



Doctrine and Dogma

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“He it is Who hath revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the Scripture wherein are clear revelations. They are the substance of the Book and others (which are) allegorical. But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, forsooth, that which is allegorical seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it. None knoweth its explanation save Allah. And those who are of sound instruction say: We believe therein; the whole is from our Lord; but only men of understanding really heed.” (Qur'an 3:7)

Holy Scriptures are coherent Self-disclosures of the Truth; concurrently revealing Traditional Doctrines which provide essential means for the assimilation of Truth by realization. Being purely intellectual and subtle in nature these do not originate and also can not be fully assimilated at the level of mind. However, when authoritatively asserted at the exoteric level the revealed doctrines descend to take the form of dogmas. Theology then comes into operation and aspires at the systematic rational explanations of the dogmas for the purpose of promoting theoretical understanding which may lead to assimilation of truth through faith which can sustain the devotion and obedience to imperatives of the dogma. It is this level of dogma that faith in the exoteric sense plays its role. These theological explanations and rational dialectics of the dogma, not being symbolic and only systematic, are discontinuous although not defective. To those in whose hearts is the blindness and are unable to see the higher reflected in the lower or the subtle in the gross, may find these theological expositions contradictory which then can be termed as dogmatism pure and simple.

To present the purely intellectual metaphysical doctrines at the exoteric level, without diluting or belittling the truth which can lead all without qualification to salvation is only possible with the help of analogies and metaphors which aspire to muster all the faculties of mind, body and the soul of man as such. The collectivity, to begin with, is not capable of one-pointed attention or of getting rid of the interference of the sentiments, which represents the lowest level of existence of being in all things that they think or do.

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Theological arguments in their attempts to explain the dogma at rational level can not escape the inconsistency; this is the price which is extorted by the doctrines for presentation of the purely intellectual at the lower level of dogma. Punctuated with these structured voids inherent in the very nature of exoteric approach, a great majority take this to be the occasion of deployment of pious imagination to bridge the two ends. This is necessary not only to maintain an apparent continuity but to keep the faith intact and inclined towards devotion and submission stipulated by the dogma. The gaps so stitched, with psychic and sentimental/moral fabric with help of analogies and metaphors created by the pious imagination, are difficult to remain unnoticed particularly from those who have a wider intellectual horizon and are inclined by their presentiment towards the domain of the higher. These openings, for a qualified few, can become windows and doorways for the vision of the higher enabling them to situate not only the context for the existence of these openings but to initially allow them the blurred vision not very distinct and as yet not fully comprehensible but strongly suggestive of the existence of a higher level of the Reality. If these few qualified receive Initiation, along with the help of 'adjuvant' or exterior supports (as needed, and especially in the initial stages) to proceed from potentiality to virtuality to actuality through interior work, then they can be classified as 'those who are of sound instruction' and they can say in the earnest, "We believe therein; the whole is from our Lord; but only men of understanding really heeds."

The rivers and runoff owing to their strong current and forceful flooding scour the earth and thus absorbs the locally available elements of the earth; the water in its nature reaming as pure and as colourless as it was when it first descended from the heavens but gets the colour and taste of the local soil; this is the exoteric or most outward aspect of the religion which the ordinary eyes can see and know or taste. And thirdly (lastly), the water which gets absorbed and fulfill the aquifers in the depth of the earth are enduringly unspoiled and perennially awaits wells to be dug or may rarely surge through the artesian springs (Sufis and Dervish), always to felicitate the qualified and quench the thirst of the pure of the heart like springs of water gushed forth from the earth for the twelve tribes of the Hebrew through the staff of Moses.

36:33.a token unto them is the dead earth. We enliven it, and We bring forth from it grain so that they eat thereof;

36:34.and We have placed therein gardens of the date palm and grapes, and We have caused springs of water to gush forth therein.

36:35.that they may eat of the fruit thereof, and their hand made it not. Will they not, then, give thanks? (Qur'an Surah Yaseen)