



Deeds are built upon the foundation of sincerity ¹

Imām Jamāluddīn Muḥammad bin` Abdullah bin Shaykh al-Aydarūs Bā` Alawī

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All of what we are talking about [in this book] is built upon a foundation, and this foundation is the intention (*niyyāh*). We shall mention the knowledge of this matter with what is facilitated. We say:

[You must] know that from the leading principles, the important rules, and that which should be acted in accordance with is the building of actions upon the mastering of intention, the purification of that which is wrapped up in the breast, and entering into acts of obedience while being purified from all the imperfections that would corrupt those very acts.

The source for all of this is the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: “*Verily, deeds are but by intentions, and every person will have what they intended.*” Therefore, the actions of the hearts are the intentions, and from them come all of the outward acts. Hence, the foundation comprises of the acts of the hearts and the branches are the acts of the limbs. Furthermore, if the foundations are perfected, then the branches will be firm, but if the principles (i.e., the intentions) are neglected, then the outward acts will quake. All of this holds true for both worldly and spiritual deeds.

If you want success and the rectification of [your] affairs, then perfect your goals—whether small or large—by first looking deeply into them, then, by giving each one what it deserves from your [spiritual] aspiration. After that, you turn it over to Allah the Almighty and seek from Him their completion and success. It is in this way that deeds grow and are sanctified and the desired results are made sound. So bring your understanding to bear on this, my dear listener, for verily discussion of these matters has some hazy territory for which it is appropriate for us to alert our brothers traveling on the path in hopes that they will be guided aright. Allah is the one who gives success and from Him is aid.

¹ Reproduced with permission from Sidi Chrisotpher Khalīl Moore’s translation of Chapter 6 from ‘*Clarification of the Subtleties of the Knowledge of Those Brought Near*’ by *Imām Jamāluddīn Muḥammad bin` Abdullah bin Shaykh al-Aydarūs Bā` Alawī* (970 – 1031 AH).

² www.reflectonthis.com; www.newandalusia.org

[You must] know that intentions have amazing affects. Things react to them and are put into action by them—good for good, evil for evil. Therefore, a good intention is the spring of all things good and it is for this reason that putting one’s aspirations to work will cause a comprehensive reaction by the means of divine power [from Allah]; the desired goal manifesting in accordance with the strength or weakness of one’s determination. Hence, it is becoming for the human being to be serious in his affairs. This person does not approach a matter with heedlessness, nor does he become accustomed to neglect. Rather, he uses his insight, strengthens his aspirations, and is persistent in his affairs.

In this context, there has come to us a very amazing statement from ancient wisdom:

Resoluteness is seizing the moment, getting on with what one has intended, and avoiding hesitation with regards to what one fears a loss of. On the other hand, thinking about what one doesn’t know—will it be or not?—is the very substance of incapacitation and the cause of defeat.

Allah’s saying [in the Qur’ān] testifies to this: **“Oh John (Yahya), take the Book with strength...,”** in other words, with firm resolve. Such is also the case for the following saying of the Prophet ﷺ: *“The intention of the believer is better than his [actual] action.”*

This is so because the actions of the hearts reach beyond to include an endless number of things that cannot be encompassed by the [actual] goals, for someone may intend good but then his heart may become distracted, or he may intend evil and then that evil actually becomes facilitated for him.

From among the amazing secrets of the intention (*nīyyah*) is that its blessings can reach things that never even occur to one. It has been narrated that when ‘Umar bin ‘Abdul ‘Azīz ؓ became Caliph the shepherds said: *“Who is this pious man who has taken charge of the people?”* It was then said to them: *“And what knowledge do you have of this?”* They replied: *“Verily, whenever a just caliph takes charge of the people then the wolves leave our sheep alone.”*

Look at this amazing intention, at how it has affected even the animals of the open country lands! Such is also the case for the effects of intentions on the evil side of things. If the human being conceals evil, and his intentions are bad, many more evils will be given birth to and spread in that area, even things that were not the [initial] goal of the person.

These are very subtle matters that one should be aware of and ponder deeply. The purpose of planting these principles is so that the human being may preserve his heart from evil. When this person enters into an act of obedience, be it prayer (*salāh*), glorifying Allah (*tasbīh*), reading then Qur’ān, giving charity, visiting the sick, attending a funeral, or any other act of worship, then they will not engage in any of that in a forgetful or headless state. One of the Gnostics said: *“Whoever mentions Allah (dbiker) in a state of heedlessness, Allah will turn away from him.”*

All that has been said in the aforementioned is for the general populace. As for the elite, they are vigilant concerning their intentions in every single thing, even with regards to permissible matters. By bringing their intentions into the permissible their deeds become those that a reward is hoped for, such as wearing a garment [with intention]. If one has a good intention while doing so, seeking to obey the command of Allah: **“...adorn**

yourselves at every mosque...” and seeking to enact the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: “*Verily Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty,*” all the while adding to that thankfulness and gratitude to Allah and praising Him for providing for him—in this case, even the merely permissible would become an act of worship.

