V1 Chapter 11 Primary Sources

Al Ghazali on the Love of God

[Introduction] The poet and scholar Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī lived during the eleventh and early twelfth centuries CE. While also a legal scholar and philosopher, he is perhaps most famous for his defense of Sufism, a more mystical and faith-based approach to Islam. In the passage below, al-Ghazālī makes his case for embracing the power of God's love. **[End introduction]**

Source: Al-Ghazali, *The Alchemy of Happiness, by Mohammed Al-Ghazzali, the Mohammedan Philosopher*, trans. Henry A. Homes (Munsell, 1873). Transactions of the Albany Institute, vol. VIII. 9/10/2017.

The love of God is of the most binding obligation upon every one. It is indeed the spirit of the body, and the light of the eye. The prophet of God declares that the faith of the believer is not complete, unless he love God and his prophet more than all the world besides. The prophet was once asked, what is faith? He replied, "It is to love God and his prophet more than wife, children and property." And the prophet was continually in the habit of praying, "O my God! I ask for thy love, I ask that I may love whomsoever loves thee, and that I may perform whatsoever thy love makes incumbent upon me."

O, faithful friend, who art worthy to be loved! Know, that the love of God is a standard that leads to victory. Whoever seeks refuge under it, will be a sovereign in two worlds, and lord of a throne

at the king's court. This love is a universal solvent to secure happiness. Whoever secures it, is richer than in the possession of both worlds. God is always rich, notwithstanding all the world is provided for through him. The heart which bears no traces of the love of God, is like a dead corpse, which knows nothing of its own spirit. Still there is no person among reasonable beings who will say that he does not love God, or who will not make pretensions to possessing a love for him. But it is like an empty claim, upon which no decision can be based and, unless the witness is a faithful one, no conclusion can be formed. If you should be asked, do you love God, beware and give no answer. For if you say I do not love him, (our refuge is in God), you would make yourself an infidel.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does al-Ghazālī see as central to faith and salvation?
2. How is this perspective different from a more works-based approach to salvation?

Examples of Sunnah

[Introduction] The Sunnah are sayings of the Prophet and also accounts of his actions that are used as models of piety and good character. **[End introduction]**

Source: Charles F. Horne, ed., *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East* (Parke, Austin, & Lipscomb, 1917).

Merchants shall be raised up liars on the day of resurrection, except he who abstains from that which is unlawful, and does not swear falsely, but speaketh true in the price of his goods.

The generous man is near the pleasure of God and is near paradise, which he shall enter into, and is near the hearts of men as a friend, and he is distant from hell; but the selfish man is far from God's pleasure and from paradise, and far from the hearts of men, and near the fire; and verily a generous ignorant man is more beloved by God than a selfish worshiper.

Feed the hungry, visit the sick, and free the captive if he be unjustly bound.

The rewards for the prayers which are performed by people assembled together are double of those which are said at home.

The taker of interest and the giver of it, and the writer of its papers and the witness to it, are equal in crime.

He who beats his slave without fault, or slaps him in the face, his atonement for this is freeing him.

The angels do not enter a house in which is a dog, nor that in which there are pictures.

Whoso comforts a woman who has lost her child will be covered with a garment in paradise.

He is not strong or powerful who throws people down, but he is strong who withholds himself from anger.

Meekness and shame are two branches of faith, and vain talking and embellishing are two branches of hypocrisy.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some of the key themes of these Sunnah?

2. How familiar are they to you?

3. Did you find any surprising in any way?

Examples of Hadith

[Introduction] Thousands of *hadith*, or recorded sayings of the Prophet, were recorded during the early Islamic era and passed down ever since. They have become a basis of both personal piety and law. The first two hadith below deal with the issue of women's "impurity" during their period and highlight that Islam places women's spirituality above such concerns. The final one highlights the "Greater Jihad" of personal piety over the "Lesser Jihad" of holy war. **[End introduction]**

Source: *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (also known as the *Bukhari Sharif**),*** one of the six largest collections of hadith. It was completed in the mid-ninth century by Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari.

He asked, "May be that you got your menses?" I replied, "Yes." He then said, "This is the thing which Allah has ordained for all the daughters of Adam. So do what all the pilgrims do except that you do not perform the Tawaf round the Ka'bah till you are clean." (The Book of Menses, p. 206)

Ibrãhim said, "There is no harm in reciting a Verse of the Qur'an by a menstruating woman." Ibn Abbas considers that there was no harm in the recitation of the Qur'an by a Junub (a person spiritually unclean due to recent sexual activity). The Prophet used to remember (glorify) Allah at all times. Umm Aiyya said they were ordered to let menstruating women come out (on festivals) to say Takbirat (Allahu Akbar), and to invoke Allah. Ibn Abbas narrated on the authority of Abu Sufyan: Heraclius asked for the letter of the Prophet; and read it. It began: "In the Name of Allah, the Most

Gracious, the Most Merciful. O People of the Scripture (Jews and Christians): Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allah. . . . (V. 3:64).

A man got up and said, “O Allah’s Messenger! I intend to go (for Jihad) with such and such an army and my wife wants to perform Hajj.” The Prophet said (to him) “Go along with her (to Hajj).” (Verse 1862, 3:65)

Questions for Discussion:

1. What do the questions about women’s spiritual activities during their periods seem to suggest about pre-Islamic restrictions on women?
2. How does Muhammad’s suggestion that a man perform the hajj rather than undertake a Jihad of the Sword reflect the difference between the Greater and Lesser Jihads?