, hide some things conformably with this precept.

*Q* - Should anyone not know the science which is known to the Sufis, and still do what the law plainly commands, and be satisfied therewith, would his faith and Islam be less than that of the Sufis?

*A* - No. He would not be inferior to the Sufis; his faith and Islam would be equal even to that of the prophets, because Iman and Islam are a jewel which admits of no division or separation into parts, and can neither be increased nor diminished, just as the portion of the sun enjoyed by a king and by a *faqir* is the same, or as the limbs of the poor and the rich are equal in number: just as

members of the body of the king and the subject are precisely alike, so is the faith of the Muslim the same in all and common to all neither greater nor less in any case.

*Q* - Some men are prophets, saints, pure ones, and other *Fasiqs* (who know God, but perform none of His commands); what difference is there among them?

*A* - The difference lies in their *ma'rifah*, or knowledge of spiritual things"; but in the matter of faith they are all equal; just as, in the case of the ruler and the subject, their limbs are all equal, while they differ in their dress, power, and office."

## IX. Sufi Poetry

"The very essence of Sufism is poetry, and the Eastern Mystics are never tired of expatiating on the *Ishq* or "love to God," which is the one distinguishing feature of Sufi mysticism. The *Masnawi*, [of Rumi] which teaches in the sweetest strains that all nature abounds with love divine, that causes even the lowest plant to seek the sublime object of its desire; the works of the celebrated Jami, so full of ecstatic rapture; the moral lessons of the eloquent Sa'di; and the lyric odes of Hafiz, may be termed the Scriptures of the Sufi sect; and yet each of these authors contains passages which are unfit for publication in an English dress, and advocate morals at variance with what Christianity teaches us to be the true reflection of God's Holy Will (*sic*). Whilst propriety demands the suppression of verses of the character alluded to, we give a few odes as specimens of the highest order of Sufi poetry.

**Jalalu 'd-din ar-Rumi**, the author of the *Masnawi* (A.H. 670), thus writes: -

"I am the Gospel, the Psalter, the Qur'an;  
I am 'Uzza and Lat - (Arabic deities) - Bell and the Dragon.  
Into three and seventy sects is the world divided,  
Yet only one God: the faithful who believe in Him am I.  
Thou knowest what are fire, water, air and earth;  
Fire, water, air, and earth, all am I  
Lies and truth, good, bad, hard and soft.  
Knowledge, solitude, virtue, faith.  
The deepest ground of hell, the highest torment of the flames,  
The highest paradise,  
The earth and what is therein, the angels and the devils.  
Spirit and man am I.  
What is the goal of speech, O tell it Shams Tabrizi!  
The goal of sense?  
This: - The world Soul am I."  
# # #

And again: -

"Are we fools? We are God's captivity.  
Are we wise? We are His promenade.  
Are we sleeping? We are drunk with God.  
Are we waking? Then we are His heralds.  
Are we weeping? Then His clouds of wrath.  
Are we laughing? Flashes of His love."

# # #

Every night God frees the host of spirits;  
Frees them every night from fleshly prison.  
Then the soul is neither slave nor master;  
Nothing knows the bondsman of his bondage:  
Nothing knows the lord of all his lordship.  
Gone from such a night, is eating sorrow;  
Gone, the thoughts that question good or evil.  
Then without distraction, or division.  
In this One the spirit sinks and slumbers."

**The following is from the mystic poet Mahmud: -**

"All sects but multiply the I and Thou;  
This I and Thou belong to partial being.  
When I and Thou, and several being vanish,  
Then mosque and church shall find Thee nevermore.  
Our individual life is but a phantom,  
Make clear thine eye, and see reality."  
The following verses are by Faridu 'd-din Shakrgunj (A.H. 662): -

"Man, what thou are is hidden from thyself;  
Know'st not that morning, midday, and the eve  
Are all within Thee? The ninth heaven art Thou;  
And from the spheres into the roar of time  
Didst fall ere-while. Thou art the brush that painted  
The hues of all the world - the light of life  
That ranged its glory in the nothingness."  
"Joy! Joy! I triumph now; no more I know  
Myself as simply me. I burn with love.  
The centre is within me, and its wonder  
Lies as a circle everywhere about me.  
Joy! Joy! No mortal thought can fathom me.  
I am the merchant and the pearl at once.  
Lo! Time and space lie crouching at my feet.  
Joy! Joy! When I would revel in a rapture.  
I plunge into myself, and all things know."

**Mr. Lane, in his *Modern Egyptians*, gives a translation of a Sufi poem recited by an Egyptian Darwesh:**

"With my love my heart is troubled: and mine eyelid hind'reth  
sleep;

My vitals are dissever'd; while with streaming tears I weep.  
My union seems far distant; will my love e'er meet mine eye?  
Alas! Did not estrangement draw my tears, I would not sigh  
By dreary night I'm wasted; absence makes my hope expire  
My tears, like pearls, are dropping, and my heart is wrapt in fire.  
Whose is like my condition? Scarcely know I remedy.  
Alas! Did not estrangement draw my tears, I would not sigh.  
O turtle-dove! Acquaint me wherefor thus dost thou lament?  
Art thou so stung by absence? Of thy wings depriv'd and pent?  
He saith, 'Our griefs are equal: worn away with love. I lie.  
Alas! Did not estrangement draw my tears, I would not sigh.  
O First, and sole Eternal! Show thy favour yet to me  
Thy slave, Ahmad El-Bekree, hath no Lord excepting Thee.  
By Ta-ha, the Great Prophet! Do thou not his wish deny.  
Alas! Did not estrangement draw my tears, I would not sigh."

**Dr. Tholuck quotes this verse from a Darwesh Breviary:**

-

"Yesterday I beat the kettle-drum of dominion,  
I pitched my tent on the highest throne;  
I drank, crowned by the Beloved,  
The wine of unity from the cup of the Almighty."

One of the most characteristic Sufi poems is the Persian poem by the poet **Jami**, entitled ***Salaman and Absal***. The whole narrative is supposed to represent the joys *Love Divine* as compared with the defunct fascinations of a *Life of Sense*. The story that of a certain King of Ionia, who had a son named Salaman, who in his infancy was nursed by a young maiden named Absal, who, as he grew up, fell desperately in love with the youth, and in time ensnared him. Salaman and Absal rejoiced together in a life of sense for a full year, and thought their pleasures would never end. A certain sage is then sent by the king to reason with the erring couple. Salaman confesses that the sage is right, but pleads the weakness of his own will. Salaman leaves his native land in company with Absal, and they find themselves on an island of wonderful beauty. Salaman, unsatisfied with himself and his love, returns once more to his native country, where he and Absal resolve to destroy themselves. They go to a desert and kindle a pile, and both walk into the fire. Absal is consumed, but Salaman is preserved in the fire, and lives to lament the fate of his beloved one. In course of time he is introduced by the sage to a celestial beauty called Zuhrah, with whom he becomes completely enamoured, and Absal is forgotten.

". . . Celestial beauty seen,  
He left the earthly; and once come to know

External love, he let the mortal go."

In the epilogue to the poem, the author explains the mystic meaning of the whole story in the following language: -

"Under the outward form of any story  
 An inner meaning lies - this story now  
 Completed, do thou of its mystery  
 (Whereto the wise hath found himself a way)  
 Have thy desire - no tale of I and Thou,  
 Though I and Thou be its interpreters.  
 What signifies the King? And what the Sage?  
 And what Salaman not of woman born?  
 And what Absal who drew him to desire?  
 And what the Kingdom that awaited him.  
 When he had drawn his garment from her hand?  
 What means that Fiery Pile? And what the Sea?  
 And what that heavenly Zuhrah who at last  
 Clear'd Absal from the mirror of his soul?  
 Learn part by part the mystery from me;  
 All ear from head to foot and understanding be.  
 The incomparable Creator, when this world  
 He did create, created first of all  
 The *first intelligence* - first of a chain  
 Of ten intelligences, of which the last  
 Sole Agent is this our Universe,  
 Active intelligence so call'd, the one Distributor of evil and of  
 good,  
 Of joy and sorrow. Himself apart from matter,  
 In essence and in energy - His treasure  
 Subject to no such talisman - He yet  
 Hath fashion'd all that is - material form,  
 And spiritual sprung from Him - by Him  
 Directed all, and in His bounty drown'd  
 Therefore is He that Firman-issuing King  
 To whom the world was subject. But because  
 What he distributes to the Universe  
 Himself from still higher power received,  
 The wise, and all who comprehend aright,  
 Will recognise that higher in the Sage.  
 His the Prime Spirit that, spontaneously  
 Projected by the tenth intelligence,  
 Was from no womb of matter reproduced  
 A special essence called the Seal - a child  
 Fresh sprung from heaven in raiment undefiled  
 Of sensual taint, and therefore call'd Salaman.  
 And who Absal? - The lust-adoring body,  
 Slave to the blood and sense - through whom the Soul,  
 Although the body's very life it be,  
 Does yet imbibe the knowledge and desire

Of things of sense; and these united thus  
 By such a tie God only can unloose,  
 Body and soul are lovers each of other.  
 What is the Sea on which they sail'd? - the Sea  
 Of animal desire - the sensual abyss,  
 Under whose waters lie a world of being  
 Swept far from God in that submersion.  
 And wherefore was Absal in that Isle  
 Deceived in her delight, and that Salaman  
 Fell short of his desire? - that was to show  
 How passion tires, and how with time begins  
 The folding of the carpet of desire.  
 And what the turning of Salaman's heart  
 Back to the King, and looking to the throne  
 Of pomp and glory? What but the return  
 Of the lost soul to its true parentage,  
 And back from carnal error looking up  
 Repentant to its intellectual throne.  
 What is the Fire? Ascetic discipline,  
 That burns away the animal alloy,  
 Till all the dross of matter be consumed  
 And the essential Soul, its raiment clean  
 Of mortal taint, be left. But forasmuch  
 As, any life-long habit so consumed,  
 May well recur a pang for what is lost,  
 A soothing phantom of the past, but still  
 Told of a better Venus, till his soul  
 She fill'd, and blotted out his mortal love.  
 For what is Zuhrah? - That divine perfection,  
 Wherewith the soul inspir'd and all array'd  
 Its intellectual light is royal blest,  
 And mounts the throne, and wears the crown, and reigns  
 Lord of the empire of humanity.  
 This is the meaning of this mystery,  
 Which to know wholly ponder in the heart,  
 Till all its ancient secret be enlarged.  
 Enough - the written summary I close,  
 And set my seal:

**THE TRUTH GOD ONLY KNOWS."**