

Part Two

RĀBĪ'A'S TEACHING AND WRITINGS

CHAPTER VI

The Ṣūfī doctrine.

Rābī'a's teaching on mysticism and her contribution to the development of Ṣūfism are of considerable importance, and in dealing with her teaching we stand on surer ground than was possible in collecting material for her biography. As a teacher and guide along the mystic Way, Rābī'a was greatly revered by the Ṣūfīs and practically all the great Ṣūfī writers speak of her teaching, and quote her sayings, as being of the highest authority. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, one of the first to write a systematic treatise on Ṣūfī doctrine, al-Qushayrī, in his *Risāla* on the subject, the great Muslim theologian al-Ghazālī, of whose works frequent editions have been brought out during the last century, and whose teaching is widely accepted by Muslims up to the present day, and al-Suhrawardī, also a well-known writer on Ṣūfism, all refer to Rābī'a's teaching on the main doctrines of Ṣūfism. These writers are chiefly concerned with expositions, doctrinal and theological, but Rābī'a's biographers also make it plain that teaching to others, what she herself had learned of the Way, played an important part in her life. It is to be noted that we do not hear of Rābī'a herself learning from any great shaykh or teacher.

‘Aṭṭār says of her, “Rābī'a was unique, because in her relations (with God) and her knowledge (of things Divine) she had no equal; she was highly respected by all the great (mystics) of her time and she was a decisive proof, *i.e.* an unquestioned authority, to her

contemporaries".¹ A later writer, 'Abd al-Rā'ūf al-Munāwī, gives her equally high commendation when he says that Rābī'a was in the rank referred to by 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, when he said that there were two classes of true believers. First, those who seek a master in the Way that leads to the majesty of God, who may act as an intermediary between them and God, people who persuade themselves that there is no way for them to God except by the Prophet, who was the "chamberlain" (*i.e.* the one who admitted them into the presence of God), so they do not accept as evidence of the right way, anything in which they do not see the footsteps of the Prophet before them. The second class are those who, when they seek to follow the right Path, do not see before them the footprint of any of God's creatures, for they have removed all thought (of what He has created) from their hearts and concern themselves solely with God. It is in this latter class that Rābī'a is placed. As al-Munāwī writes: "This state is the state of 'Abd al-Qādir and Abū Sa'ūd b. Shibli and Rābī'a al-'Adawiyya and whoso follows where they lead, will attain his desire".²

Before continuing further, it is necessary to give here a very brief outline of the Ṣūfī doctrine, in order to understand the extent and value of Rābī'a's contribution to its development. The Ṣūfī view was that

man's business is to eliminate, so far as may be, the element of Not-Being, and to attain to that union with God, that absorption into the Divine, which though to be fully achieved only after the death of the body, is possible in a certain measure even in this present life.

But how is one to overcome the element of Not-Being?

By conquering self. . . . And how is self to be conquered? By Love. By Love and Love alone can the dark shadow of Not-

¹ 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.* I, p. 59.

² Munāwī, *op. cit.* fol. 51 b.

Being be done away; by Love and by Love alone, can the soul of man win back to its Divine source and find its ultimate goal in re-union with the Truth.¹

The preparation, then, for those who sought to follow the mystic Way of the Šūfis, was the life of Purgation, that is, a life of asceticism, through which the carnal soul, the *nafs*, might be purified from its sins, which ultimately had their source in the desires of self, the *shahawāt*. When cleansed from these lusts of the flesh, the soul could enter on the Path which was destined to lead it to Union with the Divine. The Šūfis often held that such asceticism was necessary only at the beginning of the quest, as a preparatory stage, and some, such as the famous Šūfī Shaykh Abū Saʿīd b. Abī al-Khayr,² felt no need of continuing their ascetic practices when they had attained to a higher degree of the spiritual life. Others, like Rābīʿa, as we have seen in the foregoing pages, practised asceticism to the end of their lives, and so came nearer to the fulfilment of the Christian idea of sainthood.³

The Way, upon which the soul, cleansed from its sins, now entered, was made up of a number of stages, in its passage through which the soul acquired certain qualities, which enabled it to rise higher and higher,

1 E. J. W. Gibb, *History of Ottoman Poetry*, I, p. 20.

2 Died at Mayhana, Khurāsān, A.D. 1049. For a full account of his life and writings cf. R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, Chapter I.

3 Cf. Francis Thompson: "Sanctity is genius in religion: the saint lives for and in religion, as the man of genius lives for and in his peculiar attainment. Nay, it might be said that sanctity is the supreme form of genius. Both are the outcome of a man's inner and individual love and are characterised by an eminent fervour, which is the note of love in action... In like manner does the Saint receive into himself and become one with divine law, whereafter he no longer needs to follow where the flocks have trodden, to keep the beaten track of rule, his will has undergone the heavenly magnetization by which it points always and unalterably towards God" (*Health and Holiness, Works*, III, p. 260).

and to attain to more exalted stations, until at last, partly through its own striving, partly through the grace of God, it reached the heavenly gnosis (*ma'rifa*). Through this knowledge, based upon intuitions of the truth (*Khawāṭir al-yaqīn*) the mystic proceeded to the final goal, the contemplation of God Himself, and the abiding in union with Him for ever.¹

As Abū Ṭālib writes in the *Qūt al-Qulūb*, to the mystic who has attained, it is said, "Thou shalt worship God as if thou sawest Him", and the same writer, dealing with the derivation of this intuitive knowledge of God, says:

The Gnostic is not one who commits to memory passages from the Qur'ān, who if he forgets what he has learned, becomes ignorant. He only is the Gnostic who takes his knowledge from his Lord at all times, without having to learn it, and without studying, and this (knowledge) lasts throughout his life-time, he does not forget his knowledge, but he remembers it for ever. He has no need of a book, and he is the (true) spiritual Gnostic.²

Abū Ṭālib states that there are indeed myriad ways to God and quotes a gnostic who said, "The ways to God are as many as the believers", and another who held that "the ways to God are as many as created things, that is, that to the contemplative there is a way to be found through every creature",³ and this is in accordance with the later Ṣūfī view that the whole world is the book of God Most High⁴ and that beneath the veil of each atom is hidden the soul-ravishing beauty of the Face of the Beloved.⁵

But in spite of these more pantheistic views, the serious exponents of Ṣūfism held that the mystic must expect to pass through certain stages, as stated above,

¹ Abū Ṭālib, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, I, p. 120.

² Abū Ṭālib, *op. cit.* I, p. 121.

³ Abū Ṭālib, *op. cit.* I, p. 83.

⁴ Maḥmūd Shabistārī, *Gulshan-i Rāz*, p. 13, l. 201.

⁵ Shabistārī, *op. cit.* p. 11, l. 165. Cf. also Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, II, l. 191.

and in Abū Ṭālib's *Qūt al-Qulūb*, al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* and al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, whole chapters are devoted to these stages on the Way and the qualities to be acquired by the mystic as he traverses them. These degrees to be attained are given by the Ṣūfī writers, in varying order, as Penitence (*tawba*), Patience (*ṣabr*), Gratitude (*shukr*), Hope (*rajā'*), Holy Fear (*khauf*), voluntary Poverty (*faqr*), Asceticism (*ṣuḥd*)—here considered as applied to the adept, involving renunciation of all save God, not the mere purification from sensual desires needed for the novice—abnegation of the personal will in the Will of God (*tawḥīd*), complete Dependence upon God (*tawakkul*), and finally Love (*maḥabba*), including in this last, passionate longing for God (*shawq*), intimacy with Him (*uns*) and Satisfaction (*riḍā'*) considered both objectively and subjectively, *i.e.* God's satisfaction in His servant's obedience and the servant's satisfaction in God's service when he casts aside all that belongs to this world and its desires and is content to "glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever".¹ Other stages mentioned by Ṣūfī writers are Sincerity, Contemplation, Self-examination and Meditation on death,² but the stage of Love includes so much that in practice it is the final stage.³

These stages passed,⁴ the Ṣūfī attains to the true

¹ Cf. Rābi'a's verses quoted above, p. 28 last two lines.

² Cf. R. A. Nicholson, arts. on "Ṣūfīs" and "Asceticism (Muslim)" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.

³ See above, pp. 48, 49.

⁴ Compare the Christian mystic: "The Soul that would be perfect begins to mortify its passions; and when 'tis advanced in that exercise, it denies itself; then with the Divine Aid, it passes to the state of Nothing...from hence springs the dying in itself and in its senses...insomuch that when the Soul is once dead to its will and understanding, 'tis properly said to be arrived at the perfect and happy state of Annihilation, which is the last disposition for Transformation and Union...this Annihilation, to make it perfect in the Soul, must be in a man's

Gnosis and the Beatific Vision, through which, becoming one with the Divine, he abides with and in Him for ever.

Judgment, in his Will, in his Works, Inclinations, Desires, Thoughts and in itself; so that the Soul must find itself dead to its Will, Desire, Endeavour, Understanding and Thought; willing, as if it did not will; desiring as if it did not desire; understanding, as if it did not understand; thinking, as if it did not think....O what a happy Soul is this, which is thus dead and annihilated! It lives no longer in itself, because God lives in it and now it may most truly be said of it, that... 'tis changed, spiritualised, transformed and deified" (Molinos, *The Spiritual Guide*, pp. 179 ff.).

CHAPTER VII

Repentance, Patience, Gratitude.

Repentance (*tawba*) was the first stage on the Way to God. It found a place also in orthodox Muslim doctrine. In the Qur'ān punishment is laid down for the sinner, "Except those who repent (after apostasy) and amend, then surely Allah is forgiving, Merciful". Yet there may be repentance which is unacceptable, "Surely those who disbelieve after their believing, then increase in unbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted and these are they that go astray".¹ "Repent" (lit. to come back to) is used of the sinner, meaning to return to God, to a state of obedience to Him, and also of God Himself to express the Divine act of the acceptance of repentance.

The same idea is expressed in the following Sūra: "Repentance with Allah is only for those who do evil in ignorance, then turn soon, so these it is to whom Allah turns, and Allah is ever-Knowing, Wise". "And repentance is not for those who go on doing evil deeds until when Death comes to one of them he says, 'Surely now I repent', nor (for) those who die while they are unbelievers."²

The Sūfīs made Repentance a much more essential part of the life lived with God. Al-Hujwīrī says, "There is no right service without repentance. Repentance is the first of the 'stations' in this Path".³ He considers that there are three things involved in Repentance: (a) Remorse for disobedience, (b) Determination not to sin again, (c) Immediate abandonment of sin.⁴ This corresponds to a later exposition of the Sūfī doctrine

¹ Al-Qur'ān, III, 88, 89 (Woking Press Edition).

² Al-Qur'ān, IV, 17, 18.

³ *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 79.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 294.

of repentance, as involving first conviction of sin, then contrition, which in its turn must lead to a purpose to amend.¹

"Some Ṣūfis", says al-Hujwīrī, "take the view that Repentance consists in not forgetting sins, but always regretting them. Junayd and others take the view that repentance consists in forgetting the sin, for the penitent is a lover of God, and the lover of God is in contemplation of God, and in contemplation it is wrong to remember sin, since remembrance is a veil between God and those who contemplate Him."

This is the repentance of the adept in the mystic life.² Al-Hujwīrī regards Repentance as a Divine strengthening: "God hath said, And he turned towards him (Adam), for He is the Disposer towards repentance, the Merciful" (Al-Qur'ān, II, 35 (37)). Repentance may be from what is wrong to what is right—the common kind, from what is right to what is more right—that of the elect, and from selfhood to God, which belongs to the degree of Divine love.³ Again, he quotes Dhū al-Nūn as saying that there is the Repentance of return (*tawba al-ināba*), through fear of the Divine punishment, and Repentance (*tawba al-istiḥya*) through shame of Divine clemency. "The repentance of fear is caused by revelation of God's majesty, the repentance of shame by the vision of God's Beauty."⁴

This is the repentance spoken of by Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī when he said, "Repentance is repenting (turning away) from all save God Most High",⁵ and the same idea that the highest type of repentance is entirely different from the type normally practised is found in the

1 Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 11. See also p. 14 for his definition of Sin as all that is contrary to the law of God, whether by omission or commission.

2 Al-Hujwīrī, *op. cit.* p. 296. Cf. also al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 43.

3 Al-Hujwīrī, *op. cit.* p. 297.

4 Al-Hujwīrī, *op. cit.* p. 299.

5 Al-Sarrāj, *op. cit.* p. 44.

statement that "The sins of those who are near (to God) are the good deeds of the righteous".¹

Rābi'a, like all the great saints of God, had a deep sense of the exceeding sinfulness of Sin and the need for Repentance and Forgiveness, and the Ṣūfī writers, in their chapters on the stage of *tawba*, more than once mention her teaching on this subject. In a fragment quoted by Ḥurayfish, which he appends to her verses on the two loves, she prays thus:

O Beloved of hearts, I have none like unto Thee,
Therefore have pity this day on the sinner who comes to Thee.
O my Hope and my Rest and my Delight
The heart can love none other but Thee.²

And in one of her prayers quoted by the same writer she speaks of God as a Comforter in sorrow, and as the One Who can cleanse her from her sin.³

In verses already quoted,⁴ she addresses her Lord as "Healer of Souls", and says that her soul has been healed through Him.

That Rābi'a sorrowed constantly for her sins is plain from the frequent mention of her grief. 'Aṭṭār says, "It is related that Rābi'a was always weeping and it was said to her, 'Why do you weep like this?' She said, 'I fear that I may be cut off from Him to Whom I am accustomed, and that at the hour of death a voice may say that I am not worthy'". Someone asked her, "If a person commits many sins and repents, will (God) accept him?" She replied, "How can anyone repent unless his Lord gives him repentance and accepts him?" and she emphasised her conception of Repentance as a "gift from God" in another saying of hers, to the effect that "Seeking forgiveness with the tongue is the sin of lying. If I seek repentance of myself, I shall have need of repentance again".⁵

1 Al-Sarrāj, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.* 2 *Al-Rawḍ al-Fā'iḳ*, p. 213.

3 Al-Ḥurayfish, *op. cit.* p. 212. 4 See above, p. 12.

5 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā*, I, p. 67.

Al-Qushayrī, in dealing with the subject of "tawba", gives a similar account of Rābī'a's view when he says, "A man said to Rābī'a, 'I have sinned much and rebelled (against God). If I repent, will He accept my repentance?' and she answered, 'No, but if He turns towards you, you will turn towards Him'".¹

In the "*Siyar al-Ṣāliḥāt*", her biographer gives a vivid picture of the impression made by her deep grief for her sins, saying:

'Abd Allah b. 'Īsā said, "I entered Rābī'a's presence and I saw the light on her face, and she used to weep much, and a man related of her that at every mention of fire (representing the punishment of the unrepentant sinner), she swooned, and I heard the falling of her tears on the ground like the sound of (water) filling a vessel",

and he reports that Ibn Mañṣūr said:

I came into Rābī'a's presence and she was worshipping, and when I reached my place, she raised her head, and lo, the place of her worship was like a marsh from her tears and I saluted her. Then she received me and said, "O my son, do you need anything?" and I said, "I came to you to greet you", and she wept and said, "May God censure thee!" Then she rose up for (the ritual) prayer and said, "I ask forgiveness of God for my lack of sincerity when I say (those words) 'I ask forgiveness of God'", and the writer adds in comment, "How God has blessed her! God has illuminated her heart among those who are dearest to Him".²

Jāmī relates that Sufyān al-Thawrī exclaimed once in her hearing, "Alas for my sorrow", and Rābī'a rebuked him, saying, "Do not lie. If you were really sorrowful, life would not be so pleasant to you". Again she said, "My sorrow is not for the things which make me grieve, but my sorrow is for the things for which I do not grieve".³

¹ *Risāla*, p. 62.

² "*Siyar al-Ṣāliḥāt*", fol. 26a.

³ Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-Uns*, p. 716. Cf. Romans vii. 15-23.

Sha'rānī also tells how Rābi'a wept and sorrowed much, and of her emotion at the mention of fire (so often synonymous with the torments of hell to the Muslim), and how she used to say "Our asking forgiveness of God, itself needs forgiveness", and he also adds that her oratory was like a swamp of water from her tears.¹

Rābi'a, then, felt and taught that Sin was hurtful in the highest degree to the soul, since it was a cause of separation between the soul and its Beloved. This conviction of sin as a barrier between the servant and his Lord² must lead to godly sorrow, contrition. This sorrow evinced itself in her case by the outward signs of grief, the constant weeping, which is recorded of her and of other saints as a mark of godliness, and also in remorse for sins of commission and omission, and this burning grief left no place for taking pleasure in the transient delights of this world. Sin to Rābi'a was hateful because it separated her from God, not because it involved punishment hereafter.

Rābi'a's teaching on Repentance, as we have seen, includes the doctrine that "tawba" is the gift of God, not something due to the effort of the sinner—"If God turns towards thee, thou wilt turn to Him"—and this is quite in accordance with her general view that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above", and that only God has the power so to touch the sinner's heart that he will turn away from his wickedness and repent. This is, of course, also the Christian view, set forth by St Paul, "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"³

¹ Sha'rānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, p. 86.

² Cf. Romans vi. 16: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

³ Romans ii. 4.

But for the sincere penitent forgiveness is sure, since repentance is a sign of grace, and sin and grace are incompatible in the same soul. As al-Ghazālī expresses it, "Darkness cannot dwell with light, nor filthiness abide with the whiteness of the fuller's soap".¹

So if the Lord grants repentance, He will not withhold forgiveness, and since faith is the beginning, justification will be the end.²

Patience (*ṣabr*) is dealt with at length by the Ṣūfī writers as an essential stage in the progress of the spiritual life, or perhaps rather as an essential quality to be acquired by the saint. Hujwīrī quotes a saying of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī to the effect that Patience is of two sorts, firstly, patience in misfortune and affliction, and secondly, patience to refrain from the things which God has commanded us to renounce and has forbidden us to pursue.³

Abū Ṭālib gives us the view of the Ṣūfīs that Patience has three stages, first, to leave off complaining, and this is the stage of the repentant; second, to be satisfied with what is decreed, and this is the rank of the ascetics; third, to love whatever his Lord does with him, and this is the stage of the true friends of God.⁴ Al-Qushayrī speaks of patience as being as necessary to faith as the head to the body.⁵ Al-Ghazālī, in dealing with *ṣabr*, regards it as a necessity for the saint, whose spiritual life must be a militant one, making war upon the passions and seeking after victory. In this world trials and misfortunes must come, losses, pain, injury to feelings, and the saint may expect that these will come with greater force to him, since

1 Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā*, iv, 12. Cf. also Mal. iii. 2: "He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap".

2 "Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life", Romans vi. 22.

3 Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 86.

4 *Qūt al-Qulūb*, i, p. 199.

5 *Risāla*, p. 111.

“whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth”, that through the fire of affliction, the faith of the saint may shine more brightly. By patient endurance the saint may cease to feel the effects of adversity, and in the end, for his patience, he will win the greater reward.¹

Rābi‘a’s life is her plainest teaching on this subject, and many of the anecdotes related in her biography witness to her practice of this virtue. In her early years we note her patience under the heavy affliction of slavery,² and she met the trials and adversities of life in the same spirit. The loss of her goods, the poverty and discomfort of her life, the sufferings of mind and body she was called upon to endure, were all accepted as part of the will of God for her and as a training of her character.³ We have already seen how Rābi‘a, when in pain, reminded those who called her attention to her injury, that her concern was to accommodate herself to her Lord’s will and to occupy herself with something better than physical affliction.⁴ The secret of her patience is to be found in her answer to Sufyān, when he tempted her to seek what she desired from God, and she said, “If I will a thing, and my Lord does not will it, I shall be guilty of unbelief”,⁵ thereby confirming the view of both al-Qushayrī and al-Ghazālī that Patience is an essential part of faith.⁶ The faithful servant must accept in patience what is sent to him, since if he doubts either his Lord’s wisdom or His loving care for those who depend on Him, he commits *kufṛ*, and Rābi‘a did not fail to teach this lesson both by precept and example, as we have already seen.

¹ *Iḥyā*, iv, pp. 55 ff. Cf. al-Kalābādhī, “Ma‘ānī al-Akhbār”, fol. 169 b.

² See above, p. 6.

³ See above, Part I, Chapter III.

⁴ See above, p. 23.

⁵ See above, pp. 24, 25.

⁶ Cf. Heb. vi. 12: “them who through faith and patience inherit the promises”.

Gratitude (*shukr*) is the complementary quality to Patience, representing the same attitude towards God's benefits that Patience represents towards His chastisements. Like the other qualities to be acquired at the different stages on the mystic Way, gratitude contains the elements of faith, feeling and action.¹ Faith must accept the fact that all benefits come from God and are His free gift, which He might have withheld, and that He has not withheld them is due to His unfailing goodness towards His elect. This faith that all good gifts come from God must produce the feeling of joy for the gift but humility before the Giver. Joy comes from the sense of the graciousness which is the sign of God's love for us, but also because the act of giving establishes a relation between us, the beneficiaries, and the Lord who bestows the benefit and to the Ṣūfī; this relationship will mean ultimately union with the Giver.²

These feelings of joy and humility and aspiration will lead to action—acts of gratitude, taking the form of praise and thanksgiving to God for His beneficence³—and the recipient of His bounty will seek to do all things in accordance with His Will and to avoid all that is contrary to it.⁴

Gratitude must extend to misfortunes as well as blessings and here it joins forces with Patience, but whereas the latter is but a passive form of the virtue, the former is an activity arising from it. "Real resignation consists not in bowing down under the Will of God, but in rising up into it".

Even in adversity we can be thankful because our misfortunes might always be greater than they actually

1 Al-Qushayrī, *op. cit.* p. 105. Al-Ghazālī, *op. cit.* iv, p. 71.

2 Cf. al-Qushayrī, *op. cit.* p. 106. Al-Kalābādhī, "Ma'ānī al-Akhbār", fol. 50 b.

3 Cf. 2 Cor. ix. 11: "Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God".

4 Al-Qushayrī, *op. cit.* p. 106. Al-Ghazālī, *op. cit.* pp. 72, 73.

are, our spiritual state might be worse than it is; in any case all temporal adversity is less than we deserve for our unworthiness, and finally, all comes from God Himself and is the outcome of the Divine Volition.¹

Al-Qushayrī goes to the heart of the matter when he says that "Gratitude is the vision of the Giver, not of the Gift",² and he goes on to say that "Gratitude is a gift from God Himself".³

Rābi'a both taught and practised this quality of *shukr*. Much of her time was spent in praise to her Lord for His goodness to her, and her prayers, already quoted, are full of thanksgiving. She says in one, "Thou hast given me life and hast provided for me, and Thine is the glory", and again she says, "How many favours hast Thou bestowed on me, gifts and grace and help".⁴

There is one story told of her, in which she made her teaching on Gratitude very plain. Her biographer says:

It is related that at one time she saw someone who had a bandage bound about his head. She said, "Why is this bandage bound (round your head)?" He said, "My head is paining me". Rābi'a asked him how old he was. "Thirty years old", he replied. She asked him, "Were you in pain and trouble for the greater part of your life?" "No", he answered. Then she said, "For thirty years (God) has kept your body fit and you have never bound upon it the bandage of gratitude, but for one night of pain in your head you bind it with the bandage of complaint".⁵

1 Al-Qushayrī, *op. cit.* pp. 107, 108. Al-Ghazālī, *op. cit.* iv, p. 74.

2 Cf. Bishr-i-Yāsīn: "Certainly the Giver is better for you than the gift. How should you want the gift, when you possess the very Philosopher's Stone?" (R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, p. 5). Cf. also Mme Guyon:

"'Tis the Giver, not the Gift
Whence the joys I feel proceed"

(*Poems*, tr. W. Cowper, p. 90).

3 *Risāla*, p. 106.

4 See above, p. 28.

5 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.* p. 68.

Another story shews how to her, too, Gratitude meant the vision of the Giver rather than the gift, and how she turned aside from the gifts in order to look up and beyond to Him Who gave them.

Once in the spring, she was in the house, giving praise to God, and her servant-maid came to her and said, "O mistress, come out to behold the works (of God)", but Rābī'a replied, "Come you inside that you may behold their Maker. Contemplation of the Maker has turned me aside from contemplating what He has made".¹ In her disregard of the beautiful creations of God, for the sake of their Creator, Rābī'a's attitude is in contrast to that of the more pantheistic later Ṣūfīs, who felt that God was to be seen (and could be worshipped) in all His creation. The view of Maḥmūd Shabistarī that "Beneath the veil of each atom is hidden the soul-ravishing beauty of the face of the Beloved",² would have met with little response from Rābī'a, and likewise the view of Jāmī, expressed in *Yusef u Zulaykha*:

Each speck of matter did He constitute
A mirror, causing each one to reflect
The beauty of His visage. From the rose
Flashed forth His beauty and the nightingale
Beholding it, loved madly. From that fire
The candle drew the lustre which beguiles
The moth to immolation. On the sun
His beauty shone, and straightway from the wave
The lotus reared its head. Each shining lock
Of Layla's hair attracted Majnūn's heart
Because some ray Divine reflected shone
In her fair face. 'Twas He to Shīrīn's lips
Who lent that sweetness, which had power to steal
The heart from Parriz and from Farhād life.
His Beauty everywhere doth show itself,

¹ 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

² *Gulshan-i Rāz*, p. 11, l. 165.

And through the forms of earthly beauties shines
Obscured as through a veil....

Where'er thou seest a veil,
Beneath that veil He hides.¹

Rābī'a, however, desired to look upon her Lord unveiled, the beauties of His gifts were as nothing in her eyes compared with the Beauty of the Giver, and gratitude to Him outweighed the thought of the things for which she was grateful.²

In that degree of gratitude which can feel thankfulness for adversity as well as prosperity, Rābī'a went beyond the limits to which her friends among the Ṣūfīs managed to attain. She attributed her sufferings to the Will of God and said that she would not oppose her Beloved in seeking to be rid of them.³ She speaks with gratitude of "warnings" given to her by her Lord, through suffering and affliction, that she might turn wholly to Him and so win the great reward at last.⁴ We are told by an old writer that Rābī'a or another of the Ṣūfīs said, "If Thou hadst not set me apart by affliction, I had not increased Thy lovers",⁵ *i.e.* my afflictions have led me to do Thy work and lead others to love Thee.

Rābī'a, then, had the faith which accepts all gifts as from God the Giver and regards misfortune and adversity in the same light as favour and happiness. Her

¹ Tr. E. G. Browne, *Religious Systems of the World*, p. 329. Cf. also Plato's *Symposium*, ed. Jowett, pp. 581 ff.

² Cf. the similar view taken by Mme Guyon, *op. cit.* pp. 3, 4:

"Far from enjoying what these scenes disclose,

* * * * *

Their form and beauty but augment my woe
I seek the Giver of those charms they show".

³ See above, p. 24. Cf. Mme Guyon, *op. cit.* p. 52.

⁴ See above, p. 22. Cf. St Paul's view: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

⁵ Al-Kalābādhi, "Ma'ānī al-Akhhār", fol. 2 b.

faith led her to joy in the chastening of the Lord as being His goodness to her, and to a humble acceptance of all that He might send, and thence to acts of praise and thanksgiving, and an eager looking forward to the great Gift, of which these gifts were but an earnest, of Union, for ever, with the Giver. She might well have identified herself with the words of a later Ṣūfī, Bābā Kūhī of Shīrāz,¹ who wrote:

In the market, in the cloister—only God I saw
 In the valley and on the mountain,—only God I saw.
 Him I have seen beside me oft in tribulation;
 In favour and in fortune—only God I saw.
 In prayer and fasting, in praise and contemplation,
 In the religion of the Prophet—only God I saw.
 Neither soul nor body, accident nor substance,
 Qualities nor causes—only God I saw.
 Like a candle I was melting in His fire
 Amidst the flames outflashing—only God I saw.
 Myself with mine own eyes I saw most clearly,
 But when I looked with God's eyes—only God I saw.
 I passed away into nothingness, I vanished,
 And lo, I was the All-living,—only God I saw.²

¹ Ob. A.D. 1050.

² Tr. R. A. Nicholson, *Eastern Poetry and Prose*, p. 101.

CHAPTER VIII

Hope and Fear.

THE Ṣūfī writers have much to say on the stages of Hope and Fear and are agreed that both have their place in the progress of the saint towards the Goal.

Al-Hujwīrī considers that right hope and right fear are both necessary to man in this world,¹ and regards fear and hope as the two pillars of faith. Those who fear, serve God through dread of separation from Him, and those who hope, serve in the expectation of union with Him.² It is interesting to note that this writer, who maintains that every prophet has his special "station", says that to Jesus belonged the station of Hope and to John the Baptist that of Fear.³

Al-Sarrāj states that Hope and Fear are as two wings without which the work of the saint cannot make progress⁴ and al-Qushayrī, developing this simile, which he attributes to Abū 'Alī al-Rūdhabārī, says that Hope and Fear are like the two wings of a bird when it is flying straight (to its destination); if one wing fails, its flight fails, and if both fail, it dies.⁵ Both are concerned with the future, Hope looks forward to what is desired and Fear dreads what is hated.

Al-Kalābādhi, writing on Fear, says that when the Ṣūfī, Abū 'Abd Allah b. al-Jilī, was asked about the man who fears, he said, "He is the man who is made to trust (in God) by those things which are rightly feared, because he does not let fearful things disturb his mind, being removed from them by his fear of God, so that such things will be removed from him".⁶

¹ *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 112.

² *Op. cit.* p. 122.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 371. Cf. St Matt. iii and Isaiah xl.

⁴ *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 62.

⁵ *Risāla*, p. 82.

⁶ "Ma'ānī al-Akhbār", fol. 70b. "Kitābal-Ta'arruf", fol. 26b.

Another Ṣūfī, being asked about such a God-fearing man, said, "He is the man who fears what is worthy of fear, and being dominated by the fear of God, he becomes all fear, and all things make him fear". Yet this fear does not make him wretched, "He is burnt who feels the fire, but he who is fire, how shall he be burnt?"¹ Abū 'Amr al-Dimashqī is reported to have said, "The man who fears rightly is he who fears his carnal self more than his enemy".²

Among the sayings of al-Fuḍayl, one of the earliest of the Ṣūfīs, contemporary with Rābī'a, is that

He who knows God by way of love without Fear perishes through pleasure and ease. He who knows Him by way of Fear (only) is separated from Him by the spirit of servitude and avoidance, but he who loves Him, and is near to Him, and is a matter of concern to Him, and has knowledge of Him, and he who knows God in reality, is far from error, and he who gives to death (*i.e.* the chief object of Fear) its true significance, will not be unmindful of it.³

I.e. he will always bear in mind that death must bring him to the judgment of God and he will so live that he need not fear it.

Like the other qualities to be attained by the Ṣūfī on the path of enlightenment, these two can be analysed into the elements of faith, emotion and action. In Hope there is faith in the thing desired, based upon knowledge of God's mercy, upon the warm recollection of His favours received—through grace, not merit—and upon the proofs of His love and forgiveness towards His elect, and upon His promise of rewards to His servants.⁴

This faith leads to joy in the prospect of God's future favour, and the practical results are that the soul

1 "Ma'ānī al-Akhbār", fol. 70b. "Kitāb al-Ta'arruf", fol. 26b.

2 "Kitāb al-Ta'arruf", fol. 26b.

3 Munāwī, *op. cit.* fol. 17a.

4 Al-Sarrāj, *op. cit.* p. 62. Al-Ghazālī, *op. cit.* iv, pp. 124-9.

strives to fight against all that may hinder it from gaining these delights in the future and to develop those virtues which may help towards their attainment.

But Hope of such a kind is too much tinged with self-interest to be a help along the mystic Way and it is of such hope that al-Hujwīrī says, "No one who has imbibed the doctrine of hope can tread the way of purgation, because it leads to indolence"¹ and the Ṣūfī sets before himself a higher ideal of Hope. Al-Qushayrī, with his gift for going to the heart of the matter, defines Hope as "the vision of God in His perfect Beauty" and al-Sarrāj says that the true servant's hope is in God alone, and he hopes for nothing from God except God Himself.² Such hope will lead the saint onward and upward.

Fear, like Hope, is conditioned by faith and leads through emotion to action calculated to ward off that which is dreaded and hence it is salutary for the Ṣūfī if of the right type.

Al-Sarrāj speaks of three kinds of Fear, the commonest being fear of punishment. Others fear being cut off from God, or anything that might hinder their attainment of gnosis. But there is a higher type of Fear even than this and the holy fear of the elect is the fear of God alone.³

Al-Qushayrī calls Fear "the scourge of God" where-with He corrects those who would flee from His door. Terror of the common sort (*rahba*) makes a man run away, but holy dread (*khashya*) brings him near to God. Fear is as a lamp to the heart, making it see what is good and what is evil; and godly fear leads a man to turn his back on what is feared, because it is evil. "He who truly fears a thing flees from it, but he who truly fears God, flees unto Him."⁴

1 *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 133.

2 *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 62.

3 *Op. cit.* p. 60.

4 *Risāla*, pp. 78-80.

Al-Ghazālī also speaks of the fear of Hell as “a whip to drive to Paradise”.¹

All the early Ṣūfī writers are agreed that Fear is superior to Hope in its influence on the will and its effect on the life of devotion, and in freeing the soul from deceptive confidence in itself or the future. It may be interesting here to compare the Christian view on this subject as set forth in the Franciscan doctrine of the place of Holy Fear:

He that fears not, shews that he hath nought to lose. The holy fear of God orders, governs and rules the soul and maketh it come to grace. If a man possesseth any grace or divine virtue, it is holy fear that keepeth it safe. And whoso hath not yet obtained virtue or grace, holy fear maketh him obtain it. . . . But this holy gift of fear is not given save unto the perfect, for the more perfect a man is, the more doth he fear and humble himself. . . . A man should have greater fear of his own wickedness lest it overcome him and lead him astray, than of any other of his enemies. . . . Whoso hath not the fear of God, is in danger of perishing and of being altogether lost.²

To the Ṣūfī also, Fear is a gift from God, Who has decreed that His servants should fear, and holy fear, that dread which is salutary for the soul, is produced by meditation on the Divine justice as evidenced in the punishment of Iblīs and of Adam, and on Death and Judgment and Hell. Fear is a fire which burns away the desires which hinder the soul. “The fear of the Lord”, says a tradition, “is the chief part of wisdom”.³

Yet the conclusion of the matter, for the Ṣūfī, as we have said above, is that the most sublime form of Fear is that which has for its object not chastisement, nor even sin, but God Himself, fearing lest at the last the soul should be deprived for ever of the vision of His Everlasting Beauty.⁴

¹ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 130.

² *Little Flowers of St Francis*, p. 266.

³ Cf. St Luke xii. 4, 5.

⁴ *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 135.

Al-Sarrāj, summing up the Ṣūfī doctrine of these two stages, says that Hope and Fear are two fetters of the soul, hindering it from wandering from the straight path and safety and from turning aside to despair and separation (from God). Fear is like a state of darkness, in which the soul wanders, bewildered, seeking always to escape from it, and when Hope comes to lighten it, the soul goes out to a place of refreshment and grace prevails. The fairness of the day would not appear to advantage except in contrast with the darkness of the night. The best state (for the mystic) includes both, and the heart is sometimes a slave in the darkness of Fear and sometimes a prince in the brightness of Hope. Love and Hope and Fear are bound up together. Love is not perfect without fear, nor fear without hope, nor hope without fear.¹

With this question of Hope and Fear is bound up the eschatological teaching of the Ṣūfis and their conception of Paradise and Hell. For them Hell was not so much a place of punishment as a means of separation from the Presence of God, and Paradise to them was not a place of sensual or even spiritual joys, but simply the Vision of the Beloved and the state of abiding Union with Him.

Of Rābī'a's teaching on these stages, we are told that she was much subject to Fear and the effect upon her of the mention of Hell fire, already referred to, was due to her belief in the judgment that must be passed upon the sinner, a judgment which, in her weaker moments, she feared might be ordained for her, and once she prayed that she might not be condemned to Hell and was rebuked for thinking an evil thought.²

¹ Al-Sarrāj, *op. cit.* p. 63. Cf. the higher conception of St John: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John iv. 18).

² See above, p. 29.

One of her biographers says that she remained for forty years without raising her head to heaven, out of her reverence towards God, and she used to say, "Whenever I have heard the call to prayer, I have remembered the trumpet call of the Day of Resurrection, and whenever I have seen the snow I have seen also the pages of the records¹ fluttering."² She was once asked, "In what do you hope most of all?" and she replied, "In my sorrow for most of my deeds".³

But it is plain from teaching of hers already quoted that she held the motive of fear of punishment or hope of reward to be altogether unworthy of the saint of God. In the incident related by Aflākī⁴ she sought to remove both these motives as being hindrances to the attainment of the mystic goal. Again she thought that it was but a poor servant who worshipped his Lord either to escape punishment or to win reward.⁵ To her only God Himself was to be feared with the reverence due to His awful holiness, and equally to her, hope was only in God Himself, in the Vision of His Beauty.

Al-Munāwī relates that she heard a reader read that "the inhabitants of Paradise are occupied in enjoying themselves" and she said, "The inhabitants of Paradise are unfortunate in their occupation and their companions". Ibn 'Arabī blamed her for this and said that she did not know (what she was speaking of) and that it was she who was unfortunate and that they were occupied only with God and this was His will for them.⁶ She probably wished to make it clear that in her view Paradise was not a place for sensual delights,

1 A reference to the records of their deeds which all were required to take in their hands on the Day of Judgment, the righteous being given their record in the right hand and the wicked in the left. See above, p. 12.

2 Munāwī, *op. cit.* fol. 51 a.

3 M. b. Ḥusayn, *Al-Kashkūl*, p. 273.

4 See pp. 98, 99.

6 Munāwī, *op. cit.* fol. 51 b.

5 See p. 100.

but rather a state of contemplation of the Face of God.

When Rābī'a was asked what she had to say about Paradise she said, "First the Neighbour, then the house", and al-Ghazālī, after quoting her statement, goes on to say that she meant that in her heart was no leaning towards Paradise, but to the Lord of Paradise, and

...no one who does not know God in this world will see Him in the next, and he who does not find the joy of gnosis in this world will not find the joy of vision in the next, since none may make appeal (to God) in the next world who has not sought His friendship in this world and none may reap who has not sown.¹ A man is raised up only in the state in which he has died, and he dies only in the state in which he has lived and the only gnosis he takes with him is that wherewith he was blessed in himself, unless it is changed into the Vision (of God) by the removal of the veil, when his joy in it is greatly increased just as the joy of the lover is doubled if the imaginary picture of the beloved is exchanged for the vision (*i.e.* the reality) of the picture, and that is the highest joy.

For the delights of Paradise are to each one there, only what he desires, and to him who desires only to meet with God Himself there is no delight save in Him, indeed he may suffer thereby, for since the delights of Paradise are only in proportion to (his) love of God and his love of God is in proportion to his gnosis, then the origin of (that spiritual) happiness is the gnosis which has been revealed by God through faith, and if you say, "Then the joy of the Vision, if it is in proportion to the joy of gnosis, in this world is but weak", verily it shall be increased to an almost infinite degree of power, so that all the other joys of Paradise shall be despised beside it.²

All this al-Ghazālī reads into Rābī'a's teaching on the true significance of Paradise, for the Ṣūfī. Another writer, later than al-Ghazālī, also comments on this

¹ Cf. with this his teaching on Hope (*Iḥyā*, IV, p. 124).

² *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 269.

saying of Rābī'a's. He relates that Rābī'a al-'Adawiyya, when the state of love was dominating her, was asked, "Why do you not ask God for Paradise?" and she replied, "The Neighbour before the house". He compares this with a story of Āsiya,¹ daughter of Mazāham, who said, "O Lord build for me a house with Thee in Paradise"; thus she chose the neighbour before the house. He also compares the saying of the Prophet, "I ask Thee for Thine approval and for Paradise", as containing an indication of what Rābī'a said about the neighbour before the house.²

It is plain that Rābī'a's teaching on Hope and Fear, seen in an eschatological setting, is closely linked with her teaching on the doctrine of disinterested love to God,³ and since she appears to have been among the first to bring this doctrine into prominence among the Ṣūfīs and to lay particular stress upon it as the essential element in the saint's relation to God, it is possible that she was also one of the first to teach this exalted ideal of Hope and Fear and to conceive of Paradise as a spiritual state.

Ibrāhīm b. Adham, of Balkh, a contemporary of Rābī'a's, is reputed to have said, "O God, Thou knowest that in my eyes Paradise hath not the value of a gnat, if Thou hast blessed me with Thy love",⁴ and Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, somewhat later than Rābī'a, said that "Paradise is of no worth to those who love",⁵ but these fall somewhat short of Rābī'a's conception of life eternal as pure contemplation and adoration of the Beloved.

Al-Qushayrī, writing nearly three hundred years after

¹ Cf. Qur'ān, LXVI, 11. See also J. Walker, "Āsiya, the wife of Pharaoh", *The Moslem World*, Jan. 1928.

² M. b. Ḥ. Imād al-Dīn, "*Ḥayāt al-Qulūb*" on margin of *Qūt al-Qulūb*, II, p. 193.

³ See Part II, Chapter x.

⁴ Abū Nu'aym, "*Hilya al-Awliyā*", Leyden MS. fol. 200 a.

⁵ Abū Nu'aym, *op. cit.* fol. 219 a.

Rābi'a's death, includes her views as an accepted element in the Šūfī doctrine of Hope and Fear, and it may well be, since al-Ghazālī, with so much material at his disposal, gives her authority for this high conception of the only worthy motive of Hope or Fear, that Rābi'a was largely responsible for this important development in Šūfī doctrine.

CHAPTER IX

Poverty, Renunciation, Unification, Dependence.

THE stages of Poverty, of Asceticism or Renunciation, of the merging of the individual will in the Will of God, and of complete trust in and dependence upon Him, can be considered together.

Poverty (*faqr*) is held in high estimation by the Šūfī writers, but it is only poverty for the sake of God, which is meritorious. Those who are poor for His sake are promised entrance into Paradise five hundred years before the rich, even the virtuous rich.¹ Such teaching of course is similar to that of the New Testament, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God".²

Again, al-Sarrāj says that the poor are the richest of God's creation³—they dispense with the gift for the sake of the Giver. Poverty he describes as a sea of tribulation, but all its tribulations mean glory.⁴ There are different grades of those who possess nothing and do not desire outwardly or inwardly anything from anyone (*i.e.* not only do they refrain from expressing desire, but they do not even feel it) and they do not expect anything from anyone, and if given anything, they refuse to receive it; this station belongs to those who are in proximity (to God).⁵ It is, indeed, the first of the stages (*manāzil*) of unification (*tawhīd*).⁶ In a like spirit, St Francis embraced the Lady Poverty as his bride, for the love of God. Brother Giles gives an account of the Franciscan doctrine of Holy Poverty as . . .the immeasurable treasure of the most holy poverty, for it is a treasure so high excelling and so divine that we be not

1 Abū Ṭālib, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, I, p. 242. 2 St Mark x. 23-5.

3 *Kitāb al-Lumā'*, p. 48. 4 Cf. again St Mark x. 29, 31.

5 *Kitāb al-Lumā'*, p. 221.

6 *Op. cit.* p. 48.

worthy to lay it up in our vile vessels; since this is that celestial virtue whereby all earthly things and fleeting are trodden under foot, and whereby all hindrances are lifted from the soul, so that freely she may join herself to God Eternal. And this is the virtue that makes the soul, still tied to earth, hold converse with the angels in heaven...which also in this life grants to the souls that love it an easier flight to heaven; in that it guards the arms of true humility and love;¹

and again St Francis speaks of the bread of poverty as "this it is that I account vast treasure, wherein is nothing at all prepared by human hands, but whatsoever we have is given by God's own providence".²

This was the spiritual poverty of the adept in Šūfism, for which Rābi'a craved, while she was yet a novice, and incapable of understanding the depths of its meaning.

'Aṭṭār tells the story of how on one occasion, when she was making the pilgrimage and had reached 'Arafāt, she heard the voice of God saying to her, "O you who invoke Me, what request have you to make of Me? If it is Myself that you desire, then I will shew you one flash of my glory (but in that) you will be absorbed and melt away." She said then, "O Lord of Glory, Rābi'a has no means of attaining to that degree, but I desire one particle of (spiritual) Poverty". The voice said:

O Rābi'a, Poverty is the scourge (lit. the drought or famine, *i.e.* that which withers up and destroys life) of Our wrath, which we have placed in the way of men. When but a hair's breadth remains between them and Union with Us, everything is changed and Union becomes separation. As for you, you are still within seventy veils of self-existence; until you have come forth from beneath those veils, and set forth on the way towards Us, and passed the seventy stations, you will not be fit even to speak of that Poverty.³

¹ *Little Flowers of St Francis*, p. 38.

² *Op. cit.* p. 37.

³ 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.* pp. 62, 63.

Here Poverty (*faqr*) signifies the state of complete self-loss, exceedingly hard to attain, and not leading to Union, unless it is perfect, and even then the mystic may, in the good pleasure of God, be subject to a Dark Night of the Soul before attaining to Union. Such poverty could be attained only by the adept, divested of every attribute of "self".

Renunciation, or asceticism (*zuhd*), is to be considered side by side with this high conception of Poverty. The first stage of *zuhd*, to the Ṣūfī, is initiatory and represents the Purgative Life, through which the novice must pass before setting foot on the mystic Way.¹ But when the soul has been purified from all sensual desires, and the mystic "pure from Self as flame from smoke" sets forth upon his journey towards God,² then he passes beyond this early degree of *zuhd* and aims at the last stage, renunciation of all but God, attained only by the adept.

This question of *zuhd* is of the greatest importance in the study of early Ṣūfism, because at that stage Ṣūfism consisted of asceticism carried to the point of quietism, rather than the acceptance of a theosophy or a mystical doctrine as the term is generally understood. The Way was the subject of study rather than the Goal. So the Ṣūfī writers have much to say concerning *zuhd*. Al-Sarrāj states that love of the world is the root of all sin, and that renunciation of the world is the root of all good and obedience (to God).³

Abū Ṭālib says that the beginning of *zuhd* is concern for the next world, in the soul, and then the coming into existence of the sweetness of hope in God, and concern for the next world does not enter in until anxiety for this world goes out,⁴ nor does the sweetness of hope enter in until the sweetness of desire has

¹ See above, p. 49.

² Maḥmūd al-Shabistārī, *Gulshan-i Rāḡ*, p. 19, l. 315.

³ *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 46.

⁴ Cf. St Matt. vi. 24.

departed. True *zuhd* means the thrusting out from the heart of all thought of worldly things and the counting of them as vanity and only so will *zuhd* become perfect.¹

Zuhd leads ultimately to intimacy with God. Piety in the servants leads on to *zuhd* and *zuhd* to love of God, and these two states are the aim of those who seek to love God and to be intimate with Him and he is not truly a *zāhid* who does not attain to the station of love or the mystic state of intimacy (*uns*).²

Al-Qushayrī, in dealing with this subject, defines *zuhd* as leaving all that distracts the soul from God, freeing the hand from wealth and the heart from desire, and he quotes the misanthropic Ḥasan of Baṣra as saying that "*zuhd* in this world is to hate its people and all that is in it and to leave what is in this world to those who dwell in it".³

Aḥmad b. Hanbal⁴ distinguishes three kinds of *zuhd*; the renunciation of what is unlawful, which is common enough; the renunciation of what is lawful, which is a more special type; and, finally, the renunciation of all, whatever it may be, that distracts the servant from God Most High, and this is the *zuhd* of the gnostics.⁵ The gnostic seeks to cut himself off from all else in order that, undistracted, he may obtain the Beatific Vision, and therefore he counts even the delights of Paradise as contemptible in comparison with the Beauty of God.⁶

Renunciation involves unification (*tawḥīd*). The doctrine of the Unity of God was from the first the central doctrine of Islām, and to Muslims the unpardonable sin was *shirk*, the admission by word or act that

¹ *Qūt al-Qulūb*, I, pp. 248, 250.

² *Op. cit.* I, pp. 270, 271.

³ *Risāla*, p. 74.

⁴ See al-Hujwiri, *Kashf*, pp. 117, 118.

⁵ Al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, pp. 74, 75. Cf. also al-Sarrāj, *op. cit.* p. 46.

⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *op. cit.* IV, p. 195.

anything or anyone was worthy to share that which was due to God alone. Further, this doctrine meant that within the Godhead itself no duality could be admitted. God must be One in His Essence and One in His activity, and therefore must be the sole Cause of all that exists and all that comes to pass.

To the Ṣūfī, the doctrine of *tawḥīd* meant far more than the confession of God's Unity; it was to him the sinking of the Self and the abnegation of the personal will, in the will of God. So the doctrine of the Unity for the Ṣūfī was developed into the doctrine of Unification. This was expressed in the plainest terms by the Persian mystic Abū Sa'īd b. Abī al-Khayr, who lays it down that

...it is the vision of the heart that is of value, not the tongue's speech...the (true servant) is he who fears the majesty of God and frees himself from carnal desires. Until you empty yourself of Self, you will not be able to escape from it. It is not enough for me to repeat, "There is no god but God", to become a Muslim. (It is written) "Most of them have not believed in God, but are polytheists", that is, they have made profession of faith with the tongue, but most of them in their hearts are polytheists. God has said, "I do not pardon the polytheist", that is, God will not forgive one who gives Him a partner, but apart from that He will forgive whom He will. All the members of thy body are filled with doubt and polytheism. Thou must cast out this polytheism from thy heart that thou mayst have peace...thou canst not believe in God until thou dost deny thyself, that self which keeps thee far from God Most High and which says, "So and So has done thee an injury and such a one has treated thee well". All this leads to dependence on creatures and all this is polytheism. The creatures are nothing, the Friend is everything. After this manner it must be known and declared and having been declared, it is necessary to abide by it and in it. And to abide by it means that when thou hast said, "One", thou must not again say "Two" and the creature and the Creator are two. The right faith is to say God and therein to stand fast.

And to stand fast means that when thou hast said, "God", thou shouldst no more speak of the creatures nor think upon them in thine heart, so that it is as if the creatures were not. Whatever thou dost see or say, see and say from what is existent, which will never cease to be. Love that One, Who, when thou shalt cease to be, will not Himself cease to be, that thou, too, mayst become one who will never cease to be.¹

The older Ṣūfī writers had expressed the same idea. Al-Sarrāj quotes a saying of Ruwaym b. Aḥmad b. Yezīd al-Baghdadī that *tawḥīd* is the effacement of human nature, and keeping separate that which is Divine, and explains the latter phrase as meaning the separation of what is eternal from that which has been brought into phenomenal existence and is therefore evanescent.²

Al-Hujwīrī also states that sharing in the Unity involves cessation of human volition and affirmation of the Divine Will so as to exclude all personal initiative.³

Al-Qushayrī speaks of the servant being like a body in the hands of God, plunged in the depths of the ocean of His Unity, having passed away from his Self and from the claims of created things, so that at the last the servant returns to what he was at first, before he had begun to be.⁴

So also writes the Christian mystic:

We ought to offer ourselves entirely to Him, studying only His good pleasure, not our own...O complete submission of a disinterested soul; most sweet and tender in that the soul's whole feeling is divine! To attain to this, is for the soul to be deified;

1 Munawwar, *Asrār al-Tawḥīd*, p. 371.

2 *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 31.

3 *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 252. Cf. E. Underhill's description of "the transformation of the individual outlook into the universal outlook, the complete surrender of man's personal striving to the overruling Will of God, and thus the linking up of all the successive acts of daily life with the Abiding" (*Man and the Supernatural*, p. 246).

4 *Risāla*, p. 177.

as a small drop of water appears lost if mixed with wine, taking its taste and colour; and as, when plunged into a furnace, a bar of iron seems to lose its nature and assume that of fire; or as the air filled with the sun's beams seems rather to become light than to be illuminated. So it is with the natural life of the Saints; they seem to melt and pass away into the Will of God.¹

Here is the doctrine of *tawḥīd* stated quite plainly, but it is to be noted that it is only unification, not yet union. The drop of water may appear to be absorbed into the wine, yet the two are of different natures, the iron may take on the heat and colour of the fire and yet the two remain distinct substances, there is still duality, still "Thou" and "I". Not yet has the mystic attained to complete union, when "Thou" and "I" cease to exist, the union symbolised rather by the drop of water merged in the ocean, the spark absorbed in the flame, when the part becomes one with the whole, not losing its identity, but returning to its source, the spirit of man made one with the Eternal Spirit.

This stage involves also that of complete dependence upon God and trust in Him (*tawakkul*) which is the natural consequence of renunciation of this world and the abnegation of the individual will.

Abū Ṭālib says of the people of *tawakkul* that they are the elect of God, whom He has chosen, and these put their trust in Him, and are contented with Him, and so they rest from the troubles of this world and the next.² The true dependent is the one who knows that his Lord's provision for him is better than his own for himself, and that his Lord can see him

¹ St Bernard on *The Love of God*, pp. 44 and 45. Cf. also Grou, "The soul has reached the highest degree of sanctity when having become perfectly simple, she sees God only in all things, and has no interests but His interests" (cited by E. Underhill, *Man and the Supernatural*, p. 245).

² *Qūt al-Qulūb*, II, p. 3.

(and know his needs) better than he can himself.¹ Then he ceases to think of what is, or to be concerned with what shall be, and he takes no thought (for himself) for to God belong the results of our affairs, and in all cases He is worthy of praise and thanks.²

Al-Sarrāj gives a definition of the *tawakkul* of the chosen of God, which he attributes to al-Shiblī, to the effect that "you should be to God as if you were not and God should be to you as One Who was and is and shall be to eternity,"³ and elsewhere he says the *mutawakkil* should put his trust in God as the birds do.⁴

Abū Nu'aym relates of Dhū al-Nūn that he was asked concerning *tawakkul* and he said that it meant getting rid of earthly masters and the removal of motives, *i.e.* true dependence on God means that we should no longer let earthly things or earthly influences weigh with us, nor let our actions be the result of interested motives, and he added that dependence meant bringing the Self into obedience to God and withdrawing it from the power of controlling its own destiny.⁵

The same writer tells of a woman among the devotees who said, "Verily God has bestowed on those who long to meet Him a state, which if they lost they would have lost eternal bliss". They said to her, "What is that state?" She said, "Complete independence from their carnal selves" (and consequent dependence upon God), and those who heard were amazed at her, wondering how she had attained to such enlightenment.⁶

Al-Ghazālī holds that *tawakkul* is a question of faith in the Unity of God. Since God is the sole cause

1 Cf. Ps. xxxiii. 18, 19: "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine".

2 Abū Ṭālib, *op. cit.* II, p. 38.

3 *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 52.

4 *Op. cit.* p. 117.

5 "Ḥilya", Leyden MS. fol. 203 b.

6 *Op. cit.* fol. 232 a.

of all that exists or can exist, and all His acts are the result of His perfect goodness and wisdom, and all things depend on His power, then the servant can in perfect trust give up his will to the Divine Will and abandon himself to God, trusting in Him to provide for all needs.¹ To him *tawakkul* is practically identical with the Ṣūfī conception of *tawḥīd*.² As the child knows only his mother's breast, so the one who trusts in God knows only his Lord's care and in His hands is as the dead body in the hands of those who prepare it for burial.³ So we reach the doctrine of quietism, very characteristic of the early Ṣūfīs, and very possibly founded on the teaching of the Christian Gospel.⁴

Rābī'a, who belonged to this early school, was an ascetic of extreme other-worldliness, as we have already noted in the account of her life and her relations with others.

'Aṭṭār relates of her that she was asked, "Whence have you come?" She said, "From that world". They asked her, "Whither are you going?" She replied, "To that world". She was asked, "What are you doing in this world?" and she answered, "I am sorrowing". "In what way?" they asked, and she said, "I am eating the bread of this world and doing the work of that world". Then someone said, "One so persuasive in speech is worthy to keep a rest-house", and she responded, "I myself am keeping a rest-house, whatever is within, I do not allow it to go out and whatever is without, I do not allow it to come in. If anyone comes in or goes out, he does not concern me, for I am contemplating my own heart, not mere clay",⁵

¹ *Ihyā*, IV, p. 211.

² See above, p. 77 ff.

³ Al-Qushayrī, *op. cit.* p. 102 and p. 99.

⁴ Cf. St Matt. vi. 24-34.

⁵ 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.* p. 67. Cf. Ramón Lull: "'Say, O Fool, what is this world?' He answered, 'It is the prison-house of those that love and serve my Beloved'. 'And who is he that imprisons

i.e. she was concerned only with what belonged to God and was oblivious to all other thoughts and interests. Others might come and go, but she was occupied with the things of the spirit and was not to be distracted by what belonged to the things of sense.

In this connection there is an interesting little anecdote related, so far as I know, only by Abū Ṭālib, since none of Rābi'a's biographers include it. He says:

They told us that Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya, may God Almighty have mercy upon her, once said, "I praised God one night with the praises of dawn, then I slept and I saw a bright green tree, indescribable in its size and beauty, and lo, upon it were three kinds of fruit, unknown to me among the fruits of this world, like virgins' breasts, white, red and yellow, and they shone like spheres and suns in the green spaces of the tree, and I admired them and said, 'Whose is this?' and one said to me, 'This is yours, for your praises aforetime'. Then I began to walk round it, and lo, under it were eighteen fruits on the ground, of the colour of gold, and I said, 'If only these fruits were with the fruits on the tree, it would surely be better'. That personage said to me: 'They would have been there, but that you, when you offered your praises, were thinking, "Is the dough leavened or not?" and this fruit fell off'. This is a warning to those of insight and an exhortation to those who are pious and worship God.¹

This feeling that even the most homely and necessary things in life might be a cause of separation from God was shewn in a story related of her by 'Aṭṭār and already quoted.² Abū Ja'far b. Sulaymān relates how Sufyān al-Thawrī once took him by the hand and said, "Come

them?' He answered: 'Conscience, love, fear, renunciation and contrition and the companionship of wilful men'. 'And who is he that frees them?' 'Mercy, pity and justice'. 'And where are they then sent?' 'To eternal bliss and the joyful company of true lovers, where they shall laud, bless and glorify the Beloved everlastingly, to whom be ever given praise, honour and glory throughout all the world'" (*The Lover and the Beloved*, p. 106).

1 *Qūt al-Qulūb*, I, p. 103.

2 See above, p. 21.

with us to that teacher, for I can find no refreshment in any but her". And when they came in Sufyān lifted up his hands and said, "O God, I ask Thee for freedom from this world (earthly things)", and Rābi'a wept, and he said to her, "Why do you weep?" and she said, "You are the cause of my weeping". He said, "How is that?" She said, "Do you not know that freedom from this world comes only from renouncing what is in it and how can that be when you are defiled by it?"¹ and she went on to say, "You have abundance of days, and when a day has passed part of you has passed away, and it must come to pass, when part has gone, that the whole will go. You are a teacher, therefore learn".²

Among Rābi'a's sayings it is reported that she said to some devotees, "Despise the world, for it is the pleasantest thing for you, when you look down upon it".³

Jāmī tells how Sufyān once asked her, "What is the best thing for the servant to do, who desires proximity to his Lord?" She said, "That the servant should possess nothing in this world or the next, save Him".⁴

In the same strain she once said, "If a man possessed the whole world, he would not be wealthy thereby". They said to her "Why?" She said, "Because it perishes and passes away".⁵

Here the Ṣūfī view is in accordance with the Franciscan contempt of the world:

Many sorrows and many woes will that wretched man have, who setteth his desire and his heart and his hope on earthly things, for which he abandons and loses the things of heaven, and at the last will also lose those things of earth. The eagle

1 Šibt Ibn al-Jawzī, "Ta'riḫ Mir'āt al-Zamān", fol. 256 b.

2 Munāwī, *op. cit.* fol. 51 b.

3 M. b. H. Baha al-Dīn, *Al-Kashkūl*, p. 134.

4 *Nafahāt al-Uns*, p. 716.

5 Munāwī, *op. cit.* fol. 51 a.

fieth high; but if she had a weight tied to her wings, she could no more fly high; so man for the weight of earthly things cannot fly high, to wit cannot attain to perfection.¹

Al-Jāhīz notes that Rābī'a feared even the possession of the reputation of a saint, lest it should give her satisfaction in something other than her Lord's service. He says, "Rābī'a al-Qaysiyya was asked, 'Have you done any work at all that you can shew (*i.e.* any miracle) so that you may be accepted thereby (as a saint)?' and she replied, 'If there were anything, I should fear that it might be a source of profit to me'".²

Among the sayings recorded of her is this to the same effect, "What appears of my (good) works, I count as nothing at all",³ and among her counsels to those who asked her advice was this, "Conceal your good deeds as you conceal your evil deeds",⁴ again with the desire to receive nothing, not even commendation, at the hands of mankind.

The desire of these early Ṣūfīs to be free from all that concerned the phenomenal world, in order to be free for the world of spiritual things, is illustrated by a quaint story which finds a place in 'Aṭṭār's biography of Rābī'a. He relates that one day she gave three silver *dirhams* to a man to buy a garment (for her) because she was in need of it, and after he had started out, he turned back and said, "O lady, what colour shall I buy?" Rābī'a said, "Since it is a question of colour (*i.e.* something which belongs to this world of the senses) give me the money back", and she threw it into the Tigris. That is to say, adds 'Aṭṭār, that even a garment should not be a cause of separation (from God).⁵

¹ *Little Flowers of St Francis*, p. 276.

² *Al-Bayān*, III, p. 85. Cf. also Ṣibt Ibn al-Jawzī, "Mir'āt al-Zamān", fol. 257 a.

³ *Al-Kashkūl*, p. 134.

⁴ Ibn Khallikān, I, p. 34, No. 230.

⁵ 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.* p. 68; also Ṣibt Ibn al-Jawzī, *op. cit.* fol. 265 b.

She gave a shrewd rebuke to certain visitors for their worldliness, according to a story which relates that some eminent men of Baṣra came and sat by her pillow (when she was ill) and reviled the things of this world—no doubt with a desire to please the saint. But Rābī'a, with her usual ability to perceive insincerity, said to them, "You must be very fond of this world: if you were not fond of it, you would not say so much about it. Who breaks the goods must have bought them. If you were detached from this world you would not speak of it, either good or ill—remember that 'whoso loves a thing speaks much of it'".¹

A story is told of how one day a rich merchant, having come to see Rābī'a, saw that her house was falling into ruin. He gave her a thousand pieces of gold, and made her a present of a house in good repair. Rābī'a came, and was no sooner installed than, seeing the paintings on this house, she became absorbed in contemplating them. At once, returning to the merchant the thousand pieces and the house, she said to him: "I fear lest my heart should become attached to this house, and it would be no longer possible to occupy myself with the works of the other world. My only desire is to consecrate myself to the service of the Most High Lord".²

It was probably in this connection that, when asked why she had parted with her house, Rābī'a answered, "In order to leave what did not concern me and find fellowship with One who is Eternal",³ that is, she turned her back on the transient that her face might be towards that which endures for ever. She might have said, with St Paul, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the

¹ 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.* p. 72.

² 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.* Uyghur version, Part II, p. 66.

³ Abū Nu'aym, "Ḥilya", Leyden MS. fol. 241 a. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*, IV, p. 291.

things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal".¹

Many of the stories already quoted in the biographical section shew plainly that Rābi'a lived the life of the true ascetic, embracing Poverty for the love of God, choosing to live in a hut, provided only with the barest necessities of life, though she had rich and solicitous friends who would have surrounded her with comfort.² She attained as much by her practice as her precepts to the Ṣūfī ideal of the sincere *ẓāhid* in turning aside from all things, lawful or unlawful, that might distract her from the service due to God alone: she indeed counted all things loss for the sake of her Lord. In verses already quoted in full, she says, "I have fled from the world and all that is within it. My hope is for union with Thyself: for that is the Goal of my desire".³

As one of the "elect of the elect" among the *muta-wakkilīn*, she merges her will in the Divine Will and leaves all her needs in the hands of God. For thirty years, she says of herself, she had sought nothing save from Him and He had never failed her.

From this stage, in which she casts behind all that is of this world, she passes on to the last stage of the mystic Way, that of Love with all that it includes, which leads on to the final state which is the Goal of the mystic's quest, contemplation of the Vision of God, unveiled in all His Beauty, and the abiding Union of the lover with the Beloved.

1 2 Cor. iv. 18.

2 See Part I, Chapter III above.

3 Al-Ḥurayfish, *op. cit.* p. 214.

CHAPTER X

Love. Gnosis. The vision. Union.

Though, as we have already mentioned, some Sūfī writers give a place to the stages of Sincerity, Contemplation, Self-examination and Meditation on death, yet Love as conceived by the Sūfīs was so all-embracing that we shall here consider it as the last and highest stage to be attained by the adept, including Satisfaction (*riḍā'*), Longing (*shawq*) and Fellowship (*uns*); *riḍā'* representing, on one side, the acquiescence of the lover in the will of the Beloved, *shawq* the longing of the lover to meet with the Beloved, and *uns* the intimate relation which exists between the lover and the Beloved. From Love the adept passes directly to the true knowledge of the Divine mysteries (*ma'rifa*), is enabled to see God unveiled in His Beauty and becomes one with Him in mystic union—a union obtained for brief moments only in this life, but for ever in the life to come.

Satisfaction (*riḍā'*) has two sides to it; it is both subjective and objective; there is human satisfaction with God and Divine satisfaction with man.¹ Al-Hujwīrī makes the distinction plain when he says:

Divine satisfaction really consists in God's willing that man should be recompensed and in His bestowing grace upon him. Human satisfaction really consists in Man's performing the com-

¹ Cf. the saying attributed to Abū Sa'īd: "That man is a Sūfī who is satisfied with whatever God does so that God will be satisfied with whatever he does" (*Asrār al-Tawhīd*, p. 381). Cf. also St John of the Cross: "This is therefore a test to discern the true lover of God. Is he satisfied with anything less than God? Do I say satisfied? Yea, if a man possess all things, he cannot be satisfied: the greater his possessions, the less will be his satisfaction, for the satisfaction of the heart is not found in possessions but in detachment from all things and in poverty. This being

mand of God and submitting to His decree. Accordingly the satisfaction of God precedes that of Man...because Man's satisfaction is connected with God's satisfaction and subsists thereby. In short, human satisfaction is equanimity towards Fate, whether it withholds or bestows, and spiritual steadfastness in regarding events, whether they be the manifestation of Divine Beauty or of Divine Majesty, so that it is all one to a man whether he is consumed in the fire of wrath or illuminated by the light of mercy, because both wrath and mercy are evidences of God and whatever proceeds from God is good in His eyes.¹

Al-Qushayrī quotes the sayings of a Ṣūfī: "If my heart is satisfied with God Most High (*i.e.* acquiesces in His Will) I know that He is satisfied with me".² Ruwaym gives a striking illustration of his conception of *riḍā*. "Satisfaction means that if God were to put Hell on His right side, (the servant) should not ask Him to change it to His left",³ and Ibn Khafif defines Satisfaction as "the acquiescence of the heart in God's decisions and the agreement of the heart with what He wills and chooses", and again "Satisfaction is the acceptance of God's decisions with joy".³ Al-Qushayrī gives as another example of the Satisfaction of the true Ṣūfī that 'Atba al-Ghulām spent the night until dawn saying, "If Thou dost chastise me I will love Thee (for it) and if Thou dost have compassion on me, I will love Thee (for it)".⁴ Al-Hujwīrī speaks of four classes of those who are satisfied: (1) those who are satisfied with God's gift, which is gnosis; (2) those who are satisfied with happiness, which is this world; (3) those who are satisfied with affliction, which consists of diverse probations; and (4) those who are

so, the perfection of love in which we possess God, by a grace most intimate and special, lives in the soul in this life when it has reached it, with a certain satisfaction" (*Spiritual Canticle*, p. 26).

1 *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 177.

2 *Risāla*, p. 116.

3 Al-Qushayrī, *op. cit.* p. 117.

4 *Op. cit.* p. 118.

satisfied with being chosen, which is love. Of the last two classes he says:

He who is satisfied with the affliction that God sends is satisfied because in the affliction he sees the Author thereof and can endure its pain by contemplating Him Who sent it; nay, he does not count it painful, such is his joy in contemplating his Beloved. Finally, those who are satisfied with being chosen by God are His lovers, whose existence is an illusion alike in His anger, and in His satisfaction: whose hearts dwell in the presence of Purity and in the garden of Intimacy; who have no thought of created things and have escaped from the bonds of "stations" and "states" and have devoted themselves to the love of God. Their satisfaction involves no loss, for satisfaction with God is a manifest kingdom.¹

So he finally identifies Satisfaction in its highest form, with Love.

Another element in *maḥabba* is *shawq*, the passionate yearning of the soul for God. A dervish once asked Shaykh Abū Sa 'īd b. Abī al-Khayr, "What is this tumult within our breasts?" The Shaykh replied:

This is the fire of supplication, and God Almighty has created two fires, one unto life and one unto death. The living fire is the fire of supplication which He has placed in the breasts of His servants in this world, so that their carnal Self may be consumed; that fire burns brightly and when the Self is consumed away, suddenly that fire of supplication becomes the fire of longing and that fire of longing will never die either in this world or the next, and this is that flame of which the apostle of God spoke when he said, "When God willed good to His servant He kindled a light in his heart". They asked the Apostle of God what was the sign of that light, and he said, "Separation from the abode of vanity and turning towards the abode of eternity, and preparing for death, before the descent of death".

The questioner asked the Shaykh, "When God grants that fearful vision, does that fire of longing become rest?" The Shaykh said:

¹ *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, pp. 178, 179.

That vision increases thirst, it does not produce satiety... everyone who sees it, sees it according to the measure of his faith. That was the light of faith which came into the hearts through sight, so that that light of faith sees (God's) majesty and beauty according to (the capacity of) the eye of faith.¹

Al-Sarrāj also speaks of *shawq* as "the fire of God Most High which He has kindled in the hearts of His saints, so that it may burn up in their hearts all vain desires and wishes and hindrances and needs".²

Again he says that the highest degree of *shawq* is attained by the one who beholds his Lord near at hand, and sees that He is present and not absent, and so his heart rejoices in His worship and says to itself that longing is only for the absent, but He is present, not absent, and so he, in his desire is without consciousness of *shawq* and he is the true *mushtāq* without *shawq*.²

Bound up with *maḥabba* too, is *uns*; where the worshipper feels awe, the lover feels the sense of intimacy. Al-Sarrāj describes it as the heart's joy in the Beloved and he defines the highest degree of *uns*, like that of *shawq*, as becoming unconscious of *uns*, in the sense of reverence (in the Presence of God) and proximity to Him, and of His greatness, all combined with intimacy with Him.³ Al-Hujwīrī shews the difference between the relation of the ordinary worshipper, who fears God, and the mystic, who loves Him. He says:

When God manifests His glory to a man's heart, so that His Majesty predominates, he feels awe, but when God's beauty predominates he feels intimacy, those who feel awe are distressed, while those who feel intimacy are rejoiced... A servant of God seeing His favour, cannot fail to love Him, and when he has loved, he will become intimate, because awe of one's beloved is estrangement, whereas intimacy is oneness... The power of awe is exerted upon the lower souls and its desires, and tends

1 *Asrār al-Tawḥīd*, pp. 388, 389.

2 *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 64.

3 *Op. cit.* p. 66.

to annihilate human nature, while the power of *uns* is exerted upon the heart and tends to foster gnosis in the heart. Therefore God annihilates the souls of those who love Him by revealing His Majesty and endows their hearts with everlasting life by revealing His beauty.¹

Abū Ṭālib, comparing *shawq* and *uns*, says that *shawq* is a longing to see what is invisible and hidden and this state causes sorrow, but *uns* is a state of proximity through the unveiling of God's presence, and in this station is joy. He quotes al-Junayd as saying with regard to *uns* that the sign of perfect love is the abiding remembrance of God in the heart, in joy and delight and great longing for Him and intimacy with Him.² Love includes all these elements and transcends them. To the Ṣūfī mystic the servant was the lover and God the Beloved. Since the origin of every action must be referred to God, He is also the Giver of Love, and Abū Ṭālib writes that God's love to His saints precedes their love to Him,³ but the Ṣūfīs have little to say of the love of God to man, in comparison with what they say of man's love to God. The latter was incumbent upon the servant, the former but an act of grace to which the servant had no claim. The Ṣūfīs would not dream of attributing to God feelings akin to their own, He was to them the unique and incomparable object of adoration. Such a conception as that of the Christian mystic who thought of God's love as pursuing the soul,⁴ a conception which had reached its highest development in the Christian doctrine of Redemption, was impossible to the Ṣūfīs; hence they describe God as the Beloved and throw all the emphasis on the human side. Al-Hujwīrī says that

God's love to Man is in His goodwill towards him and His having mercy on him. Man's love to God is a quality which

1 *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, pp. 376, 377. 2 *Qūt al-Qulūb*, II, p. 64.

3 *Op. cit.* II, p. 52. Cf. also *Asrār al-Tawhīd*, p. 377.

4 Francis Thompson in *The Hound of Heaven*.

manifests itself in the heart of the believer...so that he seeks to satisfy his Beloved and becomes impatient and restless in his desire for vision of Him and cannot rest with anyone except Him and grows familiar with the remembrance of Him and abjures the remembrance of everything besides.

He goes on to say that

Believers who love God are of two kinds: (1) those who regard the favour and beneficence of God towards them, and are led by that regard to love the Benefactor; (2) those who are so enraptured by love that they reckon all favours as a veil (between themselves and God) and by regarding the Benefactor are led to His favours.¹

To this latter class al-Sarrāj refers when he says that the love of the saints and the gnostics arises from their vision and their knowledge of the eternal and causeless love of God, therefore they also love Him without any cause.²

Al-Qushayrī defines Love as the enduring inclination of the love-intoxicated heart, the preference of the Beloved over all companions, harmony with the Beloved, whether present or absent, the effacement of the lover's qualities and the establishment of the Beloved's essence, and finally the agreement of the heart with the Will of the Lord.³

Among the sayings of the Sūfīs which he quotes is that of al-Junayd defining Love as "the entering in of the qualities of the Beloved in place of the qualities of the lover"—being changed into the same Image till

¹ *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, pp. 307, 308.

² *Kitāb al-Luma'*, p. 59.

³ *Risāla*, p. 188. Cf. also Ramón Lull: "'What meanest thou by love?' said the Beloved, and the lover answered, 'It is to bear on one's heart the sacred marks and the sweet words of the Beloved...It is to long for Him with desire and with tears. It is boldness. It is fervour. It is fear. It is the desire for the Beloved above all things. It is that which causes the lover to grow faint when he hears the Beloved's praises. It is that in which I die daily and in which is all my will'" (*Book of the Lover and the Beloved*, p. 59).

the two become one; that of Abū 'Abd Allah al-Qurashī to the effect that Love "means to give all that thou hast to (Him) whom thou lovest, so that nothing remains to thee of thine own"; and those of Shibli when he says of Love that "it is called love, because it obliterates from the heart all save the Beloved", and again, "Love is a fire in the heart consuming all save the Will of the Beloved".¹ Of the effect of this Love upon the mystic it is related that Yaḥyā b. Mu'adh wrote to Abū Yazīd: "What do you say of one who drinks a single drop of the ocean of Love² and becomes intoxicated?" Bāyazīd wrote in reply, "What do you say of one who, if all the oceans in the world were filled with the wine of Love, would drink them all and still cry for more to slake his thirst?" and Hujwīrī explains that this intoxication with the cup of Love arises from regarding the Benefactor.³

Abū Ṭālib also, speaking of the effect of Love and that to which it brings the lover, says that Love leads to knowledge of the Divine mysteries and those who love abide in God and look to Him only and He is nearer to them than all else, and to them is given the vision of Him unveiled, and they see Him with the eye of certainty.⁴

Thus, through the stage of Love, the mystic attains to his goal, and having cast aside all the veils, which hindered him from seeing God, he at last beholds the Divine Beauty unveiled. So Plato also describes the reward of Love:

He who has been instructed thus far in the things of Love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty—not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning...but Beauty only, absolute, separate, simple and everlasting....He who under the influence of true love rising upward

¹ *Risāla*, pp. 189, 190.

³ *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 187.

² See p. 100.

⁴ *Qūt al-Qulūb*, II, p. 53.

begins to see that Beauty, is not far from the end.... This... is that life above all others which a man should live, in the contemplation of Beauty absolute.... What if man had eyes to see the true beauty—the Divine Beauty, pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colours and vanities of human life—thither looking, and holding converse with the true Beauty—Divine and Simple? Remember how in that communion only, beholding Beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities and... to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may.¹

So he makes Diotima of Mantinea set forth the doctrine of Love leading to the Beatific Vision, and foreshadow the ideals of the mystics of all creeds who were to come after her, and who were to seek the way to God through Love.

On the subject of the Vision of God which is the reward of the mystic who, having passed through the stages of the Path, reaches the knowledge which comes to him directly from God, and from knowledge passes to sight and from sight to Union, al-Junayd says that

God gives to the adept the sharp desire to behold His Essence, then knowledge becomes vision, and vision revelation, and revelation contemplation, and contemplation existence (with and in God). Words are hushed to silence, life becomes death, explanations (necessary for finite minds in this world) come to an end, signs (a concession to those who are weak in faith) are effaced, disputes are cleared up. Perishability (*fanā'*) is ended and subsistence (*baqā'*) is made perfect. Weariness and care cease, the elements perish and there remains what will not cease, as time that is time-less ceases not.²

1 *Symposium*, ed. Jowett, 1892, pp. 581 ff.

2 *Asrār al-Tawhīd*, p. 378. Cf. John Cordelier: "Like some homing star which has burned its way swifter and ever swifter to the sphere that called it, purged and made shining by the ardour of its flight, it rushes through the shrouding darkness to its Origin. All its desire now is to be lost in Him... the choice, the effort, the self-stripping, the purging and transmuting

So also writes the Christian mystic, John of Ruysbroeck, of the attainment of Union through Love:

The spirit perceives that through love it has plunged itself into the depth...and through this intimate feeling of union, it feels itself to be melting into the Unity and, through dying to all things, into the life of God. And there it feels itself to be one life with God.¹

The Godseeing man who has forsaken self and all things and does not feel himself drawn away because he no longer possesses anything as his own, but stands empty of all, he can always enter, naked and unencumbered with images, into the inmost part of his spirit. There he feels himself to be an eternal life of love, which craves above all else to be one with God.

In the transformation within the Unity, all spirits fail in their own activity, and feel nothing else but a burning up of themselves in the simple Unity of God.

Where the soul is burnt up...it feels nothing but unity...for the flame of the Love of God consumes all that it can enfold in itself....And in this Love we shall burn and be burnt up without end, throughout eternity—for herein lies the blessedness of all spirits.²

The Ṣūfīs, and chief among them Rābī'ā, felt within themselves, or at least sought diligently that they might attain to "that eternal life of love, which craves above all else, to be one with God". Though Rābī'ā was not the first among the Ṣūfīs to realise that the way to God must be sought through love, she was perhaps the first to lay stress upon the doctrine and to combine with it the doctrine of *Kashf*,³ the unveiling at the end of the Way, of the Beloved to His

fires...even the darkness, desolation and abandonment, the bitterness of the spiritual death...were they not needed, the soul had almost demanded them, that thus it might test for Him its courage and its truth" (*The Spiral Way*, p. 113).

1 *The Book of the Sparkling Stone*, p. 184.

2 *Op. cit.* pp. 185, 186.

3 Not itself unknown to earlier Ṣūfīs. Cf. al-Sulamī, "Ṭabaqāt", fols. 6 b and 7 a on Dhū al-Nūn's view.

lovers. 'Aṭṭār speaks of her as "that woman on fire with love and ardent desire...consumed with her passion (for God)",¹ and a writer of the present day says of her, "With Rābi'a...Love, the unquenchable flame smouldering in the ashes of ceremonial religion and kindling the torch of Mysticism through the darkest ages began its conquest of Mohammedan hearts".²

She was one of the first to teach the doctrine of disinterested love to God, a new conception to many of her fellow-Ṣūfīs, who for the most part served God in hope of eternal reward or in fear of eternal punishment. With regard to the element of *riḍā* in the stage of Love Abū Ṭālib relates that Sufyān al-Thawrī said one day in Rābi'a's presence, "O God, mayst Thou be satisfied with us", and she said, "Are you not ashamed before God to ask Him to be satisfied, when you are not satisfied with Him?" (*i.e.* not acquiescent in His Will for you) and Sufyān said, "I ask forgiveness from God".

Ja'far then said to her, "When is the servant satisfied with God Most High?" and she said, "When his pleasure in misfortune is equal to his pleasure in prosperity".³

Some people were speaking in Rābi'a's presence of a devotee, who was known to be holy and in the favour of God, and who lived on what he collected from the refuse-heap of one of our kings, and a man said in her hearing, "What harm would there be in this, if he is in favour with God, that he should ask of Him to provide him with food by some other means?" and Rābi'a said to him, "Be silent, O worthless one, have you not realised that the saints of God are satisfied with Him, that they accept His Will even if He takes from them their means of livelihood, so long as it is He Who chooses this for them?"⁴

¹ *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā*, I, p. 59.

² R. A. Nicholson, *Selected Poems*, Introd. p. xxvii.

³ *Qūt al-Qulūb*, II, p. 40.

⁴ Abū Ṭālib, *op. cit.* p. 40.

Of *shawq* Rābī'a said, "The groaning and the yearning of the lover of God will not be satisfied until it is satisfied in the Beloved".¹ In verses quoted by Al-Hujwīrī, for which no author is assigned,² but attributed to Rābī'a by Suhrawardī, she says of the one who claims to be a lover of God but does not accept His Will unquestioningly, "You rebel against God, yet appear to love Him. I swear by my faith, that this is most strange. If your love were sincere, you would have obeyed Him, since the lover obeys that one whom he loves."³ She said further in regard to *uns*, "Every-one who obeys (*i.e.* the true lover) seeks intimacy", and then recited these lines:

I have made Thee the Companion of my heart,
But my body is available for those who desire its company,
And my body is friendly towards its guests,
But the Beloved of my heart is the guest of my soul.⁴

There is an incident recorded by the Persian writer Aflākī which shews how Rābī'a sought to make her contemporaries understand how the true Ṣūfī must love God for Himself alone.

One day a number of saints saw that Rābī'a had taken fire in one hand and water in the other and was running with speed. They said to her, "O lady of the next world, where are you going and what is the meaning of this?" She said:

I am going to light fire in Paradise and to pour water on to Hell so that both veils (*i.e.* hindrances to the true vision of God)

¹ Suhrawardī, "*Awārif al-Ma'ārif*", *Ihyā*, iv, p. 343, margin. Cf. also "*Kashf al-Asrār*": "My cup and my wine and the Beloved are three, And I, filled with the yearning of Love, am the fourth" (Rābī'a), fol. 12.

² *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 58.

³ *Op. cit.* *Ihyā*, iv, p. 344, margin. Also "*Hayāt al-Qulūb*", *Qūt al-Qulūb*, ii, p. 169, margin. Kalābādī, "*Ma'ānī al-Akhhār*", fol. 207 b.

⁴ *Op. cit.* *Ihyā*, iv, p. 358, margin. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, vol. i, No. 230.

may completely disappear from the pilgrims and their purpose may be sure, and the servants of God may see Him, without any object of hope or motive of fear. What if the hope of Paradise and the fear of Hell did not exist? Not one would worship his Lord or obey Him.¹

Al-Ghazālī, in dealing with the love of the servant for his Lord, relates that Rābi'a al-'Adawīyya said one day when in the company of the Ṣūfis, "Who shall lead us to our Beloved?" and her servant (probably that 'Abda bint Shuwāl, who had learnt much from her mistress)² answered, "Our Beloved is with us, but this world cuts us off from Him".³ Then someone asked Rābi'a, "What is your love to the Apostle of God like?" and she replied, "Verily I love him greatly, but love of the Creator has turned me aside from love of His creatures".⁴

ʿAṭṭār also mentions among her sayings on this great subject of all-absorbing love to God, that one day Rābi'a was asked, "Do you love the Lord of Glory?" Perhaps her questioner thought it was impossible or presumptuous for her to love One so far above her. But she said, "I do". Then she was asked, "Do you hold Satan as an enemy?" She replied, "No", and the other, astonished, asked, "How is that?" Rābi'a said, "My love for God leaves no room for hating Satan", and she went on to say, "I saw the Prophet in a dream, and he said to me, 'O Rābi'a, dost thou love me?' I said, 'O Prophet of God who is there who does not love thee? But my love to God has so possessed me that no place remains for loving or hating any save Him.'"

Then someone said to her, "What is Love?" a question no less searching than Pilate's "What is

1 Aflākī, "Manāqib al-ʿĀrifīn", fol. 114 a.

2 See above, p. 19.

3 Cf. St James iv. 4: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God".

4 *Iḥyā*, iv, p. 308.

Truth?" She said, "Love has come from Eternity and passes into Eternity and none has been found in seventy thousand worlds who drinks one drop of it until at last he is absorbed in God, and from that comes the saying 'He loves them (His saints) and they love Him'" (Qur'ān, v, 59).¹

ʿAṭṭār gives another anecdote shewing how she tried to emphasise her teaching of disinterested love to God, in which he relates how a number of elders came to Rābī'a, and she asked one of them, "Why do you worship God?" He said, "There are seven degrees in Hell, which are a source of dread to me, and everyone must pass by them, willy-nilly, in fear and terror".

Another said, "The different spheres of Paradise are places of rare delight, and much rest is promised".

Then Rābī'a rejoined, "He is a bad servant who worships God from fear and terror, or from the desire of reward—but there are many of these".² They asked her, "Why do you worship God, have you no desire for Paradise?" and she replied, "The Neighbour first, and then the House. Is it not enough for me that I am given leave to worship Him? Even if Heaven and Hell were not, does it not behove us to obey Him? He is worthy of worship without any intermediary (motive)."³

Al-Qushayrī, in the chapter on Love in his *Risāla*, mentions Rābī'a in connection with what is really the

¹ ʿAṭṭār, *op. cit.* p. 67.

² So also St Basil (*ob.* A.D. 389): "We obey God...from fear of punishment and in that case we take on the resemblance of Slaves. Or we keep the precepts, because of the utility that we desire from the recompense, thus resembling Mercenaries. Or finally, from love of Him Who has given us the law, we obey with joy at having been judged worthy of serving so great and good a God and thus we imitate the affection of children towards their parents" (Von Hügel, *op. cit.* p. 165).

³ ʿAṭṭār, *op. cit.* p. 69.

right conception by the servant of God's love to him. He says:

"It is related that Rābi'a prayed once, 'O my God, wilt thou burn in Hell a heart which loves Thee?' and an unseen voice answered her, 'We shall not do thus. Do not think of Us an evil thought!'"¹ which may be considered as a rebuke to Rābi'a for lack of faith or for having too low a conception of God's love for His saints, but her view is in accordance with the view of the earlier Ṣūfīs, that it was incumbent on the servant to love his Lord, but not incumbent on Him to return that love.² It is told how someone blamed worldliness in her presence, and Rābi'a said, "The Prophet of God said, 'If anyone loves anything more than the remembrance of God, then your remembrance of that thing leads your heart astray, since you are a vessel for something else that you are remembering besides Him'"³.

Another story shewing how Rābi'a felt that love to God must be all absorbing and exclude all else but Him is related by Abū Sa'id b. Abī al-Khayr, who says that he heard it from Abū 'Alī the Jurist. Rābi'a was asked by what means she had attained to such pre-eminence in the spiritual life and she replied, "By constantly saying this, 'I take refuge in Thee, from everything which has distracted me from Thee, and from every hindrance which has hindered me from Thee'"⁴.

Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī in his "Ṭabaqāt", dealing with devout women,⁵ says that a group of them were in his cell seeking a blessing, and they asked for a benediction to be pronounced for them and Rābi'a

¹ *Risāla*, p. 192. Cf. above, p. 29.

² See Abū Ṭālib's commentary on Rābi'a's verses, p. 142.

³ Munāwī, "Al-Kawākib al-Durriya", fol. 51 a.

⁴ *Asrār al-Tawḥīd*, p. 345.

⁵ Now, unfortunately, unavailable.

gave them what they desired in quoting the words, "God has separated from you every cause of separation which has separated you from Him".¹ Sufyān al-Thawrī asked her once what was the basis of her faith, and her answer revealed the secret of her whole life and the essence of all her teaching, when she said, "I have not served God from fear of Hell, for I should be like a wretched hireling, if I did it from fear; nor from love of Paradise, for I should be a bad servant if I served for the sake of what was given, but I have served Him only for the love of Him and desire for Him".²

It was on this occasion that she is said to have recited her famous verses on the two types of love, the type which seeks its own ends, and that love which seeks only the Beloved and His glory.³ Abū Ṭālib says that these verses were attributed to Rābī'a by the people of Baṣra, and by others to either Ja'far b. Sulaymān al-Duba'i or Sufyān al-Thawrī or Hammād b. Zayd or 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd, but Abū Ṭālib himself gives them as Rābī'a's own. They run thus:

I have loved Thee with two loves, a selfish love and a love that
is worthy (of Thee),
As for the love which is selfish, I occupy myself therein with
remembrance of Thee to the exclusion of all others,
As for that which is worthy of Thee, therein Thou raisest the
veil that I may see Thee.

¹ *Asrār al-Tawḥīd*, p. 410.

² Abū Ṭālib, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, II, p. 57. Cf. also Ghānim al-Maqdisī, "Kashf al-Asrār", fol. 12. Cf. also St Francis Xavier's *Hymn of Love*:

"O Deus, ego amo Te
Nec amo Te ut salves me,
Aut quia non amantes Te
Aeterno punis igne".

³ Cf., for the Christian doctrine of Pure Love, Von Hügel, *Mystical Element of Religion*, II, pp. 152 ff.

Yet is there no praise to me in this or that,
But the praise is to Thee, whether in that or this.¹

Abū Ṭālib comments on these verses in detail and says that in regard to her saying "The Selfish love" and her saying "the love of which Thou art worthy" and her distinction between the two loves, it is necessary to make this distinction and he will explain her meaning to those who do not understand these sayings or the nature of the two loves. In the selfish love, she has seen God and loved Him through contemplation, which is the essence of certainty, not through mere report and hearsay, but she has been given assurance through God's grace and kindness. Her love has come by way of personal intercourse, and she has drawn near to God and fled to Him (away from this world) and occupied herself with Him, to the exclusion of all but Him. Before this she had earthly desires, but when she saw her Lord, she cast these away and He became all-in-all to her heart and the sole object of her love. God had freed her from all (objects of desire) save Himself, and this although she was not worthy of that love and was not fit to look upon Him at the last, unveiled and manifest in the place of satisfaction. Her love for God need not have been reciprocated by Him, though it must needs be given by her to Him.² He had shewn favour to her and He was worthy to bestow favour, and He had shewn her His Face in His Presence at the last (*i.e.* when the Vision was revealed to her),

1 Ḥurayfīsh adds another fragment to these verses:

"O beloved of hearts, I have none like unto Thee
Therefore have pity this day on the sinner who has come
to Thee,

O my Hope and my Rest and my Delight,
The heart can love none other but Thee".

Rawḍ Al-Fā'iḳ, p. 213.

For different readings, cf. al-Sarrāj, *Maṣā'irī*, p. 180, and Kalābādhī, "Kitāb al-Ta'arruf", fol. 30 b. Cf. also al-Antākī, *Taḡyīn al-Aswāq*, p. 55.

2 See above, p. 92.

as He had shewn it to her at this time in her presence first. To God was due the praise for the grace He had shewn in this world (*i.e.* while she was still traversing the Way) and to Him was the praise for the grace He had shewn in the next world (*i.e.* when the Goal was attained and she saw Him unveiled and face to face), and there was no praise due to her in this here, or in that yonder, because it was God who had brought her to both stages. So Abū Ṭālib explains Rābī'ā's words, believing that she had reached the highest truth in regard to Love.¹

Al-Ghazālī also, in dealing with the Ṣūfī doctrine of Love, gives these verses of hers, and adds in his commentary upon them, what he believed to be the interpretation of them. He says:

She meant by the selfish love, the love of God for His favour and grace bestowed and for temporary happiness, and by the love worthy of Him the love of His Beauty which was revealed to her, and this is the higher of the two loves and the finer of them. The delight arising from the Beauty of the Lord is that which the Prophet of God explained when he said, speaking of his Lord Most High, "I have prepared for my faithful servants what eye hath not seen nor ear heard and what has not entered into the heart of man,"² and some of these delights are given beforehand in this world to the one who has wholly purified his heart. Someone said, "If a man reaches this high knowledge, he will be stoned,"³ because his words have passed beyond the limits of their minds (the minds of those who lack enlightenment) and they will consider his speech mad and unbelieving". The purpose of the gnostics is only to attain to this knowledge and possess it, for it is a consolation unknown to the souls from which it is hidden, and when it is attained it destroys all anxieties

¹ *Qūt al-Qulūb*, II, pp. 57, 58.

² 1 Cor. ii. 9: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him".

³ Perhaps a reference to the fate of al-Hallāj, who revealed his "high knowledge" and suffered martyrdom, A.D. 922.

and sensual desires and the heart becomes filled with its grace. Even if the gnostic were cast into the fire he would not feel it because of his absorption and if the favours of Paradise were spread out before him, he would not turn towards them because of the perfection of the grace that is in him and his perfect attainment, which is above all else that can be attained. How can he who understands only the love of sensible things, believe in the joy of looking upon the Face of God Most High? For such a one there is no vision or form, and what meaning is there for him in the promise of God Most High to His worshippers and in His statement that He gives the greatest of all graces? But he who knows God, knows that all joys (save only sensual desires) are included in this joy.¹

With the Ṣūfī doctrine of the Beatific Vision, and the joy of the mystic to whom it is granted at the end of the path, we may compare the conception of Plotinus, from whom indeed the Ṣūfīs have plainly derived something of their own mystical doctrine.² Plotinus, dealing with the Vision Beautiful, says:

Such vision is for those only who see with the Soul's sight—and at the vision, they will rejoice, and awe will fall upon them and a trouble deeper than all the rest could ever stir, for now they are moving in the realm of Truth.

This is the spirit that Beauty must ever induce, wonderment and a delicious trouble, longing and love and a trembling that is all delight. For the unseen all this may be felt as for the seen: and this the souls feel for it, every soul in some degree, but those the more deeply that are the more truly apt to this higher love—just as all take delight in the beauty of the body, but all are not stung as sharply, and those only that feel the keener wound are known as Lovers.³

Therefore we must ascend again towards the Good, desired of every Soul. To attain it is for those that will take the upward

1 Al-Ghazālī, *op. cit.* iv, p. 267.

2 Cf. E. G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, p. 420, and R. A. Nicholson, *Selected Poems*, p. xxx.

3 Plotinus, 1st *Ennead*, vi, p. 82.

path, who will set all their forces towards it...until, passing, on the upward way, all that is other than God, each in the solitude of himself, shall behold that solitary dwelling Existence, the Apart, the Unmingled, the Pure, that from Which all things depend, for Which all look and live and act and know, the Source of Life and of Intellection and of Being.

And one that shall know this vision—with what passion of love shall he not be seized, with what pang of desire, what longing to be molten into one with This, what wondering delight! If he that has never seen this Being must hunger for It as for all his welfare, he that has known must love and reverence It as the very Beauty...he loves with a veritable love, with sharp desire; all other loves than this he must despise, and disdain all that once seemed fair.

What are we to think of one that contemplates Absolute Beauty in Its essential integrity—so perfect Its purity, far above all things?

Beholding this Being...resting, rapt, in the vision and possession of so lofty a loveliness, growing to Its likeness, what Beauty can the soul yet lack? For This, the Beauty supreme, the absolute and the primal, fashions Its lovers to Beauty and makes them also worthy of love.

And for This, the sternest and the uttermost combat is set before the Souls: all our labour is for This, lest we be left without part in this noblest vision, which to attain is to be blessed in the blissful sight, which to fail of is to fail utterly.

Only he has failed, that has failed of only This, for Whose winning he should renounce kingdoms and command over earth and ocean and sky, if only, spurning the world of sense beneath his feet, and straining to This, he may see.¹

¹ Plotinus, *op. cit.* pp. 85, 86. Cf. the Franciscan concept of the Vision: "That grade of contemplation is a heavenly fire and a sweet devotion of the Holy Spirit, and a rapture and uplifting of the mind intoxicated in the contemplation of the unspeakable savour of the Divine sweetness, and a happy, peaceful and sweet delight of the soul, that is rapt and uplifted in great marvel at the glorious things of heaven above; and a burning sense within of that celestial glory unspeakable" (*Little Flowers of St Francis*, pp. 290, 291).

Al-Ghazālī, turning aside from the distinction between the two loves in Rābī'a's verses, seems to concentrate on the Vision which is the object of the higher love. He and Plotinus are at one in their conception of "the delight arising from the Beauty of the Lord"; in the course of his travels and of his studies of different schools of philosophical thought, it is not unlikely that he had come across the ideas of Plotinus, who may also have affected the earlier Ṣūfis, if not directly by his writings, at least indirectly by his influence.

A later Ṣūfī, the greatest of all the Arabic mystic poets, wrote in a like strain on this same theme:

With my Beloved I alone have been,
 When secrets tenderer than evening airs
 Passed, and the Vision blest
 Was granted to my prayers,
 That crowned me, else obscure, with endless fame,
 The while amazed between
 His Beauty and His Majesty
 I stood in silent ecstasy
 Revealing that which o'er my spirit went and came.
 Lo, in His face commingled
 Is every charm and grace;
 The whole of Beauty singled
 Into a perfect face
 Beholding Him would cry,
 "There is no God but He, and He is the most High".¹

It is possible that Abū Ṭālib and al-Ghazālī read more into Rābī'a's verses than she herself meant to express. She seems to have been chiefly concerned to distinguish between the love towards God—which finds a satisfaction for itself and seeks to gain something for itself, out of loving Him, even though it loves Him exclusively, and which is therefore only of the same type as the human love of the lover for the beloved, which includes its own satisfaction and enjoyment as

¹ Ibn al-Fārid, *Eastern Poetry and Prose*, p. 142.

a result of loving¹—and the love which seeks nothing for itself, but only the glory of the beloved, a height to which the love of one human being for another rarely attains. The former has always some taint of selfishness, but in the second type the soul is content to seek only the glory of God and to carry out the will of the Beloved, even to its own hurt, and in beholding the Vision of the Everlasting, is content.

So we read in *The Dream of Gerontius* of the eager soul, after death, inspired by pure love and adoration, escaping from the hold of its companion angel, darting to the very Throne of God and there, scorched by the Divine Fire of God's perfect purity, lying in acquiescent rapture, seeking only to carry out the will of God.² Only this type of love is worthy of God.

To sum up Rābī'ā's teaching on Love, that is the love of the servant to his Lord: she teaches, first, that this love must shut out all others than the Beloved, that is, the saint must turn his back on the world and all its attractions, he must cut himself off from the creatures of God, lest they should distract him from the Creator,³ he must even rise above the claims of the senses and allow neither pleasure nor pain to disturb his contemplation of the Divine. To Rābī'ā God seemed to be a jealous God, Who will suffer none to share with Him that love which is due to Him alone.⁴

1 Cf. al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p. 308.

2 Cf. also R. Browning, *Johannes Agricola*:

"I keep the broods of stars aloof
For I intend to get to God.
That's why I haste to God so fast,
For in God's Breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory past,
I lay my spirit down at last".

3 Cf. Browning's *Saul*:

"So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown,
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down,
One spot for the creature to stand in!"

4 Cf. incident related on pp. 21, 22.

Then, secondly, she teaches that this love, directed to God to the exclusion of all else, must be disinterested, that it must look neither to hope of reward, nor to relief from punishment, but seek only to do the Will of God and to accomplish that which is pleasing to Him, that He may be glorified. So will the love of the servant be transmuted into that higher love, which is truly worthy of the Beloved. Only to the servant who loves thus, can God reveal Himself in His perfect Beauty and only by treading this Way of self-renouncing love, can the loving soul at last be united with its Beloved and in His Will find its peace.¹

By means then of Love and all the stages which have passed before, the Šūfī attains to the mystic gnosis and "the heart becomes filled with its grace". That knowledge comes directly as a gift from the Lord and from it the gnostic proceeds to contemplation of the unveiled Essence of God.² With the enlightened eye of gnosis, the mystic gazes upon that Vision, and thus beholding, is rapt up into union with the Divine, and the final Goal of the *Quest*, the End of the Path, is attained, not by annihilation, but by absorption and transmutation, so that the soul transmuted into the Divine Image, and become itself part of God, in Him abides and lives for ever.³ As Suso, the Christian mystic, describes it in his *Book of Truth*:

This highest state of union is an indescribable experience, in which all idea of images and forms and differences has vanished.

¹ Cf. E. Hamilton King, *The Hospital*:

"Measure thy life by loss instead of gain,
Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured forth,
For Love's strength standeth in Love's sacrifice,
And he who suffers most, has most to give".

² *Qūt al-Qulūb*, I, pp. 120, 121.

³ Cf. St John of the Cross: "Thus the soul, when it shall have driven away from itself all that is contrary to the Divine Will, becomes transformed in God in love... the soul then becomes immediately enlightened by and transformed in God because He

All consciousness of self and of all things has gone, and the soul is plunged into the abyss of the Godhead and the spirit has become one with God... In this highest state God becomes the inner essence, the life and activity within, so that whatever the person does, it does as an instrument... Like a being which loses itself in an indescribable intoxication, the spirit ceases to be itself, divests itself of itself, passes into God, and becomes wholly one with Him, as a drop of water mingled with a cask of wine. As the drop of water loses its identity and takes on the taste and colour of the wine, so it is with those who are in the full possession of bliss; human desires influence them no longer; divested of self they are absorbed in the Divine Will, mingled with the Divine Will and become one with it.¹

So Rābī'a in one of her poems says, "My hope is for union with Thee, for that is the goal of my desire",² and again she says, to Ḥasan of Baṣra, "I have ceased to exist and have passed out of self. I am become one with Him and am altogether His."³ Again she said in a time of spiritual distress that the cure for her sickness was Union with her Friend and in the next life she would attain it.⁴ Rābī'a, throughout her life, had her eyes fixed upon that Goal, and when the end of life came she might have said, with Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī:

Up, O ye lovers, and away! 'Tis time to leave the world for aye...
O heart, toward thy heart's love wend, and O friend, fly toward
the Friend.⁵

She had looked upon the Vision and experienced Union for brief moments in this life, and it was not without reason that her Ṣūfī friends, after her death, believed they heard her say, "I have attained to that which I beheld".

communicates His own supernatural being in such a way that the soul seems to be God Himself and to possess the things of God... the soul seems to be God rather than itself and indeed is God by participation" (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, pp. 77 ff.).

1 Quoted by Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 290.

2 See above, p. 13.

3 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.* 1, p. 66.

4 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.* 1, p. 69.

5 *Selected Poems*, p. 140.

Rābi‘a
the Mystic and her
Fellow-Saints in Islām

MARGARET SMITH



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