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THE CAUSES OF ANGER AND ITS MEDICINE1

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From Imam Ghazali's book "Ihya' Uloom ad Deen" (The revival of religious teachings)

Know, O dear readers, that the medicine of a disease is to remove the root cause of that disease. Isa (Jesus Christ) -peace be upon him- was once asked: "What thing is difficult?" He said: "God's wrath." Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist) -peace be upon him- then asked: "What thing takes near the wrath of God?" He said: "Anger". Yahya - peace be upon him- asked him: "What thing grows and increases anger?" Isa -peace be upon him- said: "Pride, prestige, hope for honour and haughtiness". The causes which cause anger to grow are self-conceit, self-praise, jests and ridicule, argument, treachery, too much greed for too much wealth and name and fame. If these evils are united in a person, his conduct becomes bad and he cannot escape anger. So these things should be removed by their opposites. Self-praise is to be removed by modesty. Pride is to be removed by one's own origin and birth, greed is to be removed by remaining satisfied with necessary things, and miserliness by charity. The prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "A strong man is not he who defeats his adversary by wrestling, but a strong man is he who controls himself at the time of anger." We are describing below the medicines of anger after one gets angry. The medicine is a mixture of knowledge and action. The medicine based on knowledge is of six kinds: (1) The first medicine of knowledge is to think over the rewards of appeasing anger, that have come from the verses of the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet (pbuh). Your hope for getting

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rewards of appeasing anger will restrain you from taking revenge. (2) The second kind of medicine based on knowledge is to fear the punishment of God and to think that the punishment of God upon me is greater than my punishment upon him. If I take revenge upon this man for anger, God will take revenge upon me on the Judgement Day. (3) The third kind of medicine of anger based on knowledge is to take precaution about punishment of enmity and revenge on himself. You feel joy in having your enemy in your presence in his sorrows, You yourself are not free from that danger. You will fear that your enemy might take revenge against you in this world and in the next. (4) Another kind of medicine based on knowledge is to think about the ugly face of the angry man, which is just like that of the ferocious beast. He who appeases anger looks like a sober and learned man. (5) The fifth kind of medicine based on knowledge is to think that the devil will advise by saying: " You will be weak if you do not get angry!" Do not listen to him! (6) The sixth reason is to think: " What reason have I got to get angry? What Allah wishes has occurred!" Medicine based on action When you get angry, say: I seek refuge in God from the accursed evil (A'oudhou billaahi min as shaytaan ir rajeem). The prophet (pbuh) ordered us to say thus. When Ayesha (RA) got angry, he dragged her by the nose and said: " O dear Ayesha, say: O God, you are the Lord of my prophet Muhammad, forgive my sins and remove the anger from my heart and save me from misguidance." If anger does not go by this means, you will sit down if you are standing, lie down if you are sitting, and come near to earth, as you have been created of earth. Thus make yourself calm like the earth. The cause of wrath is heat and its opposite is to lie down on the ground and to make the body calm and cool. The prophet (pbuh) said: Anger is a burning coal. Don't you see your eyebrows wide and eyes reddish? So when one of you feels angry, let him

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sit down if standing, and lie down if sitting. If still anger does not stop, make ablution with cold water or take a bath, as fire cannot be extinguished without water. The prophet (pbuh) said : " When one of you gets angry, let him make ablution with water as anger arises out of fire." In another narration, he said:" Anger comes from the devil and the devil is made of fire." Hazrat Ali (RA) said: The prophet did not get angry for any action of the world. When any true matter charmed him, nobody knew it and nobody got up to take revenge for his anger. HE GOT ANGRY ONLY FOR TRUTH.