

AWAKENING

(by M. Valentine)

Faith is a matter of the HEART, not of the mind. The first converts to ISLAM were not men of great education or intellectual ability. They were average men. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was himself illiterate. So the question poses itself, that being why would these men choose to follow the Prophet (peace be upon him)? There are numerous answers, however this paper will explore but one.

The night before the assault on Medina, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) followers (actually ALLAH'S followers to be precise) expressed some degree of fear (understandingly) - Muhammed answered these concerns not with logic but rather the assurance that the overwhelming mercenary army facing them were nothing compared to the True power which they were servants of. To put in other words, while preserving the Prophet's (peace be upon him) message, "If ALLAH stands with us who can possibly stand against us?"

Since youth I was educated by my Father, truly educated (not dumped down by the public school system). I had what Nietzsche termed a "classic Western education". By the age of 15 I was versed in Kant, Spinoza, Kierkegaard, Hegel, most of the notable western philosophers, as well as noteworthy western poets; Byron Blake, Shelley Keats, Shakespeare. By 16 I understood astronomy & built a 6" Newtonian reflector. Einstein, Galileo, etc. had become second nature.

One may have understandably predicted a bright future, in worldly terms, given such a beginning. Given that, why did I begin using drugs and alcohol regularly at the age of 11?

To be as succinct as possible, not all the mental knowledge in the known universe could ever fill up that empty, negative, hungry hole, that "spiritual void" which seemed ever present (you know? those truths you face, looking in the mirror each night in the hours before dawn, when you recall every failure, every mistake you ever made - and yearning so desperately for an answer, something, anything, that will make you whole, complete, and point the way for you to be quite simply "a good man. Fortune smiled upon me (or more aptly put - "the Will of ALLAH") this Friday past at my first Jumma while standing beside the Imam & all the men present, declaring "There is no God but ALLAH, and Muhammed is his Prophet", I felt something akin to when one walks into the ocean, water covering your whole body, your whole being - only much more intense for it was happening within & without the outpouring of support from all those present as the Jumma adjourned was, well, indescribable (strong words from a poet).

Now I have an inescapable thirst to feel, know & be more. The fine points of theological debate between one group of the ummah & another are of no consequence to me whatsoever. In the end I thirst to be like the sufi poet Rumi - this journey may take the remainder of my earthly life' but as an Imam once reminded me "Man is by nature impatient", and that it is best to simply follow the path and not get in your own way.

In-shah-Allah,

M. Valentine