

THE RISALE-I NUR COLLECTION

The
LETTERS

*Epistles on Islamic
Thought, Belief, and Life*

BEDİÜZZAMAN SAİD NURSİ

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Translated by Huseyin Akarsu

Light

New Jersey
2007

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Foreword

HE LETTERS REPRESENTS THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SAID Nursi (1876-1960) and his disciples and Turkish Muslims in general who were passing through a harsh time with respect to religious life and activities. Faced with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey upon the ruins of the Ottoman State, as well as the replacement of centuries of Islamic traditions with European imports in the legal, official, education, and personal spheres, Said Nursi exerted all of his intellectual and literary talents to ensure that the Turkish people and society would not slip out of the sphere of Islam altogether.

An active participant in the social arena, Said Nursi gradually eschewed such activism on the grounds that politics divides Muslims against each other and weakens them in an already hostile environment. Marking this choice by referring to himself as the “New Said” in his writings, he spent the rest of his life explaining Islam’s truths in modern and scientific terminology to counteract the newly emerging anti-religious and secular trends.

Why Said Nursi wrote The Letters

As always, his first and foremost concern is to prove God’s Existence and Unity, bodily Resurrection, the Day of Judgment, and the validity of the Qur’an and Muhammad’s Prophethood. He does this by basing himself upon what the West considers “rational” thought, meaning science, observation, and logic. However, he does not neglect to address the heart and spirit also. Said Nursi chose this path after realizing the futility of using the traditional

religious proofs to approach new generations being educated according to the Western paradigm that considers religion irrational and hostile to real knowledge, progress, and development. Thus, unlike many religious leaders, he learned how to debate with such people within the scientific context that formed their worldview.

His next concern is to show that religious and scientific knowledge are not contradictory and mutually exclusive. In all of his writings we notice the same approach: direct observation of events in nature and what can be inferred or stated from such study, beginning with a hypothesis and seeking to support it by using scientific logic and reasoning to counter the arguments of those opposed to it, and testing the hypothesis in the real world to see if it is accurate or needs to be refined. Is this not the exact approach used by scientists seeking to understand the multifaceted aspects of creation?

A synopsis of the main ideas

The First Letter contains the answers given by Said Nursi to various questions asked by his students on the degrees of life, death, Hell, and love. While answering the first question, he elaborates upon his concept of the five levels of human existence. In ascending order, these are the lives of ordinary people (lived in this realm of trial and testing), of Khadr and Elijah (lived in a realm that is unbounded by such human concepts as time and location in relation with this corporeal realm, and such human needs as eating and drinking), of Jesus and Enoch (lived in a realm with their somewhat ethereal bodies so refined that they are not bound by human life's necessities and live an angelic type of life), of martyrs (who think they continue their worldly lives in a happy realm free from all pain and trouble), and the spiritual life of the deceased.

Said Nursi also analyzes the difference between figurative love and true love, which is a prominent theme throughout his writings. After defining figurative love as love for the opposite sex and for the things of this world, he explains how it can be transformed into true love (love for the Creator), by realizing that the human heart is created to function as a mirror to God and therefore cannot be satisfied with the love for anything or anyone else except Him, the Eternal One.

During our lives, he tells us, each person creates a private world containing all that we love: family and relatives, possessions, jobs, habits, and so on. But why should we give our true love to such temporary things, for even if they do not leave us one day “without saying good-bye,” we will leave them through death or another means. As such love brings only pain, suffering, and loss, how can we not feel such emotions when what we love vanishes? Is it not more logical to give our true love to the One Who created what we love and caused us to meet it? Should we not express our true love of the One Who is the All-Loving, Who has made love the basis of the universe and presents us with a love that is eternal and far beyond our ability to comprehend, by striving to learn what earns His good pleasure? Why, Said Nursi asks repeatedly, should we be content with a temporary and transient love when we can have one that is eternal and all-encompassing?

As he writes in *The Words*: “The essence of the universe is love. All creatures move with the motive of love. All laws of attraction, rapture, and gravity originate in love” (p. 506). Our figurative love is but a very faint shadow of Divine Love, a shadow so slight and flickering that it can be extinguished forever in a moment of anger or disappointment.

In the Thirteenth and Sixteenth letters, Said Nursi reveals why he embraces a life of exile that deprives him of normal human contact. The living embodiment of his teachings, he attributes his misfortunes to God’s Will that he should do everything for His good pleasure alone. As he might have viewed his exile as a time for retreat and seclusion, God arranged for him to live a life of total dependence upon Him and in the service of the Qur’an. Forbidden from preaching and limited to a very few visitors, he thanks Divine Mercy for allowing him to devote himself to serving the Qur’an, spreading its teachings via his writings, and drawing closer to God through prayer. Accepting his destiny, he silences the siren songs of material comfort, respect, fame, wealth, and so on that attract so many of his contemporaries.

As for why he abandoned politics, Said Nursi explains:

[B]elievers cannot serve their cause through politics in such stormy circumstances. Whatever service is rendered for Islam through politics eventually benefits the dominant anti-Islamic system, because foreign powers control the reins of political life. Engaging in politics also divides Muslims into opposing political factions that have a negative impact upon individual hearts and collective life—some peo-

ple are so obstinate that even Muslims may label angelic brothers or sisters as satans, or a satanic party member as an angel, depending upon whether or not they support a certain political party. When I saw a learned man severely reproach a good, virtuous man who did not share his political views and then praise a corrupt member of his political faction, I became dismayed by the evils of politics and completely withdrew, saying: "I take refuge in God from Satan and politics." (p. 45)

Said Nursi consents to his isolation, but instead of railing against the injustice that causes it, he uses his love for God to transform it into the vehicle for serving the Qur'an so effectively that parts of his more than 4,000 page *Risale-i Nur* were copied by hand, smuggled out of whatever prison or place of exile in which he happened to be, and found their way into the hands of people starved for spiritual enlightenment, guidance, and understanding. To this day, more than 40 years after his death, he is remembered by many people with great affection and respect, and his writings continue to circulate.

The Nineteenth Letter, a discussion of the Prophet's miracles and how they assert the truth of his Prophethood and Message, form the centerpiece of this volume. Miracles are especially hard for the West to deal with, for they seem to occur outside the realm of the ordinary, of what science can predict and accept with certainty. Said Nursi relates these events, as well as the names of the eyewitnesses who related them so that they could be passed down to posterity.

Another major concern in this letter is to show the relevance—indeed the centrality—of Islam to modern life and how it is far superior to the path of materialism. Constantly reminding his audience that Islam is not dependent upon science or blind belief, he invokes it to make his points. He points to the overarching order seen in nature, asking how could it exist without a being behind it, if rocks could have created the dome of Hagia Sophia (Ayasofya) mosque themselves and without any being to direct them.

He brings up other thought-provoking points that modern science can answer only by saying: "Chance, accident, coincidence, meaningless." Among them are: "Alright, you have described that particular phenomenon or animal, but how did it manage to come into existence for the first time?" and "How is it that everything in the universe has developed in such a way that it meets all of our needs and those of animals and plants? Could

this really be just coincidence?" Is it more logical to answer such question by asserting God's Existence and Unity, or by asserting that everything is the result of blind chance?

The miracles granted to all Prophets and Messengers function as signs demonstrating that those who perform them have been raised by God. In addition, they are God's hints of the furthest extent of human knowledge and an encouragement for us to pursue them, through scientific experimentation and observation, until they become the common property of humanity. For example, since Muhammad was able to summon forth water from stones and apparently dry land, talk with inanimate objects and make them fulfill his requests, heal people and have his prayers answered, we should exert all of our efforts to find ways to bring about the same results.

In the Twentieth Letter, Said Nursi discusses various aspects of Divine Unity revealed by the phrases *there is no god but God, (He is) One, He has no partner, His is the Kingdom, To Him belongs all the praise, He alone gives life, and makes to die, He is living and dies not, In His hand is all good, He is powerful over everything, and unto Him is the homecoming*.

At first glance, the meaning of each phrase appears rather straightforward: God is One, owns everything, has the power to give life and take it away, is eternal and dispenses good, and is our final destination. But Said Nursi, not content with such superficial understandings, peels away layers of meanings to expose ever-deeper ones, just as the full glory of a flower is revealed by its layers of petals falling back to disclose its core.

For example, he writes that *there is no god but God* induces within us the understanding that we are not to depend upon anybody or anything other than God, for only God can send good or evil our way. It also proves His Unity in the Sphere of Creation despite the vast abundance and diversity of His creation, for all things are only reflections of His Names and Attributes and thereby point to Him as their creator and allow us to acquire a slight degree of knowledge concerning Him.

(He is) One frees us from all forms of polytheism and from ascribing real power to any person or thing other than God, causes us to notice the perfect order and sensitive balance pervading the universe and ensuring its functioning in a such a way that we become so used to it that we take it for granted. Such awareness, in turn, reveals His Names the All-Powerful and All-Knowing One, among others, which increase our knowledge of Him.

The other phrases also contain deeper levels of meaning. The use of so few words to convey such exalted truths is just one aspect of the Qur'an's miraculous style that, according to Said Nursi, often reveals just the tip and then calls upon us to use our powers of observation and reflection to dive into the ocean of Divine Wisdom of which each verse—even each word—is only a wave on the surface.

At the end of The Twenty-ninth Letter, Said Nursi discusses a topic that remains controversial in the Islamic world, although it has been a fundamental part of Islam for centuries (from the very beginning according to others): Sufism (*tariqa*). Despite its proven success as a potent vehicle that attracts people to Islam and then keeps them within its fold, some Muslims and others inspired by the deluge of materialism, secularism, and indifference to or outright disrespect for religion in any form blame it for the Muslim world's backwardness, underdevelopment, poverty, illiteracy—in short, for all material shortcomings that make it inferior to the West.

Said Nursi counters with rational arguments: How can you condemn a whole system for the mistakes of only a very few of its adherents? (If this was acceptable, what would be the position of the West's much vaunted concepts of democracy or human rights?) How can you strike at the root of Muslim unity and identity at a time when the Muslim world is under external and internal attack? (Is it logical to pursue a course of self-destruction in the face of imminent danger?) How can you seek to deprive those who want to acquire more knowledge of God in order to draw closer to Him and be successful in the afterlife from doing so, when all you can offer them is this temporary existence that has no permanent value or satisfaction? As humanity was created to serve God by reflecting the Divine Names and Attributes through conforming to the Sharia (Divine Law) and the Prophet's Sunna (in his capacity as the “living Qur'an”), who are you to defy God and the Prophet by saying that Sufism, a “discipline or technique that allows people to practice the Sharia in a better way,” must be abandoned so that the interests of this temporary world and nation-state may be pursued without hindrance?

His view is starkly at odds with that presented by such people. Throughout his writings, he reminds people that the leading scientists of the Muslim world quite often were practicing Sufis and that there is no reason why such a joining of religious and scientific knowledge cannot succeed

today and lead the Muslim world to regain its rightful place among the world's great civilizations.

He admits that there are dangers to following this path, such as neglecting the Sharia and Sunna in favor of Sufism's spiritual delights and pleasures or being reduced to lower levels due to one's pride in his or her spiritual achievements, but says that all real and potential dangers are far outweighed by the benefits that Sufism brings to people and society as a whole. Moreover, which path is completely free of danger? Did not "democratic" Europe bring forth Nazism, fascism, communism, and other scourges of the last century? And yet the fundamental truth of democracy is never called into question or blamed for such hideous results. Why should any spiritual way be treated any differently?

The other letters consist of straight answers given by Said Nursi to the great issues raised by Muslim, Christian, and Jewish scholars and theologians, not to mention ordinary believers, for centuries:

- **GOD'S EXISTENCE AND UNITY:** Thus if each being's or particle's existence is attributed to nature, causes, or itself, each one must have the all-encompassing knowledge and absolute power or countless operative devices needed to perform its wonderful duties. But if existence is attributed to a Single One of Unity, each particle becomes His officer through the resulting connection. This enables it to manifest Him somehow and, along with being an object of His manifestation, depend on His Infinite Knowledge and Power. This relationship with the Creator's Power allows it to perform functions and duties far beyond its own power.
- **THE MEANING OF LIFE:** Thus this world is the field, and this life the term, in which people are tested so that elevated diamond-like spirits may be distinguished from base coal-like ones. This is why devils were created and Prophets were sent with Divine commandments. Without such testing, good and evil could not be distinguished and would be treated equally: The spirit of Abu Bakr, who rose to the highest level, would remain at the same level as that of Abu Jahl, who fell to the lowest level. Thus the creation of devils and evil is wholly good, for they cause good and universal results to be achieved. Those who suffer because of them do so because of their own weakness, misuse of their free will, or some external circumstances that they caused to appear. As a

result, all evil and misfortune that happen to people lie in themselves, not in God's creation of them.

- **THE MEANING OF DEATH:** Good news! Death is not annihilation or going to non-existence, not an eternal separation or a chance event without an author. Rather the All-Wise and All-Compassionate Author is discharging you from service, changing your abode, and sending you to the ever-lasting happiness that is your true home. Death is the door to union with the Intermediate World, where you will meet with 99 percent of your friends.
- **THE ROLE OF PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS:** As the One who creates knows, the One who knows will speak. Since He will speak, He will speak to those having consciousness, thought, and speech. Since He will speak to such people, He will speak to humanity, whose nature and awareness are the most comprehensive of all conscious beings. Since He will speak to humanity, He will speak to those most perfect and worthy of address.
- **THE REASON FOR PRAYER:** Prayer is a kind of worship through which servants proclaim their helplessness and poverty before God. The prayer's apparent purposes are causes for praying, and its rewards are given mainly in the Hereafter. If your prayer appears to be unanswered, do not say: "My prayer has not been accepted"; rather, say: "The time for prayer is not yet over."

As the vast majority of his audience was Muslim, there are topics of specific interest to them, although he does not neglect to address the atheists and agnostics also. Said Nursi analyzes the miracle of the Qur'an, the Prophet's Ascension, Ramadan, Sufism, and issues related to Islamic belief. In these, he goes to great length to make his answers clear and understandable to all people. There is no hiding behind a veil of religious platitudes and demands for blind faith.

On a more personal level, he explains how believers should conduct themselves, why he avoids politics and obligations to other people, the value of brotherhood and sisterhood among believers and strong relations with family members and relatives, loneliness, involuntary (evil) thoughts, and other issues that were of interest to his students. All of these are based on a firm Qur'anic foundation and are eminently reasonable and rational, show-

ing once again how the Qur'an is relevant to every sphere of human life, regardless of the era or location in which its audience lives.

Said Nursi ends this correspondence with his students and the Muslim world at large by summarizing all that he has tried to convey in easily remembered phrases. For example:

- (In today's world) injustice wears the hat of justice, treason wears the cloak of patriotic zeal, jihad is called aggression and a violation of human rights, and enslavement is presented as emancipation. In short, opposites have exchanged forms.
- All revolutions, social corruption, and moral failings are caused by: "I don't care if others die of hunger so long as my own stomach is full," and: "You must bear the costs of my ease by working so that I can eat." The first attitude is cured through *zakat*; the second by prohibiting interest. Qur'anic justice stands at the door and turns away interest, proclaiming: "You have no right to enter!" Yet humanity ignored this prohibition and received a great blow. It must heed it now to avoid receiving a greater one.
- The Qur'an is a mercy for humanity, and so urges a civilization that secures the greatest happiness for the most people.

Western civilization, in its present phase, is founded upon five negative principles: It is based upon power, and power inclines toward oppression; it seeks to realize individual self-interest, even though this causes people to rush madly upon things to possess them; it considers life as struggle, which causes internal and external conflict; it unifies through national and/or racial separatism, and "feeds" by swallowing the resources and territories of "others," both of which engender terrible conflict; and it strives to satisfy novel caprices or aroused desires (whether the satisfaction is real or not), and so brutalizes people.

Islamic civilization rests upon right (not power), which requires justice and balance; encourages virtue, which spurs mutual affection and love; considers life as mutual help, which leads to unity and solidarity; unifies people through a common religion in a common state, which leads to internal peace, brotherhood [sisterhood], and a willing self-defense against external enemies; and guides people to the truth. Therefore it encourages scientific progress and elevates people, through moral perfection, to higher ranks of humanity. Never break with Islam, for it

guarantees our survival. Stick to it, heart and soul, or we shall perish utterly.

- Not affirming something's existence is often confused with affirming that it does not exist. The absence of a sign or evidence that a thing exists may justify people's not affirming its existence if they are not inclined to accept its existence. But affirming something's non-existence requires clear evidence proving its non-existence, for not-affirming its existence is doubt, while affirming its non-existence is denial.
- Every misfortune contains degrees of Divine Favor. Be mindful of the greater misfortune, thereby being thankful for the favor of the lesser misfortune. Concentrating on and exaggerating the latter increases it, and this exaggerated reflection in the heart or imagination makes it real and troublesome.
- Entrusting the accomplishment of an affair to God before taking all necessary precautions and making all necessary arrangements is laziness. Leaving the desired outcome's realization to God, after doing all that can be done, is to trust Him. Contentment with the result after exerting one's efforts is a laudable virtue that encourages further effort and reinvigorates one's energy and industry. Contentment with what one already has destroys endeavor.
- If people follow Islam's injunctions strictly, and with firm belief and complete sincerity, their desire and effort to find Islamic solutions to new problems lead them toward perfection. Such a desire or effort by those indifferent to Islamic injunctions, and therefore outside Islam, lead them toward ruin. The right course of action during these troubled times is not to use farfetched efforts to derive "new" laws from the Qur'an and Sunna. Rather, it is to close the doors and even shutter the windows against innovation. Those indifferent to religious duties, free and easy about whether they do them or not, must not be rewarded with special dispensations to release them from those duties. Rather, others should warn them to reform themselves.

Conclusion

Many people who write on religion spend their lives authoring academic tomes or theological treatises that are abstract or divorced from the reader's

life. Others offer such simplistic and “feel-good” explanations that they are worse than useless and in fact might actually do great harm.

Said Nursi, however, makes the same points just as eloquently through simple parables and allegories from which everyone can benefit. Even more importantly, his solutions and explanations fit right into real life, regardless of our level of mental, spiritual, or cultural development. In that respect, he follows the style of the Qur'an, the final Divine Revelation addressed to every person, regardless of his or her particular era, culture, language, age, or level of intelligence.

Although written during the second quarter of the twentieth century, Said Nursi's views have not been made obsolete by time. If his calls for avoiding nationalism built on ethnicity or any other human consideration had been heeded, would we have had to endure the atrocities in Bosnia and Rwanda, or the even more horrific examples of Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, and Maoist China? If we had based our progress upon scientific knowledge and understanding, instead of ideological assertions and utopian thought, would we have had to watch communist regimes destroy their countries and their citizens by ignoring reality and what makes people human? If we had used our knowledge and wealth to uplift all of humanity, instead of just certain sections, would we still be faced with the massive—and apparently unsolvable—problems of Third World poverty, debt, illiteracy, human rights violations, and thuggish leaders who hold on to power at all costs?

Would we be spending most of our resources on making better weapons or improving national infrastructures to deliver food and the conveniences of modern life to those who do not have them; on building military bases or on building schools, clinics, hospitals, and better housing; on drawing farther apart from those who are different from us instead of drawing closer and working together for a better future for all of our children? Read his words carefully, and try to find yourself in them so that you can do your part to improve your own life and the lives of those around you.

A FINAL NOTE: Every effort has been made in this book to allay the misperception that Islam is a male-dominated religion and for men only. This view has been popularized in the media and in academia. We would like to point out that no religion can be blamed for the misunderstandings of its followers. Islam teaches that Adam and Eve were created, lapsed, and were forgiven in equal measure; that men and women are equal in God's

eyes; and that they are equal as regards their responsibilities and duties toward God and others. As God states in the Qur'an: *I shall not allow to go to waste the deed of any one among you, whether male or female. You are one from the other* (3:195). However, in the interest of textual fidelity, most of the time only men are mentioned.

— The Editor

*The
First Letter*

The First Letter

Degrees of life • Blessing in death

• Hell's location • Figurative love and real love

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

... and we pray Him for succor.

In His name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

This letter consists of brief answers to four questions.

FIRST QUESTION: Is Khadr still alive?¹ If so, why do some scholars reject this?

ANSWER: He is still alive. Of the five degrees of life, Khadr has the second. This is why such scholars reject this.

The first degree is as we live here and now, which is bound by certain conditions. The second degree is manifested in the lives of Khadr and Elijah. To a certain extent it is free, for those who have it can be in different places at the same time and are not bound by ordinary human life's necessities. For

¹ Khadr (Khidir): One of God's righteous servants, who it is thought might have been a Prophet. He represents eternal enlivening or the gaining of eternity through elixir. It is understood from Moses' companionship with him (18:65-82) that his mission relates to the spiritual domain of existence. He was blessed with knowledge of God and some sort of perpetual life, and can explain the wisdom behind life's events. (Tr.)

example, they do not have to eat and drink. The experiences that some godly persons who can discern hidden truths have had with Khadr suffice to illuminate and prove this degree of life. Further, one spiritual degree or station that saints reach in their spiritual journey is the Station of Khadr. One who attains this degree may meet Khadr and be instructed by him directly. Sometimes, one who holds this station is even mistaken for Khadr.

The third degree is manifested in the lives of Prophets Jesus and Enoch, who live in heaven with their physical bodies. Their bodies are not bound by human life's necessities and have acquired a sort of refinement and luminosity to the degree of astral bodies and an angelic type of life. Prophet Muhammad² is reported to have said: "Jesus will return to the world before the end of time and follow Muhammad's Sharia." This implies that Christianity will be purified of its borrowed elements and superstitions and join Islam. As a result, this chosen way of God (true Religion) will use the "sword of Revelation" to eradicate the trends of unbelief and absolute materialism established by natural philosophy.

The fourth degree is the life of martyrs. Some Qur'anic verses state that martyrs enjoy a higher degree of life than deceased non-martyrs. Since martyrs sacrifice their life in His way, God Almighty grants them an intermediate life resembling worldly life without its pains and troubles. They do not feel the pangs of death or know that they are dead. Instead, they consider themselves transferred to a better world and enjoy perfect happiness. On the other hand, the dead are aware that they are dead (although their souls are eternal) and experience a lesser degree of pleasure in the intermediate life than that enjoyed by martyrs.

The difference can be explained as follows: In a dream, two people enter a palace as beautiful as Paradise. One receives little pleasure, because he knows that he is dreaming and that everything will disappear when he wakes up. The other person is unaware of this and so feels wholly contented and happy. In addition to the relevant Qur'anic verses, some Prophetic

² In any publication dealing with Prophet Muhammad, his name or title is followed by the phrase "upon him be peace and blessings," to show our respect for him and because it is a religious requirement to do so. A similar phrase is used for his Companions and other illustrious Muslims: "May God be pleased with him (or her)." However, as this practice might be distracting to non-Muslim readers, these phrases do not appear in this book, on the understanding that they are assumed and that no disrespect is intended. (Ed.)

Traditions (Hadith)³ and countless experiences prove that martyrs lead a life with some degree of consciousness and know that they are alive. This is particularly well-indicated in the experienced reality that Hamza can, by God's leave, help those whom God wills him to help, even after his death, and carry forward some of their worldly affairs.

One of my students, my cousin 'Ubayd, was martyred in my company and on my behalf [while fighting the Russians in eastern Turkey during the First World War]. I had a true dream of him, in which I saw myself enter his grave and witness him enjoying the degree of life belonging to martyrs. He told me that he was alive and that I was dead. He had cried much over me, he said, and had built a fine house underground to avoid the Russian invasion. This dream, together with certain other signs, convinced me that martyrs, in some condition, have a higher degree of life than the dead.

The fifth degree is the deceased's spiritual life. Death is a changing of residence and a discharge from worldly duties with the soul set free, not a complete annihilation into non-existence. This degree of life is established clearly by such repeatedly observed facts as the souls of some godly persons appearing in their human (material) forms and being seen by those with insight into hidden truths. Another proof is the deceased's ability to communicate with us while we are dreaming or awake.

SECOND QUESTION: Such verses as: *He has created death and life that He may try which of you is best in conduct* (67:2) imply that death is created, like life, and thus a blessing for living beings. But death appears to be decomposition, seems to extinguish life's light and cause a living body to rot away, and destroys pleasures. How can it be a blessing?

ANSWER: Death is a discharge from this worldly life's duties, a changing of residence, a transferal of the body, an invitation to and the beginning of an everlasting life. The world is continually enlivened through acts

³ Derived from the word *haddatha* (to inform), *hadith* literally means a tiding or information. Another literal meaning of the word *hadith* is something that takes place within time. Over time, it has assumed the meaning of every word, deed, and approval ascribed to God's Messenger. According to the *muhaddithun* (scholars of Hadith, or Traditionists), everything related to God's Messenger is included in the meaning of Hadith (Tradition). Hadith is usually used as synonymous with the Sunna, so it is the record of every act, word, and confirmation of God's Messenger. It is the second source of Islamic legislation (the Qur'an is the first one). (Tr.)

of creation and predetermination, and yet it also is continually stripped of life through other cycles of creation, determination, and wisdom. The dying of plants, the simplest level of life, is a work of Divine artistry, as is their living—but more perfect and better designed. This is so because when a fruit seed dies, it seems to decompose and rot away into the soil. But in reality, it undergoes a perfect chemical process, passes through predetermined states of re-formation, and grows again into an elaborate new tree. Thus the seed's "death" is a new tree's beginning, and death, which is something created like life, is as perfect as life.

As the death of fruits and animal flesh in people's stomachs raises them to the degree of human life, this death can be regarded as more perfect than their lives. Since a plant's death is so perfect and serves so great a purpose, each person's death must be much more perfect and serve a still greater purpose, for humanity is life's highest level. After "going underground," each of us will be brought into eternal life.

Death is a blessing for many reasons. Let me briefly set down four:

FIRST: It discharges us from life's hardships, which gradually become harder through old age. It also allows us to meet again the 99 percent of our friends who have already died.

SECOND: It releases us from worldly life, which is a turbulent, suffocating, narrow dungeon of space, and admits us to the wide circle of the Eternal Beloved One's mercy, where we enjoy a pleasant and everlasting life without any suffering.

THIRD: It frees us from old age and similar conditions that make life unbearable. For example, if your old parents and grandparents were living in misery in front of your eyes, you would see death as a great blessing and life as an unendurable pain. Besides, the autumnal death of insects (lovers of lovely flowers) is a mercy for them, for they do not have to live through winter's harshness and severity.

FOURTH: Sleep is a time of repose and relief, and thus a mercy, especially for the sick and afflicted. Similarly, death (the "brother" of sleep) is a blessing and mercy especially for those afflicted with such misfortune that they might contemplate suicide. As for the misguided, both life and death are torment within torment and pain after pain.

THIRD QUESTION: Where is Hell?

ANSWER: Only God knows the Unseen. Say: "Knowledge is only with God." Some Prophetic Traditions report that it exists under Earth. Through

its annual movement, Earth draws a large cycle that will be the Supreme Plain of Mustering after the Resurrection. This implies that Hell is under Earth's orbit. It cannot be seen, for it consists of fire that gives no light. In the annual orbit of Earth, there are innumerable creatures that exist but are invisible to us because they emit no light. It is like the moon when it is hidden from the sun's light—it cannot emit light and so becomes invisible to us.

There is a minor Hell and a major Hell. The minor Hell is under Earth or in its center. We know from geology that heat increases by 1°C for every 33 meters toward Earth's center. Thus Earth's center has a temperature of 200,000°C, given that its radius is 6,000 kilometers. This agrees with a relevant Prophetic Tradition.

In both this world and the intermediate one, the minor Hell fulfills many of the major Hell's functions. In the other world, it will be expanded into the major Hell. Earth will empty its contents into the Supreme Plain of Mustering, which will be built in Earth's orbit, and then transfer the minor Hell to the major Hell upon God's command.

Some leading Mu'tazili⁴ scholars mistakenly thought that Hell would be created later, for it still must be expanded fully to contain its future contents. Besides, the other world's stations are veiled from us, for our eyes are not as penetrating as starlight and cannot divide the universe into small-enough areas. Prophetic sayings imply that the major Hell has a relation with this world, such as describing intense summer heat as "coming from the heat of Hell."

We cannot see or comprehend the major Hell, but we can glimpse something of its nature through the Divine Name the All-Wise.⁵ The major Hell appears to have deputed certain functions to the minor Hell. The sovereignty

⁴ Wasil ibn 'Ata' (699-749), the founder of this sect, taught that Muslims who commit a major sin are neither believers or unbelievers, but in an intermediate station known as transgression (*fisq*). The Mu'tazilah eventually split into several other sects. They were characterized by an overemphasis on using reason and trying to interpret Islam in the light of first-order logic. They also believed that it is lexically permissible to ascribe creation of deeds to people, thus almost denying the Divine Destiny any part in our actions. (Ed.)

⁵ In Said Nursi's thought, God created the universe as a "book" to be "read" by those who want to learn of and draw close to Him. He says that the universe (the created Qur'an), the Qur'an (the revealed universe), and humanity are three universal books making the Creator known to us. The universe's order, regularity, interconnectedness, functioning, and so on display God's Names and Attributes such as All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate, the All-Providing, the All-Knowing, the All-Willing, the All-Powerful and so on. (Ed.)⁴

of an All-Powerful One of Majesty, an All-Wise One of Perfection, Who owns the absolute power of the commanding words *Be! and it is*, has bound the moon to Earth and Earth to the sun with perfect wisdom and order. He has set the sun and its satellites on a course that moves, according to a theory, toward the sun of suns (the Vega star in the Lyra constellation) with a speed almost as great as that of Earth's revolution around the sun.

In addition, He has made the stars, which are like the electric lamps used on special occasions, as luminous evidences of His Lordship's sovereignty and His Power's greatness. Such a Power and Wisdom can make the major Hell function as the source of the "heat and fire" of the stars looking to the other world's heaven and to illuminate them with Paradise's light. He can make some sections of Hell a place of punishment and a dungeon for people who deserve it. In addition, the power of the Majestic, All-Wise Creator, who makes a thumbnail-size fruit-pit contain a tree, can make the minor Hell encapsulate the major one until an appointed time.

In conclusion, Paradise and Hell are two fruits growing on the tip of a branch extending from the Tree of Creation far into eternity, two opposite outcomes of the chain of being. The places of these outcomes are on opposite ends of the chain: the degraded one on the lower end, and the luminous sublime one on the upper end.

Paradise and Hell are two storerooms of the flow of worldly events and Earth's spiritual products. One storeroom is being filled with evil products and is located below, while its opposite is above. They are two pools receiving the flow of two streams, one carrying the wicked and foul while the other carries the good and pure. Paradise is the place where Divine Favor and Mercy manifest themselves, whereas Hell is the place where Divine Wrath and Awe are exhibited. The Gracious, All-Merciful One, the All-Powerful One of Majesty, manifests Himself (through His Names and Attributes), places His exhibitions, wherever He wills.

The existence of Paradise and Hell was proved in the Tenth and Twenty-ninth Words.⁶ We would like to add here only that the fruit's existence is as evident as the branch's existence, the result's as evident as the chain's, the storeroom's as evident as the product's, the pool's as evident of the stream's, and the Place of Manifestation's as evident as (Divine) Mercy's and Wrath's.

⁶ Said Nursi, *The Words*, The Light, Inc., 2005: New Jersey.

FOURTH QUESTION: Love for the opposite sex, called “figurative love” by Muslim saints and scholars, sometimes can become real love (love for the Creator). Can this happen with the love of the world?

ANSWER: The world has two faces; one mortal and transient, the other a mirror in which Divine Names are manifested and which is a field sown with seeds for the next life. If its lovers can turn away from its transient face to the other, such a love can change into love of God. But such lovers should not take their own particular, small, and perishable world for the whole vast outer world. If they forget themselves, become immersed in and fall in love with the external world, they, along with the misguided, will drown in the bog of nature worship—unless a hand miraculously comes to their aid.

Consider this analogy: Four of us are in a room with four walls, and each wall has a full-length mirror. This makes at least five rooms appear: one real and common to all of us, and “private” rooms reflected in each of our mirrors. Each of us can change our private room’s shape, appearance, and color by manipulating our own mirror. For example, we can make it green or red, by painting the mirror, or give it different shapes. But we cannot change the shared real room so easily. Although both private and common rooms appear to be almost identical, their disposition and manageability is quite different. You can destroy your reflected, private room with a finger, whereas you cannot even move a stone of the shared real one.

Likewise, the world is a decorated station in which each person’s life is a full-length mirror. In this station, each of us has a private world of which the pillar, center, or gate is our own life. Our private world can be compared to a page on which our deeds are recorded with the pen of our life. We love our private world, but inevitably realize that this world is built around our life and so, like our life, is transient, unstable, and perishable.

Given this, we should give our heart to the Divine Names’ manifestations and not to perishable things. Furthermore, we should know that our private world is assigned to us as a field in which to plant seeds to grow into our Paradise, and that we should love it for the sake of the fruits we will harvest in the other world. If we devote our love to the fruits of our deeds and the Divine manifestations, our love for the world will change into love for God. Otherwise, as stated in: *Be not as those who forgot God, and so He caused them to forget themselves; they are the ungodly* (59:19), we might drown in our

private world by forgetting ourselves and our private world's temporary nature, and so embrace our worldly life as if we and it would last forever.

Such a love for the world's transient face causes endless pain and suffering, for it engenders a pathetic compassion and despairing tender-heartedness. Sensitive lovers feel pity for all beings and, accordingly, their feelings are wounded by the perishing of all beautiful, mortal creatures. As they can do nothing for them, they suffer great hopelessness.

On the other hand, those who find God discover a remedy for the ailments caused by such feelings of compassion and tender-heartedness. Perceiving that the souls of all living beings, for whose perishing they feel such pity, are mirrors in which a Permanent Being's permanent Names are reflected constantly, their tender-heartedness changes into accepting joy and ease of mind. They understand that behind all the beautiful (but mortal and perishable) creatures is a pure grace and a sacred beauty manifested permanently through their delicate workmanship, ornamentation, and the wonder with which they are favored and illumined.

And so they understand how death and perishing are only processes of renewal to refresh and augment the beauty and pleasures and also to display the Divine artistry observed in the universe. Their pleasure in and appreciation of all Divine manifestations increases, as does their ardor.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Second Letter*

The Second Letter⁷

Why I refuse gifts

In His name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

 HIRD: YOU SENT ME A GIFT, AND THUS WILL CAUSE ME TO BREAK A very important principle. I do not mean that I will refuse your gift, as I refused that of my brother 'Abd al-Majid and my nephew 'Abd al-Rahman, for you are my brother-in-religion, more advanced in religion and in serving it, and more after my own heart. Therefore I accept your gift for the first and last time and explain why, as a rule, I do not accept gifts.

Earlier in my life (when I was the Old Said⁸), I avoided being put under obligation because I would rather be dead than indebted. I have not renounced this principle, although I have suffered great hardship and difficulty. I do not follow it from self-denial or to show independence of others, but for the following reasons:

FIRST REASON: Misguided people accuse Muslim scholars of using knowledge to earn money and claim that they exploit religion and religious knowledge to make a living. We must refute such allegations through our deeds.

⁷ This is part of a letter written to a disciple who had sent a gift. (Tr.)

⁸ "Old Said" refers to the period in Said Nursi's life from his birth until he adopted a different way of serving Islam by explaining the truths of belief and the Qur'an in the initial years of the 1920s. This latter part of his life passed in exiles and prisons, and he suffered great persecutions. In this period, he wholly devoted himself to preserving Islam through his writings and teaching. The "Third Said" emerged in 1950, after conditions had eased somewhat. From 1950-60, his works began to be printed and circulated among university students and intellectuals. (Ed.)

SECOND REASON: We must follow the Prophets when preaching the truth. As stated in such Qur'anic verses as: *My wage falls only upon God* (26:109, 127, 145, 164, 180), the Prophets did not depend upon people. This verse is particularly apt in the present context: *Follow those who ask no wage, that are rightly guided* (36:21).

THIRD REASON: As stated in The First Word, Muslims must give and receive in God's name. Unfortunately, this is no longer the practice. Givers either do not care about this basic principle, and so give for their own sake and tacitly put you under obligation, or receivers become grateful to apparent means and causes and not to God, the real Benefactor.

FOURTH REASON: Contentment, thrift, and trust in God are infinite treasures that cannot be exchanged for something else. I do not want to close the door to that treasure by receiving gifts from people. I am infinitely indebted to the Majestic All-Provider, since He has not placed me under obligation to others. I desire from His Mercy that I spend the rest of my life following the same principle and depend only on His munificence.

FIFTH REASON: The last few years have convinced me that my health and disposition do not allow me to receive gifts, particularly from rich people and officials. As the food they offer has a bad effect upon me, I think God wants me to avoid it. Besides, as I usually prefer solitude, I cannot admit anyone at just any time. If I accept gifts, I have to do it out of consideration even if I do not want to. This is very disagreeable to me. In addition, I prefer a piece of dry, stale bread and a robe with many patches, which keeps me away from pretence and sycophancy, to having to please others because of the high-quality sweets and clothes they present to me.

SIXTH REASON: The main reason is that Ibn al-Hajar, the most esteemed person in my school of conduct (*madhab 'amali*) says: "Something given to you for your supposed piety is religiously forbidden to you if you are not pious." Today, people's cupidity and avarice make them charge a high price for their gifts. Imagining me a pious man and even a saint, they give me a loaf of bread. Considering myself godly would be self-conceit and a proof of impiety. But if I do not know myself to be pious, then people's offerings are religiously forbidden to me.

Finally, to accept gifts means consuming in this world the permanent fruits belonging to the other world, since the alms and gifts accepted are given in return for deeds done for the Hereafter.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Third Letter*

The Third Letter⁹

- *A light from the Qur'an's eloquence*
- *Two points of belief*

In His Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

FIFTH: YOU WROTE THAT YOU WISHED TO SHARE MY FEELINGS. Here is just one of them: One night while in my little hut in a tall, wild pine tree, I looked at the sky bright with stars and discovered a sublime miracle of expression and a clear light from the supreme eloquence of the Qur'anic oath: *No! I swear by the planets that recede, go forth, and hide* (81:15-16). These two verses, which refer to moving stars' concealment and reappearance, draw one's attention to a magnificent work of Divine artistry and a marvelous scene for reflection.

Those planets sometimes enter the circle of the stationary planets, leaving the light-circle of the sun that "commands" them, and provide ever-renewed displays of Divine artistry. Sometimes they appear with another bright star like themselves and compose a beautiful scene. At other times, they enter among smaller ones and appear as their commanding officer. Venus after sunset, as well as one of its companions before dawn, present fine spectacles particularly at this time of year. After fulfilling their duties of "inspec-

⁹ An extract from the same letter as above. (Tr.)

tion” and serving as shuttles in weaving the works of Divine artistry, they re-enter the resplendent circle of the sun’s light and are concealed therein. Such a display demonstrates the majestic Lordship and splendid Sovereignty of the One Who conducts in perfect order all heavenly bodies and Earth like airplanes or ships in the universe’s sky.

Reflect on His Sovereignty’s might. Some of His airplanes and ships are 1,000 times larger than Earth, and yet move so fast that they can cover in a second the distance a person travels in 8 hours. Now you may understand what sublime happiness and how great an honor it is to devote yourself to such a magnificent Sovereign in sincere belief and worship, and to be His guest in this world.

I looked at the moon and discovered a bright light of miraculousness in: *And the moon—We have determined it by stations, till it returns like an aged palm-bough* (36:39). The moon’s determination and directing, as well as illumination and minutely calculated position in relation to Earth and the sun, are amazing miracles displaying the infinite power of Its Determiner and Positioner. The moon teaches its observers that everything is easy for the Owner of such power, Who can do whatever He wills.

By following the sun so strictly that it is never lost and always performs its task, the moon makes its observers say: “Glory be to Him Whose creation bewilders intelligence.” At certain times, such as the end of May when the moon enters the Pleiades as a crescent resembling a curved palm-bough and the Pleiades a cluster of dates, it leads one to imagine a huge, radiant tree behind the sky’s dark-colored veil, some of whose fruits (stars) and a bough (the moon) pierce that veil and show themselves with one of its clusters (the Pleiades). Behold this spectacle, and see the elegance and eloquence of the simile: *like an aged palm-bough*.

I recalled: *He made Earth submissive to you; therefore walk in its tracts* (26:109, 127, 145, 164, 180), which likens Earth to a meek ship. Inspired by this resemblance, I found myself on a large ship travelling rapidly in space, and recited: *Glory be to Him, who has subjected this to us, and we ourselves were not capable of subjecting it* (36:21), which the Prophet told us to recite whenever we mount an animal or ride in a vehicle.

I observed that the nature of its motion makes Earth resemble a movie’s projection, which firsts set the skies in motion and then mobilizes the stars as if they were a magnificent army. Such enchanting spectacles fill a reflec-

tive mind with admiration and amazement. “Glory be to God,” I said, “How amazing, wonderful affairs are conducted in such abundance yet at such little expense!” This led me to reflect on two points of belief.

FIRST: A visitor recently asked: Paradise and Hell are quite far from us. If the people of Paradise will fly across the Supreme Plain of Mustering into Paradise at the speed of lightning, how will the people of Hell, burdened down by their sins, reach Hell with their bulky bodies?

I replied: Imagine that all nations are invited to a meeting on the other side of Earth. Each nation would go there on a large ship of its own. Likewise Earth, used to high-speed travelling across the great “ocean” of the universe, will convey its inhabitants to the Supreme Plain of Mustering on Judgment Day. Besides, its center contains a fire of 200,000°C (mentioned in a Prophetic saying), given that heat increases by 1°C for every 33 meters toward the center and Earth’s radius is 6,000 kilometers. Some Traditions state that this fire fulfills some of Hell’s functions in this world and in the intermediate one, and that it will be discharged by Earth into Hell. After this, Earth will assume its permanent and far more beautiful form, and will be a station in the other world.

SECOND: The Almighty Creator, One and All-Wise, accomplishes many things out of a few and uses a little thing to perform many tasks so that His Power’s perfection, His Wisdom’s beauty, and His Oneness’ proofs are manifested. When the power to create is attributed to One Being, everything becomes so easy as to be virtually necessary. In contrast, attributing it to more than one maker and cause engenders such difficulties that everything becomes impossible. Consider this analogy: A commander (or a builder) easily achieves great feats by using many soldiers (or stones). But if the soldiers (or stones) had to do these activities themselves, the end result would be great confusion and difficulty.

In the same way, ascribing all celestial bodies’ movements and everything’s circulation, as well as seasonal, diurnal, and nocturnal alternations, to One God makes it easy to see that God, by moving a planet with one order, demonstrates amazing art in the succession of seasons, wisdom in the alternation of day and night, and charming scenes in the apparent movements of the stars, the sun, and the moon.

As the host of all beings, He gathers them like obedient soldiers in His army. He can make Earth, as insignificant as a private when compared to

other planets and galaxies, the commander of all stars and make the sun a lamp for its inhabitants. He weaves matchless scenes of beauty (pictures of His Power's works) by using the four seasons as a shuttle. He uses day and night (pages of the Book of Wisdom) to divide and measure time, and establishes lunar months by daily showing the moon in a different fashion. Further, He puts the stars as ornamented, elegant, charming, and shining lamps in the hands of angels whirling in ecstasy, thereby displaying vast wisdom in the relationship between Earth and the stars.

If all of these activities were not the work of a Being having absolute rule over all creation, then every day Earth, the moon, the sun, and all stars would have to perform a real, conscious movement in an endless circle and at an infinite speed.

Infinite ease in unity and in becoming one, and infinite hardship in multitude and division, cause artisans and traders to derive unity from multitude by forming corporations to facilitate their business. In sum, misguidance is a way of infinite hardship, while the way of unity and guidance is one of infinite ease.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Fourth Letter*

The Fourth Letter

*A ray from the manifestation of the
Divine Name the All-Wise*

In His Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

God's peace, mercy, and grace be upon
you and your brothers!

Dear Brothers,

 AM NOW IN MY HUT IN A TALL PINE TREE ON MT. CAMDAGI. Totally isolated from other people, I have become used to loneliness. Whenever I desire human company, I imagine you with me and console myself with an imaginary conversation with you. If possible, I would like to stay here for some months. When I return to Barla, we will try to have a face-to-face conversation, something that I have been longing for more than you. For the time being, I am writing a few points that have occurred to me.

FIRST: This is somewhat of a secret, but no secret remains unrevealed to you. It is as follows: Some people of truth are objects of the manifestation of the Divine Name the All-Loving. They look to the Necessarily Existent Being through the window of creation under that Name's manifestation in the highest degree. Your poor brother seems to have been made the object of the manifestations of the Divine Names the All-Compassionate

and All-Wise while serving the Qur'an as the herald of its infinite gems. All of The Words are manifestations of this Divine favor. I hope God has included The Words in the meaning of: *Whoever is given the Wisdom has been given much good* (2:269).

SECOND: Then I remembered the dictum about the Naqshbandi way's principles: In this way, one must renounce four things: the world, the Hereafter, "becoming," and the idea of renunciation. Remembering this brought another dictum to mind: In our way, depending on one's perception of his [or her] nothingness,¹⁰ four things are necessary: perception and admission of one's absolute poverty vis-à-vis the Divine Riches, of absolute helplessness vis-à-vis the Divine Power, of absolute gratitude or thankfulness to God, and of absolute enthusiasm in His cause.

Then I remembered your grand and colorful poem beginning with: "Look at the Book of the Universe's colorful page." Through that poem's window, I looked at the stars and wished I were a poet to complete it. I wrote down what occurred to me at that moment, although I have no talent for writing verse. As my successor, you can shape it into proper verse if you would like to. This is what suddenly came to me:

Listen to the stars and heed their beautiful sermons,
see what is written in these luminous missives of Wisdom.

All of them are jointly delivering this truthful discourse:

"Each of us is a radiant proof
for the glorious Sovereignty of
an All-Powerful One of Majesty.
We bear witness to the Maker's Existence,
and to His Unity and Power..."

¹⁰ The Qur'an declares: *I shall not allow to go to waste the deed of any doer among you, whether be a male or female: you are one from the other* (3:195). It is clear that Islam does not discriminate between men and women in religious responsibility. Each gender shares most of the responsibilities, but each one has certain responsibilities that are particular to it. The Qur'an usually uses the masculine form of address, for this is one of Arabic's characteristics. In almost every language, the masculine form is used for a group comprising both men and women, like the English word *mankind*, which includes both men and women. So, brotherhood also includes sisterhood, and, since the believers comprise both male and female believers, the believers are brothers and sisters. However, in order to maintain the original text and avoid repetition, usually we do not mention the feminine forms in translation. (Tr.)

We are His subtle miracles sending light to gild Earth's face
 and upon which the angels make excursions.
 We are the heavens' innumerable discerning eyes
 directed to Paradise and overseeing Earth.¹¹

We are the exquisite fruits
 attached to the Tree of Creation's heavenly branch;
 and to the Milky Way's twigs, attached by
 the All-Gracious One of Majesty's Hand of wisdom.
 For the heavens' inhabitants,
 we are travelling mosques,
 revolving houses and exalted homes,
 light-diffusing lamps, mighty ships, and planes.

We are miracles of the Power of the All-Powerful One of Perfection,
 the All-Wise One of Majesty,
 Each of us is a wonder of His creative art,
 a rarity of His Wisdom,
 A marvel of His creation, a world of light.

To the one who is truly human,
 We present countless proofs in countless tongues.
 The atheists' eyes, may they be blind, never sees our faces,
 Nor do their ears hear our speech.
 We are signs that speak the truth.
 On us is the same stamp and seal.

We obey and glorify our Lord,
 and mention Him in worship...
 We are ecstatic lovers in the Milky Way's widest circle,
 the circle reciting our Lord's Names.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

¹¹ It is as if the stars, the "eyes" of heavenly bodies, watch the intricate works of creation on Earth and then turn toward Paradise to observe their permanent forms, just as the angels observe the miracles of Divine Power exhibited on Earth, the land sown with the seeds of Paradise's flowers.

*The
Fifth Letter*

The Fifth Letter

The spiritual journey's final station

In His Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

 MAM RABBANI,¹² A “SUN” AND GREATEST MASTER OF THE NAQSHBANDI way, says in his *Letters*: “I would prefer to make one matter of belief known in plain terms than attain thousands of spiritual pleasures and ecstasies and work miracles. He also says: “The final station of all spiritual journeying is to attain the full perception of the truths of belief.”

Again, he says:

There are three kinds of sainthood: that known to everybody (minor), that of a medium degree, and that of major sainthood (the greatest one), which can be attained through direct succession to the Prophetic Message. This greatest one paves the way to the truth without entering the intermediate realm of spiritual orders.... One can progress in the Naqshbandi way by having a firm belief in the

¹² Imam Rabbani (Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi) (1564?-1624): Indian Sufi and theologian largely responsible for reasserting and reviving Sunni Islam in India against the syncretistic religious tendencies prevalent under the Mughal emperor Akbar. He was given the posthumous title: *Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thani* (Renovator of the Second [Islamic] Millennium). The Naqshbandi Sufi order, to which Imam Rabbani belonged, is found in India, China, Central Asia, Turkey, and Malaysia. (Ed.)

pillars of belief and performing the religious duties. Neglect of or deficiency in either makes this way impossible to follow.

This means that the Naqshbandi way encompasses three kinds of mission. The first and greatest is directly serving the truths of belief without mediating influences. Imam Rabbani entered into such service especially in the closing years of his life. The second is to try one's hardest to perform and promote the obligatory religious duties and the Sunna¹³ of the Prophet by following a spiritual order. The third is to follow a Sufi way in order to be purified of spiritual diseases. The first is obligatory, the second is necessary, and the third is supererogatory.

Given this, if such people as 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Shah Naqshband,¹⁴ and Imam Rabbani were alive today, they would preach and defend the truths of belief and the fundamentals of the Islamic creed, since one cannot otherwise attain eternal happiness. Any neglect of them results in eternal punishment. One cannot enter Paradise without belief, but many deserve Paradise without following a spiritual order. Following an order has the same use and importance as a fruit, whereas the truths of belief are the food essential to one's spiritual life. One can live without fruit, but not without bread.

In the past, one could attain only a few truths of belief by strict performance of an order's rituals for a certain period from 40 days to 40 years. But if God, through His Mercy, today has inspired a way so that people can attain these truths within 40 minutes, it is unreasonable to remain indifferent. Relying on God's Mercy, the *Risale-i Nur* is trying to establish such a

¹³ The Sunna is the record of the Messenger's every act, word, and confirmation, as well as the second source of Islamic legislation and life (the Qur'an is the first one). In addition to establishing new principles and rules, the Sunna clarifies the ambiguities in the Qur'an by expanding upon what is mentioned only briefly in it, specifies what is unconditional, and enables generalizations from what is specifically stated and particularizations from what is generally stated. (Ed.)

¹⁴ 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1077/78-1166): Traditional founder of the Qadiriyyah order of the Sufi branch of Islam. His achievement as a thinker was to have reconciled the "mystical" nature of the Sufi calling with the sober demands of Islamic law. His concept of Sufism was that of a holy war or jihad waged against one's own will in order to conquer egotism and worldliness and to submit to God's will. Shah Naqshband (d. 1384): Founder of the order at Bukhara, Turkistan, was called *an-naqshband*, "the painter," because of the impression of God that the repetition of his prescribed ritual prayer (*dhikr*) should leave upon the heart, and so his followers became known as Naqshbandiyah. The order has no mass support, for its litanies are subdued and emphasize repetition of the *dhikr* to oneself. (Ed.)

way. Today we are in desperate need of a most suitable remedy for our current spiritual diseases, a most useful light to illuminate the way of Islam attacked by many veils of darkness, and a most truthful guide in the valleys of misguidance.

If misguidance came only from unlettered ignorance, it would be easy to remove. But if it is caused by science and knowledge, it is very difficult to remove. This second type of misguidance was very rare in the past and almost impossible to cure, since those misguided through scientific knowledge were too arrogant to realize their ignorance. Today, in my judgment, God Almighty has favored us with sparks of spiritual light from the Qur'anic miracle as a remedy for modern atheism.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Sixth Letter*

The Sixth Letter

Belief relieves loneliness

In His Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

May God's peace, mercy, and grace be upon you and your brothers so long as days and nights continue, afternoons follow each other, the moon reappears after its complete disappearance, and the Farkadan (the two stars b and Ursae Minoris) coincide.

PERSEVERING BROTHERS, ZEALOUS FRIENDS, AND MEANS OF CONSOLATION for me in this world of separation and exile. As God Almighty enables you to share the meanings with which He has endowed me, you have a right to share my feelings as well. While I will not relate the unbearable afflictions arising from this exile, as that might drive you to extreme sorrow, I will write about my surrounding conditions.

I have been very lonely for the last 3 months. At most, a visitor drops by once every 15 or 20 days. Otherwise, I am alone. In addition, it has been 20 days since the mountaineers left the area. At this time of night in these forsaken mountains, silent and amidst the trees' sorrowful sounds, I find myself immersed in five sorts of loneliness, as follows:

FIRST: Being old, I am separated from most of my contemporaries, friends, and relatives who have gone to the Intermediate World (between this life and the next) and left me in a most wretched isolation. This loneliness makes me feel a second type of separation coming from the disappearance of most creatures with which I feel a connection, such as the past

spring. This loneliness arouses yet another feeling, that of separation caused by being far from my hometown and relatives. In addition to these, the mountains' dark nightscape makes me feel a fourth kind of separation.

Lastly, I have seen my soul in complete separation during its journey to eternity from this guest-house (the world). I exclaimed all of a sudden: "Glory be to God!" wondering how I could endure such separations. In the meantime, I felt my heart groan out this couplet:

O Lord, I am a stranger, I am lonely and weak,
impotent, old and ill, and I have no choices at all;
O God, I beg Your mercy, ask Your forgiveness,
and I cry for help from Your Throne of Grace!

At just that point belief's light, the Qur'an's effusive grace, and the All-Merciful's favor came to my aid and changed five kinds of separation into five circles of warm companionship. As I recited: *God is sufficient for us; an excellent Guardian is He* (3:173), my heart recited: *If they turn their backs, say: "God is enough for me. There is no god but He. In Him I have put my trust. He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne"* (9:129).

Also my soul, weeping and wailing in its fearful sorrow, was persuaded by my intellect, which told it:

O helpless one, give up wailing and trust God,
for this wailing is an error that causes trouble after trouble;
If you have found the One Who makes you suffer, this suffering
changes into a gift bringing peace and happiness.

So thank God instead of complaining, for nightingales
are always happy with the happiness of roses.
But if you do not find Him, the whole world is a
place of suffering, misfortune, and loss.

When you have so great a responsibility
(as to be able to be an approved servant of God and gain eternal life),
why are you wailing over an insignificant misfortune?
Come, put your trust in God and smile at the face of misfortune
so that it may also smile, for as it smiles, it lessens and changes.

Then, like Mawlana Jalal al-Din,¹⁵ I said to myself:

¹⁵ Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, also known as Mawlana (1207-73): The greatest Sufi master and poet in the Persian language, famous for his lyrics and for his didactic epic *Masnavi-ye Ma'navi* ("Spiritual Couplets"), which widely influenced Muslim Sufi thought and

He asked: “Am I not (your Lord)?”
and you responded: “Yes!”

How can one thank Him for that “yes”?
By suffering misfortune!
What is the mystery of that “yes”?
That you say: “I am a slave in chains in the
abode of poverty and perishing.”

Upon this, my soul conceded that people can open the door to light by understanding their helplessness and poverty before God’s Power and Riches, and by trusting and seeking refuge in Him. It therefore praised and thanked God for the light of belief and submission. I came to understand how sublime a truth is contained in this couplet in Ata’ullah Iskandarani’s *The Wise Sayings*:

What has he found who has lost God?
And what has he lost who has found God?

This allowed me to grasp the inner meaning of the Prophetic Tradition: “Good tidings await those who are estranged by others (because of their Islamic beliefs and lifestyle).”

Although my loneliness and feelings of separation were removed by the light of belief, they nevertheless left a strong impression on my spirit. They drove me to ask myself if my duty in this guest-house of the world has ended, as this world is only a station on my way to eternity, so that I may delegate that duty to you and *The Words*. That is why I asked you whether *The Words* were enough to remove all doubt concerning the truths of belief, so that I could forget the world and, saying as Mawlana Jalal al-Din said:

Do you know what *sama'* (whirling in ecstasy) is?
It is to become unconscious of self-existence.
And to enjoy permanence in the self’s absolute annihilation.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

literature. After Rumi’s death, his disciples were organized as the Mawlawiyah order, called in the West the Whirling Dervishes. (Ed.)

*The
Seventh Letter*

The Seventh Letter

The Prophet's marriage to Zaynab

In His Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

Peace and God's mercy and grace be upon you forever.

Dear Brothers,



WAS INFORMED THAT YOU TOLD HAFIZ OF DAMASCUS TO REPORT two things to me: First, that today's misguided people, like the past's hypocrites, claim that the Prophet married Zaynab bint Jahsh to satisfy his carnal desires.

ANSWER: This allegation is completely false and never has—or will have—any effect on his pure personality and chastity. History records and his contemporaries, whether friend or foe, testify that he was monogamous and happily married to Khadija, a widow several years his senior, and engaged in no misconduct or impurity for 25 years, at which time he was 50 years old. As we know, men between the ages of 25 and 50 burn with lust and carnal desire. This shows that his marriages after the age of 50, when desire has subsided, were made for important purposes. One purpose is explained below.

The Messenger's actions and norms of conduct constitute, like his sayings, the second source of Islamic law and constitution. His Com-

panions¹⁶ inherited and transmitted whatever they observed while he was living among them, while his wives narrated and conveyed the rules and norms of personal and family life. This heavy responsibility required that he should have wives of different temperaments, upbringing, and character. Almost half of the religious subtle truths and rules were narrated by these women, known as the Pure Wives.

His marriage to Zaynab is explained in: *Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the Messenger of God and the seal of the Prophets* (33:40). Like all other Qur'anic verses, this one addresses all levels of understanding. What it means to some is as follows:

Zayd, the Messenger's emancipated slave and servant who he called "my son," admitted that he was spiritually inferior to his wife Zaynab.¹⁷ Realizing that her sublime character made her fit to a Prophet's wife, he eventually was allowed to divorce her. As stated in: *We gave her in marriage to you* (33:37), the Prophet then obeyed God's decree that he marry her, although this broke an established social tradition of the time. In sum, this marriage was ordained in heaven and had nothing to do with any alleged carnal desire.

As indicated by: *We gave her in marriage to you, so that there might be no sin and trouble for believers in respect of wives of their adopted sons* (33:37), this verse contains an important piece of legislation that benefits the community. If elders or leaders address their subjects, or Prophets address members of their community, as "sons," this is due to their rank, position, and mission, not because they are their subjects' real fathers. Nor is it like a husband telling his wife: "You are like my mother's back," a statement which makes his wife forbidden to him unless he pays the required fee. So the daughters or widows or former wives of Muslims are not forbidden to the Prophet.¹⁸

¹⁶ The Companions: Those who gathered around the Prophet to receive instruction and follow his example as closely as possible. They are considered the Muslim nation's elite and vanguard and are given the highest respect and admiration. (Tr.)

¹⁷ The Prophet had requested Zayd and Zaynab to get married to show that people should not judge others by their color or social status: Zayd was a black ex-slave, whereas Zaynab was a noble-born Arab woman. (Ed.)

¹⁸ One purpose of this Divine Decree was to abolish the mistaken pre-Islamic practice of allowing adopted and foster children to enjoy the same legal status as biological children. Thus, for example, a man could not legally marry his adopted son's widow or former wife. This practice was ended because no relationship can compare with that of being a child's natural parents. Nor are such declarations comparable to a husband's telling his wife:

As explained above, verse 33:40 shows that people with different levels of understanding can draw this implication: Those of superior rank and responsibility feel a fatherly affection toward those who work under them. If they are spiritual leaders, Prophets, or saints, for example, their compassion and affection will far exceed that of a father. As the people will see them as a father, they may consider it improper for such people to marry one of their women. To remove this illusion, the Qur'an tells us that: "Divine Mercy causes the Prophet to have great affection for you. Due to his position as your leader, you are like his children. But as he is not your biological father, he can marry one of your women. His calling you 'my sons' does not mean you are legally his sons."

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

"You are as my mother's back," which has legal implications but does not legally make his wife his mother: God has not made your wives to whom you say: "You are as my mother's back" your mothers, nor has He made those whom you call "my son" your sons. This is only a saying of your mouth. But God says the truth and guides on the way (33:4). This separation of "legal" fiction from natural reality benefited the entire community. As the Messenger, Muhammad was obliged to establish this new law and custom. (Tr.)

*The
Eighth Letter*

The Eighth Letter

A glimpse of the Divine Names the All-Merciful and the All-Compassionate

In His Name, Glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

 HERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY THE DIVINE NAMES THE ALL-MERCIFUL and the All-Compassionate are included in the *basmalah* (In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate) said at the outset of every good deed and intention. I hope to explain some of them later. For now, I will talk about one impression they make upon me:

These two greatest Divine Names seem to own a light so comprehensive and splendid that it envelops the universe, satisfies everyone's needs forever, and secures them against all hostility. They can enlighten people if they grasp their poverty and helplessness vis-à-vis God's Riches and Power and, in return, thank Him for His limitless Compassion and Mercy. This is the way of sincere devotion to God and humility.

On this point I would like to emphasize, in opposition to some researchers, people of discernment and even Imam Rabbani, whom I consider my master in most subjects, that what Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) deeply felt for his son Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) was affection, not love. Affection is keener, purer, and more sublime than love, and thus more suited to Prophet-

hood's exalted rank. Love seems unsuitable, in my opinion, particularly when deeply felt for mortal beings.

Thus Prophet Jacob felt deep affection, so wonderfully expressed in the Qur'an, for Joseph. Moreover, affection enables one to manifest the Divine Name the All-Compassionate. Love can make one manifest the Divine Name the All-Loving when directed to the real Beloved One. This is how Zulayha, wife of the 'Aziz of Egypt (Potiphar in the Bible), felt for Joseph. Compared with love, affection is so much more sublime and profound that the Qur'an regards Jacob's feelings as being more exalted than Zulayha's.

Imam Rabbani, understanding that Prophets feel no love for mortal beings, opined that Jacob's love for Joseph was not a flaw, for he loved Joseph's spiritual beauty and not his mortal person. However, Imam Rabbani ran into trouble when interpreting it. In reality, Jacob's affection for Joseph is far brighter, purer, and more sublime than love. Indeed, affection is graceful and deeply felt, whereas in most cases love is not something to which we should lower ourselves.

In addition, affection is so comprehensive that people's affection for their own children makes them feel some affection for all children and all living beings. They can become comprehensive mirrors in which the Divine Name the All-Compassionate manifests Itself, whereas love is restricted to the beloved and causes lovers to diminish others in order to prefer their beloveds. For example, a lover is reported to have said: "The sun feels ashamed because of my beloved's beauty and veils itself behind the cloud so it cannot be seen." What gives this lover the right to have the sun, which so brightly manifests eight of God's Great Names, to feel ashamed?

Also, affection is a sincere feeling with no ulterior motive and seeking no return, while love demands repayment. The tears caused by love demand such a return, while even the lowest type of sincere affection (such as that felt by animals for their young) proves that affection does not demand any return. Jacob's affection for Joseph, the finest aspect of *Sura Yusuf*, directs us to the Divine Names the All-Merciful and the All-Compassionate and shows that the way of affection leads to Divine Compassion. The remedy for the ailments of affection is the truth expressed in: *God is the best guardian, and He is the Most Merciful of the Merciful* (12:64).

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Ninth Letter*

*The Ninth Letter*¹⁹

- *Working miracles and Divine gifts*
- *Orientation of human inclinations*
- *Iman (belief–conviction) and Islam*

In His name, Glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify with His praise.

 ECOND: I CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR ZEAL AND SUCCESS IN spreading the Qur'anic truths. This is more of a Divine gift or Divine assistance to you, or a miracle of the Qur'an itself. Thinking it is time to talk about Divine gift and wonders worked through the agency of saints, I will mention one difference between the two:

Wonder-working should be publicized only if it cannot be avoided. However, declaring a Divine gift is approved of because it publicizes the favors received from God. God may be leading certain people in the first group to gradual perdition through wonder-working, for they attribute the wonders with which God favors them to themselves and so feel proud. But if people are honored with wonder-working by God, attribute it to Him, and have greater belief and trust in Him, it is harmless. They should not publicize or demonstrate it willfully to boast of it.

¹⁹ This is a part of the letter written to the same sincere disciple, [to whom the Seventh Letter may have been sent.] (Tr.)

A Divine gift is a mode of Divine guidance and assistance. It is harmless and is more sublime than a wonder-working, which can lead one to perdition. Thus it can be declared a Divine favor, since it cannot be regarded as one's possession. This is why, my brother, that sometimes my public words about Divine guidance and assistance we receive in serving the Qur'an is a way of declaring God's favor to us. And this is also why I sometimes write to you about our successes in this sacred service, since I know it makes you more thankful.

THIRD: Those who regard this world as a military guest-house and live accordingly are the happiest of all people. They can rise to the rank of being approved and loved by God, the highest spiritual rank, and do not sell something of the greatest value for almost nothing. Such people live happy lives on the straight path and do not deviate.

Worldly affairs and things are almost as worthless and brittle as glass, while those belonging to the Hereafter are as valuable as diamonds and impossible to break. All human instincts, such as curiosity and love, passion and desire, are implanted in people to help them earn a happy life in the Hereafter. If one exploits them for the sake of this life, they only buy brittle glass at the price of diamonds.

On this subject, I would like to emphasize one point: Love is a very strong emotion. Feeling it for mortal beings either throws lovers into endless pain and sorrow or, since mortal beings are not worth so sincere a love, leads lovers toward seeking the Permanent Beloved One. In the latter case, it becomes real love.

Each of a person's thousands of feelings has two aspects: figurative and real. For example, everyone worries about the future even though they have no guarantee that they will be alive tomorrow. Then, they realize that they will die only at their appointed time. As a result, they stop worrying about their uncertain future here and focus on their eternal future beginning with death. That is a future worth worrying about, especially for those who do not heed the Divine commandments.

In the same way, people feel great passion for wealth and position. But they soon understand that wealth, fame, and position are not worth it, for such things may remove their dignity, reveal such degrading attitudes as show and hypocrisy, or cause them to bow and humble themselves before others. But above all, these things are temporary. In the end, such people incline

toward the spiritual ranks and nearness to God and busy themselves with good deeds so that they will have provisions for their eternal life. Their inordinate ambition to acquire transient things thus changes into acquiring what is eternal.

People's excessive inclination toward insignificant, transient things can be obstinate. But if they eventually realize that this obstinate attachment is of no benefit, such obstinacy can become persistence for belief's truths or Islam's fundamentals, as well as for striving for the next life.

If people exploit their spiritual faculties to satisfy their sensual and worldly desires and live in this world as if they will stay here forever, those faculties will lead to immoral qualities and cause much waste. But if people use them to prosper in the Hereafter, without neglecting life's essential needs, these faculties will lead to laudable moral qualities and happiness in either world in accordance with wisdom and truth.

One reason why preachers' advice is ineffective nowadays is that they invite people to change their nature. They advise: "Do not be envious or ambitious, do not feel enmity or be obstinate, do not love the world," and so on. Such advice is useless, for it is against human nature. Instead, these energies can and should be channeled into good deeds and directed toward positive aims. For example, love for the world can be channeled into love for the other world, enmity can be directed against one's carnal self, and envy can become a means for competing to do good deeds.

FOURTH: Muslim scholars have discussed at length whether Islam and *iman* (belief–conviction) are different. Some say they are the same and others say they are different, although one is not acceptable without the other. I see a difference between them, as follows: Islam is choosing a side, while *iman* means affirming with certainty.

In other words Islam, or being a *muslim*, means siding with, submitting to, and obeying the truth. *Iman*, or being a believer (*mu'min*), means confirming and confessing the truth of Islam. I know some people who strongly advocate the Qur'an's commandments even though they are not believers. Such people may be considered *muslim* in the literal sense (of those who surrender) because they observe some of Islam's elements without believing in all of them. Some believers cannot be considered *muslim*, for they do not pay much attention to the Qur'an's commandments or try to obey them.

QUESTION: Is belief without Islam or being a Muslim—without obedience and practice in daily life—enough for one to prosper in the other world?

ANSWER: Those who live according to the Qur'an's commandments but without belief, and believers who do not apply the Divine commandments in their lives, will not prosper in the other world. The proofs of Islam, as numerous as all particles in creation and as strong as the chain of beings, and the truths of the Qur'an and belief are expounded so clearly in the *Risale-i Nur* that they provide the reader with firm belief and submission.

Whenever I recite in the daily rite of Shah Naqshband, after confessing my belief: "We live with this confession, and we die with it, and tomorrow we will be resurrected with it," I feel that I would not give up even one truth of belief, even if the whole world were offered to me. It is unbearable for me to think any thought contrary to one truth of belief, even for a second. If the whole world were my private property, even my carnal self would not oppose sacrificing it in return for establishing one truth of belief.

I feel a very firm belief in my heart when I recite: "We believe in all the Prophets You raised up, and we believe in all the Scriptures You sent down, and we confirm them all." I consider it impossible to think or believe otherwise, and consider misguided people as infinitely stupid and foolish.

I send my greetings and present my respects to your parents. I ask them to pray for me. They are like my own parents, as you are my brother in religion. I also send my greetings to everyone in your village, particularly to those who hear you read *The Words*.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Tenth Letter*

The Tenth Letter

- *The Manifest Record and the Manifest Book*
- *The Supreme Plain of Mustering*

In his Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

(This consists of the answers given to two questions.)

IRST: THE QUR'AN MENTIONS THE MANIFEST RECORD (*IMAMUN Mubin*) and the Manifest Book (*Kitabun Mubin*) several times. Some Qur'anic interpreters maintain that they are the same thing, while others say they have different meaning and connotations. Although explanations of their true content and meaning differ, all agree that both phrases describe Divine Knowledge. Through the Qur'an's enlightenment, I have the following conviction:

The Manifest Record, which relates to the Unseen world, describes one aspect of Divine Knowledge and commands. It relates to the past and the future, not the present. This notebook of Divine Destiny contains the origin, roots, and seeds of things rather than their flourishing forms in visible existence.

The origins, roots, and seeds, from which God grows things with perfect order and artistry, show that they are arranged according to a notebook of principles contained in Divine Knowledge. The seeds and fruits, which

contain the indexes and programs of beings that will come into existence, indicate that they are miniature registers of Divine commands. For example, a seed is the program and index for forming a tree, as well as a miniature embodiment of the Divine principles causing the tree to come into existence and determine this program and index.

In short, the Manifest Record can be understood as the index and program of the Tree of Creation, which spreads its branches through past and future time, and through the Unseen world. In this sense, it is a ledger of Divine Destiny or a register of its principles. Particles are used and managed to bring things into existence through the dictates and requirements of these principles.

The Manifest Book relates to the visible or observable world, and thus more to the present than to the past and future. It is a book or a description of God's Power and Will, rather than of His Knowledge and commands. If the Manifest Record is the Divine Destiny's notebook, the Manifest Book is the Divine Power's notebook. In other words, all things display perfect art and orderliness through their existence and essence, attributes and functions. This proves that everything is given existence according to an effective Will's laws and an absolute Power's principles, that it is formed specifically and given an appointed measure and particular shape. Thus Divine Power and Will have a universal, comprehensive register of laws, a great notebook, according to which a particular form and substance for each thing is determined.

Neglectful people, who follow misguidance and philosophy, surprisingly call this "nature," thereby making it quite meaningless even though they have felt the existence of God's Supreme Preserved Tablet (*Lawhun Mahfuz*) and seen the manifestations and reflections of that perspicaciously written book of Divine Wisdom and Will. However, through the Manifest Record's dictates (namely, Divine Destiny's decree and instruction), Divine Power uses particles to create or write the chain of beings, each link of which is a sign in the creation of things, on the metaphorical page of time (the Tablet of Effacement and Reaffirmation [*Lawh Mahw wa Ithbat*]).

Thus particles move because of that writing's vibration and motion, which occurs while beings pass from the Unseen world to the manifest (material) world, from Knowledge to Power. The Tablet of Effacement and Reaffirmation is a slate for writing and erasing, an ever-changing notebook

of the fixed and constant Supreme Preserved Tablet, and this latter Tablet's notebook in the sphere of contingencies, where all things are unceasing manifestations of life and death, existence and ephemerality. This is the reality of time. What we call time, a mighty river flowing in creation, has a reality like everything else. Its reality is like the ink and pages of the writing of Power on the Tablet of Effacement and Reaffirmation. Only God knows the Unseen.

SECOND QUESTION: Where is the Supreme Plain of Mustering?

ANSWER: True knowledge of everything is with God. The sublime wisdom displayed by the Wise Creator in everything (by attaching great wisdom to a small thing) also is manifested in Earth's revolution. It does not revolve aimlessly, but draws the periphery of a huge circle into which, through its revolution, it continually empties the outcomes of all events occurring within it. On the Day of Judgment, each person will see his or her life's outcome.

According to a Prophetic Tradition, this huge circle will be centered on the area of Damascus, but in its expanded form and according to the Hereafter's dimensions and features. All outcomes are continually transferred to the Supreme Plain of Mustering's registers or tablets. This plain, now behind the veil of the Unseen, will be visible on the Day of Judgment, and Earth's inhabitants will see it in their new Hereafter forms.

At the end of time, Earth, which is a field (of seeds to grow and be harvested for the Mustering), a stream (carrying our deeds), a measure of grain, a bushel (measuring and emptying the outcome of our deeds), will have produced enough material to fill up the Supreme Plain of Mustering. Earth functions like a seed from which this plain will grow, like a tree, with all its contents. Just as rapidly spinning a radiant dot produces a radiant circle, the rapid and purposeful movement of Earth, a small dot when compared to the universe, as well as its life's outcome will be used to form the Supreme Plain of Mustering. Say: True knowledge is with God.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Eleventh Letter*

The Eleventh Letter

- *Involuntary thoughts and fancies*
- *The superiority of Qur'anic commandments over modern civil laws*

In His Name.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

(This letter, which relates to the four gems from the treasuries of four Qur'anic verses, cures some spiritual illnesses.)

Dear Brother,

 HE QUR'AN TAUGHT ME THE FOLLOWING FOUR MATTERS. I AM writing about them for those who would like some knowledge of them. This letter relates to four gems from the treasury of truths contained in four Qur'anic verses, each of which has a different form and use.

FIRST MATTER: *Satan's guile is ever feeble* (4:76).

О my soul that suffers unease due to involuntary thoughts and fancies! Most of these things are involuntary. If they are good, they may have some positive effect on people and reflect in their conscience, just as a mirror reflects the sun's heat and light. They do not penetrate into one's soul if they are evil, just as a reflection of something foul is not foul and a reflected snake does not bite.

Thus conceiving of unbelief is not unbelief, just as imagining cursing is not really cursing. In particular, unintentional thoughts, fancies, and suppositions are harmless. According to the Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a (the people of truth),²⁰ something is ugly or vile and a sin only if forbidden by God. As involuntary thoughts are not included in Divine prohibitions, they are neither vile nor foul, regardless of how foul their reflections may be.

SECOND MATTER: This was inspired by pine, wild pine, and poplar trees on Barla's plateau. It can be found in The Seventeenth Word's Addendum.²¹

THIRD MATTER: This and the following section present two examples of the Qur'anic commandments' superiority over modern civil law. For example, the Qur'an decrees that men, (in certain circumstances,) shall inherit twice as much as women (4:11). This is perfectly just and a perfect mercy for women. It is just because, in most cases and according to Islamic law, the husband provides for his wife and children, whereas the wife has no legal obligation to provide for her husband or herself. Thus she is compensated for inheriting half of what a man inherits.

It is a perfect mercy because a girl is delicate, vulnerable, and thus held in great affection by her father who, thanks to the Qur'anic injunction, does not see her as someone who will cause him a loss by carrying half of his wealth to others. In addition, her brothers feel compassion for and protect her without envy, for they do not see her as a rival when dividing the family's possessions. Thus the affection and compassion she enjoys throughout her family compensates for her apparent loss in inheritance.

It is a great injustice to give her more than her due share out of unrealistic compassion—unrealistic because no one is more compassionate than God. If the Qur'anic bounds are exceeded, women may become vulnerable to family members' exploitation and tyranny, especially considering the modern era's barbaric selfishness, which can be as bad as the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance's tyranny, when infant girls were buried alive. All Qur'anic injunctions, like those pertaining to inheritance, prove the truth of: *We sent you (O Muhammad) as a mercy to all beings* (21:107).

FOURTH MATTER: Modern civilization, which is essentially a system of injustices (in most cases) because it lacks real human values, wrongs mothers more than girls by depriving them of their rights. Being the purest and

²⁰ The broad majority of Muslims. Also known as Sunnis. (Ed.)

²¹ Said Nursi, *The Words*.

finest reflection of Divine Compassion, a mother's affection is creation's most revered reality. A mother is so compassionate, self-sacrificing, and intimate a friend that she sacrifices everything, even her life, for her children. A timid hen, whose motherliness represents the lowest level, will attack a dog to protect her chicks.

Thus the truly human, unlike those who appear human but are bestial in essence, consider it a great injustice and shameful disrespect, a heart-rending ingratitude and harmful poison for social life, to deprive such a respected, dear being of her rightful share of her son's wealth. The Qur'anic verse: *And to his mother a sixth* (4:11), accords perfectly with justice and universal truth.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Twelfth Letter*

The Twelfth Letter

- *Why Adam was sent out of Paradise*
- *Why Satan was created*
- *Why God afflicts the innocent with misfortune*

In His Name, Glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

Peace be upon you and your friends.

Dear Brothers,

 THAT NIGHT YOU ASKED ME THREE QUESTIONS, BUT I DID NOT answer because you discussed them in an improperly disputatious way. Matters of belief cannot be a subject of dispute. Now, I write brief answers to those questions. You can find detailed answers in *The Words*—I indicated which ones to our brother the pharmacist. But I forgot to mention The Twenty-sixth Word, which is about Divine Destiny and human free will. Read it as well, but not as you would a newspaper. I want him to study these Words, because doubt in some matters of religion are due to weak belief in the pillars of belief, and those Words prove those pillars decisively.

YOUR FIRST QUESTION: Why was Adam sent out of Paradise, and why will some people be thrown into Hell?

ANSWER: Humanity has a unique duty in the universe. Adam was sent to Earth with so sublime a duty that humanity was made the object of an infinite spiritual evolution, a comprehensive mirror in which all Divine Names are reflected. This duty enabled humanity to develop its full potential. If Adam had stayed in Heaven, his rank would have been fixed and humanity's full potential would not have developed. Humanity was not created to worship God in the manner of angels, whose worship does not cause them to evolve spiritually. Divine Wisdom must have required a different world in which humanity could attain the highest ranks and fully develop its potential. This is why Adam was sent to Earth after he lapsed, which, in fact, was what fulfilling human nature requires.

As this expulsion was a mercy for humanity and in complete accord with wisdom, it is absolutely right and just to throw unbelievers into Hell. At first, it might seem improper for wisdom and justice to condemn unbelievers to eternal punishment because of their unbelief during their short lives here. But in reality it is fully just and right that the All-Overwhelming One of Majesty puts them in Hell forever, for unbelief insults and degrades creation and denies and contradicts all creatures' witnessing to God's Oneness. Moreover, it falsifies God's Beautiful Names, which are reflected continually in the mirrors of all living and non-living things. Therefore unbelief is an infinitely great crime, and God will call unbelievers to account and punish them for treating creation so unjustly.²²

YOUR SECOND QUESTION: Why was Satan created? Why does evil exist, when creating evil is itself an evil, and creating ugliness is ugly?

²² In other works, Said Nursi presents additional arguments for God's condemning unbelievers to eternal punishment, such as: Unbelief is destruction and negation. A palace that took hundreds of workers years to build can be destroyed by one person striking a match. Imagine a garden with flowers and trees on which birds sing and in which animals live. They all subsist on the water reaching them through canals, which has been entrusted to one person. What kind of sentence should this person receive if he or she neglects his or her duty to irrigate the garden by letting the water flow, and so causes all of the garden's inhabitants to die? Unbelief is equivalent to this, but on a far larger scale—that of creation itself.

In addition, unbelievers who deserve eternal punishment would not have abandoned their unbelief even if they were to live on Earth forever. In that sense and because of such people's intention, unbelief is infinite and not restricted to their short life here. As warnings make no difference to such unbelievers, God seals their hearts and hearing, and covers their eyes. These people's arrogance, sinfulness, and intention to pursue unbelief forever cause them to lose the ability to believe. (Tr.)

ANSWER: Creating or conferring existence on evil is not an evil, for people have free will. God gives objective existence to our willed actions. People will and do something, and God creates it. And so it is our own willing and doing of evil that is evil and ugly, not God's giving objective existence to it. If God did not create what we will and do, our free will would be annulled.

Also, God's creation involves the universe, not just one act, and should be evaluated on results and not only on the acts themselves. For example, rain produces many results, almost all of which are beneficial. If some people are harmed due to water's misuse, they cannot argue that rain's creation is anything but a grace. Fire also has many benefits. If some people are harmed by it through their own ill-will and misuse, they cannot claim that fire's creation is something other than wholly good. As fire was not created to burn one's hand, those who accidentally burn their hands have no right to conclude that creating fire is evil.

In short, a lesser evil is not resisted for the sake of a greater good. If people do not agree to endure a lesser evil in return for a much greater good, they will suffer a greater evil. For example, people may not want to fight for Islam since doing so endangers their lives and possessions. But such a holy fight has great benefits: Muslims are saved from invasion and Islam continues to bless them in both worlds. If Muslims renounce such a fight on the pretext of suffering loss, they will experience even greater loss. A gangrenous finger must be amputated, although it seems an evil, or else one day the whole hand will have to be cut off (an even greater evil).

Thus it is not an evil that God created and creates devils and apparently evil and disastrous acts, for they produce good and important results. For example, angels do not rise to the higher spiritual ranks because devils cannot tempt them into deviation. Animals have fixed stations, and so cannot rise to higher stations or fall to lower ones. But human beings can acquire endless ranks or stations, all the way from the top to the bottom. There is an infinitely long line of spiritual evolution between the ranks of the greatest Prophets and saints and such people as Pharaoh and Nimrod.

Thus this world is the field, and this life the term, in which people are tested so that elevated diamond-like spirits may be distinguished from base coal-like ones. This is why devils were created and Prophets were sent with Divine commandments. Without such testing, good and evil could not be

distinguished and would be treated equally: The spirit of Abu Bakr, who rose to the highest level after the Prophets, would remain at the same level as that of Abu Jahl, who fell to the lowest level.²³ Thus the creation of devils and evil is wholly good, for they cause good and universal results to be achieved. Those who suffer because of them do so because of their own weakness, misuse of their free will, or some external circumstances that they caused to appear. As a result, all evil and misfortune that happen to people lie in themselves, not in God's creation of them.

IF YOU ASK: As sending Prophets has caused many or even most people to become unbelievers because of Satan's seduction, how can you say that creating evil things and acts is good, that raising Prophets is a mercy for humanity?

ANSWER: As quality is always far more important than quantity, we should consider only qualitative values in making our judgment. To cite an example: 100 date-stones are worth only 100 cents until they are planted and grow into palm trees. But if only 20 grow into trees and the remaining 80 rot because of over-watering, how can you say it is an evil to plant and water them? Everyone would agree that it is wholly good to have 20 trees at the expense of 80 date-stones, since 20 trees will give 20,000 date-stones. Again, 100 peacock eggs are worth maybe 500 cents. But if she sits on the eggs and only 20 hatch, who can say it is an evil that 80 eggs were spoiled in return for 20 peacocks? On the contrary, it is wholly good to have 20 peacocks at the expense of 80 eggs, because the 20 peacocks will be worth far more than the eggs and will lay more eggs.

And so it is with humanity. Our being raised up by Prophets, as well as our fight against Satan and our carnal self, result in the loss of animal-like people, unbelievers, and hypocrites (more in number but poorer in quality) in exchange for hundreds of thousands of Prophets, millions of saints, and billions of people of wisdom and sincerity—the suns, moons, and stars of the human world.

YOUR THIRD QUESTION: Is it just for God to afflict innocent people and animals with misfortune and suffering?

²³ Abu Bakr (d. 634): One of the first Muslims, the Prophet's companion during his migration to Medina, and the first caliph after the Prophet's death; Abu Jahl (lit. Father of Ignorance): One of the Prophet's main opponents who fought him at every turn. He was killed during the Battle of Badr (624). (Ed.)

ANSWER: No injustice can be attributed to Him, for He owns all of creation and so can do with it as He wills. Consider this analogy: A skillful clothes designer pays you to serve as a model to display his artistry. He fashions the jeweled garment he has made you wear as he wills, and tells you to sit and stand. How can you say: "You cause me trouble by making me sit and stand. Also, you have damaged this cloth that makes me look beautiful." Such objections would be sheer impertinence.

God, the Majestic Creator, dresses you in an artistically fashioned garment (e.g., the body, jeweled with eyes, ears, a nose, and a tongue, etc.). To show His Beautiful Names' works, He makes you ill, hungry, and thirsty, and afflicts you with misfortune. He exposes you to various conditions so that you may be perfected and His Beautiful Names may be manifested. Given this, your objection will cause many instances of wisdom to silence you.

Monotony and inertia are a kind of non-existence, while activity and alteration mature life through suffering and misfortune. Life grows stronger and purer and develops fully through the Divine Beautiful Names' operation. Ultimately, life becomes the pen with which people determine and write their own fate. Thus they fully deserve their reward (or punishment) in the Afterlife.

This is my brief answer to your three questions over which you disputed.

My dear brother, read this letter to the pharmacist and to those who were present during the disputation whom you think should hear it. Give my greetings to my disciple the pharmacist, and tell him that it is not permitted in religion to dispute in public such subtle matters of belief as mentioned above. Such disputes, having no basis in any established sense of proportion and balance of judgment, damage Islam and harm the participants and audience. Such matters should be discussed soberly and to exchange views.

Please tell him that he should write to me about any doubts he may have about such matters. His dream about his deceased father can be interpreted as follows: His father, who was a doctor, God's mercy be upon him, must have done much good to many godly persons by curing them, and the souls of those persons, who welcomed him, showed themselves to his son as birds when his father died.

I pray to God for all friends who were present here that night, and greet them.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Thirteenth and Sixteenth
Letters*

*The Thirteenth and Sixteenth Letters*²⁴

Indifference to politics and other personal matters

In His Name.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

Peace be upon those who follow true guidance, and reproach and disgrace upon those who follow their own whims and fancies!

My dear brother,

 YOU ASK ABOUT MY HEALTH AND CONDITION, WANT TO KNOW WHY I do not apply to the government for the certificate (I once was given to preach in mosques), and wonder why I am so indifferent to politics. Since I am frequently bothered with such questions, I feel I must explain myself. In doing so, I allow myself some harsh language to defend my friends and *The Words* from the groundless anxieties and troublesome treatment of worldly people.

YOUR FIRST QUESTION: How are you? How are things going?

ANSWER: Infinite thanks to God, Most Merciful of the Merciful, Who has changed all the injustice directed toward me by misguided, worldly peo-

²⁴ Rather than dealing with the main topics that Said Nursi discusses in his works, these two letters concern his answers to questions asked to him about the persecution he had to endure and certain political issues that he ignored. Thus, we have chosen to summarize them in a single letter. (Tr.)

ple into a mercy for me. When they unjustly exiled me to Barla, I had abandoned politics and secluded myself in a cave on Mt. Arak in Van. Yet the Wise, Compassionate Creator made this exile a mercy. My retreat in the mountain, in which I was not so secure, might not have been undertaken only for God's good pleasure, whereas here nothing diverts me from sincere devotion to Him only.

When I was a prisoner of war in Russia, I intended to spend the rest of my life in a cave. Praise and thanks be to God, the Most Merciful of the Merciful, for He has made Barla a cave for me—but with the additional grace that my frail body does not suffer the hardships of cave life. Even so, suspicious officials who fear that I might engage in anti-regime activities harm my service of the Qur'an.

Second, these people have not restored my certificate to preach, although they provided certificates to all other exiled preachers and amnestied all imprisoned criminals. But my All-Compassionate Lord has transformed this injustice into a mercy by causing me to live in this silent place of isolation so that I can dedicate my life and efforts to serving the Qur'an and spreading its light.

Third, these people exiled me to a village even though they allow powerful, influential chieftains who can interfere with their worldly affairs to live in towns and cities and meet their relatives. Except for a very small number, my relatives and fellow citizens are not allowed to visit. My All-Compassionate Creator changed this isolation into another great mercy by freeing my mind from any malicious intention and worry, thereby leaving it open to enlightenment by the Qur'anic truths.

These people even begrudged my writing a couple of letters during my first 2 years of exile. Worse, they still do not accept my having two or three visitors a month, even for the sake of religious worship. But my Compassionate Lord and Wise Creator changed this injustice into mercy by causing me to enter into a welcome retreat in these “3 months of additional prayer,” during which one can harvest the reward of 90 years of prayer and devotion.

That must suffice as my answer.

YOUR SECOND QUESTION: Why do I not apply for the certificate?

ANSWER: I am bound by Destiny in this matter, not by misguided, worldly people. My application is to Destiny, and I will ask the government

to restore my certificate only when Destiny permits me to do so and stops providing for me here. In other words, everything happens for a reason: one apparent and one real. Various misguided, worldly people are the apparent cause for my exile, whereas the real cause is Divine Destiny.

People who feared that I might serve Islam greatly and interfere in their worldly affairs committed a great injustice by exiling me. But this is only an apparent cause. The real cause is that Divine Destiny saw I could not serve Islam and (religious) knowledge sincerely, and therefore had those people exile me so that I could render such service and changed my exile into a mercy. As I am bound by Divine Destiny, and that Destiny is purely just, I should and do apply only to it. The apparent cause has almost nothing to do with the effects, so why should I apply to it?

The reasons why Destiny does not permit me to apply for the certificate to preach in my hometown are as follows:

ONE: I do not meddle in the affairs of these misguided, worldly people and so feel no obligation apply to them. All I can do is carry out the dictates of Divine Destiny that bind me. This is how my application should be, and so it is.

TWO: As this temporary guest-house of a world is subject to alteration and destruction, it is not the real, permanent home. Seeing that I am not permanently in this world even if I live in my hometown, it is useless to try to live in a particular place. If the Owner of that house is merciful to you, then each inhabitant is a friend and every place a home. But if one cannot receive His Grace and Mercy, then its inhabitants are enemies and every place is one of exile and isolation.

THREE: One should apply according to the law. However, they have treated me arbitrarily and illegally for the last 6 years. I have not been treated as a mere exile, but as one banned from enjoying almost any legal and civil rights. Why should I apply in the name of the law to those who do not follow it?

FOUR: When the district governor asked them, on my behalf, if I could stay at Badra village for a few days, they refused. If such an insignificant application was refused, why should I apply for something significant, which would mean humbling myself before them?

FIVE: It is an injustice and a disrespect to justice to demand one's right from and apply to those who take wrong for right. I do not wish to commit such a wrong or show such disrespect to justice.

SIX: These people do not treat me justly because they think I am engaged in politics. Rather, they do so on behalf of the committee of irreligious people, whether consciously or not, because I am devoted to Islam. So applying to them means to repent of my belief in Islam and to sympathize with their way. If I applied to them and expected their aid, Divine Destiny, which is entirely just, would punish me through them. They give me trouble because I am devoted to Islam. But because my devotion and sincerity contain some shortcomings, Divine Destiny sometimes punishes me. If this is so, it seems impossible that I will be relieved of these troubles.

SEVEN: Officials are responsible for helping those who benefit the community and for hindering those who harm it. But the official who put me under surveillance came to me in order to catch me red-handed while I was explaining a pleasure of experiencing belief in God's Oneness to an old visitor. He deprived my guest of this pleasure and angered me. And yet this same official flatters those who show their bad manners and harm the village's social life.

Prisoners, no matter how many crimes they have committed, have the right to meet the official in charge of surveillance, regardless of his or her rank. But I have not met with the superior official here, nor with the two persons in charge of surveillance and who hold significant local government positions, for the last year. They do not ask after my health, although they have passed my room several times. I thought that they kept away out of hostility, but later it became clear that they did so out of fear that I might swallow them (brainwash them).

Therefore it would be a useless humiliation and indeed unreasonable to accept a government with such officials as a reliable, serious authority to which I could apply. If the Old Said were living now, that is, if I were to behave as I did when engaged in politics and worldly affairs, I would say as Antara²⁵ did:

²⁵ Antara: A sixth-century Arab warrior and poet, celebrated in his own day [around 600] as a hero because he rose from slave birth to be a tribal chief. His poetry is represented by one poem in the *Mu'allaqat*. His greatness gave rise to many legends, and he became the hero of the popular Arabic epic *Sirat Antar*. In it he represents the ideal of a Bedouin chief, rich, generous, brave, and kind. His name also appears as Antar. *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. (2001). (Ed.)

The water of life drunk in humiliation
 is like the torments of Hell,
 While Hell would be a place of pride,
 if I could live therein with honor and dignity.

But the Old Said is not living now, and the New Said considers it useless and meaningless to speak to such people. May their world cause them to perish! Although I have long been through with their world and withdrawn from their politics, may it rebound on them, they continue to heap unbearable trouble upon me due to groundless suspicions and pretexts. Thus I will not provide any basis for their suspicions by applying to them.

EIGHT: Divine Destiny punishes me through the unpitying hands of those misguided, worldly people to whom I sometimes feel inclined, even though they are unworthy of it, for the reward of loving such unworthy ones is pitiless enmity. I keep silent, since I regard myself as deserving this punishment.

I fought the Russians for 2 years during World War I, commanding a volunteer regiment and sacrificing my worthy friends and disciples. The army commander and Anwar Pasha, then military staff chief, appreciated my services. I was wounded and taken prisoner. On return from captivity, I courted danger by writing books like *Six Steps* and thereby humiliating the British invaders in Istanbul. I did this to help those who are now keeping me, without reason, under such pitiless surveillance. They repay my help with cruelty. In 3 months, they have caused me as much suffering as I experienced during my 3 years of captivity in Russia.

The Russians let me teach, although they considered me a cruel commander of volunteer Kurds. I taught most of the 90 officers who were my friends in captivity. Once the Russian camp commander came and listened. At first he thought the lessons were political and wanted to ban them, but afterwards permitted me to continue. Later we adapted a room in the barracks as a mosque in which I led the prayers. They never interfered with our prayers or prohibited me from communicating.

But my fellow countrymen, whose belief I try to secure and strengthen, keep me under strict surveillance for no reason and forbid me to meet and communicate with others, although they know I have withdrawn completely from politics. They even forbid me to teach in my private room, although I have the necessary certificate, and to lead or even attend prayers

in the mosque that I repaired and led the prayers in for 4 years. They still do not allow me to lead the prayers, even for the three people who are my regular congregation and intimate friends, in order to deprive me of the congregational prayer's reward.

In addition to all these injustices, whenever someone praises me—although I do not like or desire praise—the officer in charge of my surveillance becomes angry and jealous. He then resorts to some cruel devices to break my influence and troubles me in order to be appreciated by his superiors.

Living under such conditions, who else should I apply to but God Almighty? If the judge assumes the attorney's authority, there is no reason to apply to him or her. Whatever your opinion about this, I believe that there are many hypocrites among those friends. Hypocrites are worse than unbelievers and, therefore, make me suffer more than the unbelieving Russians did.

O you who are unfortunate because of your cruelty and hypocrisy! What harm did I do or am I doing to you that causes you to afflict me so? On the contrary, I am trying to secure your belief and help you attain eternal bliss. Are you crushing me with so much suffering because my service is not purely for God's sake? We will settle accounts in the greatest court of the Hereafter. My last words on this matter are: God is sufficient for us, and most excellent is He in Whom we trust. How good He is as the Guardian, and how good He is as the Helper.

YOUR THIRD QUESTION: Why are you so indifferent to Turkey's political situation (in particular) and that of the world (in general)? Why don't you change your attitude in the face of all these events? Are you keeping silent because you fear the misguided, worldly people, or because you approve of what is going on?

ANSWER: Serving the Qur'an caused me to abandon politics, even to forget to think of it. My whole life shows that fear cannot prevent me from following what I believe to be right. What and why should I fear? My only relationship with this world is death. I have no children, no wealth, and no dynasty. May God bless those who try to break my false worldly fame and glory, not those who preserve it. I now have only my life and, as you know, am firmly convinced that my life and death are in God's Hands only. Besides,

I prefer an honorable death to a humiliating life. Like Old Said, somebody is reported to have said:

We are such people that do not agree
to be of mediocre degree;
We either enjoy preeminence with
no one else in the world or enter the grave.

Serving the Qur'an prohibits me from considering humanity's political and social conditions for, among other things, we are travelers in this world. Basing myself on the Qur'an's light, I say that humanity has reached a marsh in this century. Whole caravans of humanity are trying, with great difficulty, to advance in this putrid marsh. A small minority follow a safe way and some have extricated themselves, but the majority continues to flail around in the dark. Although 20 percent of this majority seems quite happy with this struggle, mistaking its dirt and filth for musk and ambergris, whereas the other 80 percent knows that it is in a filthy marsh but cannot see the safe path (leading them out).

We must bring that majority out of the marsh. To do so, we must use a mace to knock the 20 percent back to its senses or provide the 80 percent with a light to see a way to safety. I see that most people hold maces, but almost no one gives light to the helpless 80 percent. If some still have light, they are not trusted because they also carry maces. People are afraid of being beaten after being drawn to the light. Besides, the light may be extinguished if the mace is broken.

This marsh represents the modern corrupted social life of misguided people. The intoxicated 20 percent are those who willingly indulge in life's material pleasures and stubbornly resist the light. The great majority, who are bewildered in the marsh, dislike deviation but cannot get out of it. The maces represent political trends and movements, while the light is the Qur'an's truths. No one should oppose and feel hostile toward the light, for only Satan hates it. Thus I took refuge in God from Satan and politics, threw the mace of politics away, and held tightly to the light. Many of those involved in political trends love the light. No one should turn away from or accuse the Qur'anic lights and truths, which are offered sincerely and without ulterior political motives and aspirations, unless they are human devils who favor atheism and irreligion in the name of politics.

I thank God that abandoning politics prevented me from reducing the Qur'an's diamond-like truths to pieces of glass under the accusation of exploiting them for political ends. On the contrary, these diamonds continue to grow in value in the eyes of more and more people from every social strata.

In addition, believers cannot serve their cause through politics in such stormy circumstances. Whatever service is rendered for Islam through politics eventually benefits the dominant anti-Islamic system, because foreign powers control the reins of political life. Engaging in politics also divides Muslims into opposing political factions that have a negative impact upon individual hearts and collective life—some people are so obstinate that even Muslims may label angelic brothers or sisters as satans, or a satanic party member as an angel, depending upon whether or not they support a certain political party. When I saw a learned man severely reproach a good, virtuous man who did not share his political views and then praise a corrupt member of his political faction, I became dismayed by the evils of politics and completely withdrew, saying: "I take refuge in God from Satan and politics."

Another important reason for my indifference to politics is that eternal happiness can be attained only through belief. One without belief is unhappy in both worlds and is doomed to suffer the greatest suffering. Therefore, regardless of their personal belief or unbelief, piety or impiety, sincerity or insincerity, no one but Satan has the right to oppose serving belief.

Furthermore, belief is Islam's very foundation or spirit, and manifests itself in each particle of Islam. The more established people are in belief, the more successful they can be in other areas of religion. Depending on politics usually leads to two perilous consequences: Believers either despair of God's Mercy, due to successive disappointments, and are condemned to punishment by: *Do not despair of God's Mercy* (39:53) or feel forced to support every party decision or activity in some way, whether it conforms to Islam or not, and thus face the threat of: *And lean not on the evildoers, so that the fire touches you* (11:113).

These misguided, worldly people are afraid of a service dedicated to securing and strengthening people's belief. I sometimes hear them say: "Said is as powerful as 50,000 men, so we do not release him." My reply is:

O you misguided, worldly people, unfortunate because of your hypocrisy! Why are you so incompetent at your own business, though your only concern is with this world? If you are afraid of me, anyone can perform 50 times as much as I do. If you are afraid of my mission to announce the Qur'anic truths and of my belief's spiritual force, know that I am as powerful as 50 million, not 50,000 people. I challenge all European atheists, including those among you. I destroy their castles of positivism and naturalism with the Qur'anic lights that I spread. If all of Europe's atheist philosophers, including yours, cooperate against me, by the will of God they will never move me even one inch from my way.

This being the truth, stop impeding me in my duty. Your efforts are in vain, for God's decree cannot be resisted by brute force or material power, and because once God lights a light it cannot be extinguished by blowing.

Praise belongs to God, Who guided us unto this. If He had not guided us, we would not have been guided. Indeed, our Lord's Messenger came with the truth.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

The Fourteenth Letter

This Letter was not written, or was not included in *The Letters*, by Said Nursi.

*The
Fifteenth Letter*

The Fifteenth Letter

A subtlety about sainthood • Internal wars during ‘Ali’s caliphate • Humanity’s final apostasy after an almost universal conversion • The meaning of: All things are perishable, except His Face (28:88)

In His Name, Glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

YOUR FIRST QUESTION: IT IS SAID THAT A COMPANION OF THE lowest degree is greater than the greatest saint. If this is the case, why could they not discover, through their insight and wisdom, the identity of the conspirators among them that eventually caused three of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs to be martyred?²⁶

ANSWER: There are two points here.

FIRST POINT: Some light can be shed by explaining a subtlety about sainthood, namely, that there are two kinds of sainthood: minor and major. Minor sainthood usually is attained by strictly following a Sufi order. An initiate is sometimes favored by God with unexpected wonders in return for overcoming human instincts and animal desires.

²⁶ Said Nursi is referring to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (d. 644), the second caliph, who was killed by Abu Lu’lu’ Firoz, a non-Muslim Persian slave, for personal reasons; ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan (d. 656), the third caliph, who was killed by Egyptian rebels upset with one of his decisions; and ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib (d. 661), the fourth caliph, who was killed by a Kharijite seeking revenge for his group’s defeat at the Battle of Nahrawan (658). (Ed.)

The Companions enjoyed the rank of major sainthood, which is attained through a direct inheritance of the Prophetic mission and, without having to follow a religious order, by full observance of the Sharia, penetrating to the truth and ultimately gaining nearness to God. Such sainthood, though much greater and more valuable than the minor one, is rarely favored with wonder-working. Therefore it is safer, for wonder-working can lead saints to attribute wonders to themselves and thus bring about spiritual desolation. Without having to follow a religious order's discipline for many years, the Companions attained the rank of major sainthood through the grace and elixir of the Prophet's presence.

This can be explained by an analogy: People can re-live the just-passed Night of Power and Destiny (*Lailat al-Qadr*) in two ways.²⁷ One, they can live through the whole year and reach this night the next year. This is how the initiated reach their final destination. Two, they can leave the cover of their material existence, enter the sphere of the spirit, and rise high enough to see all of time as a single point. While material existence is restricted to time and space, whereas the spirit is almost free from both, past and future unite into a single point when people's inner senses become so refined and sharpened that they can live at the spirit's level. Thus the quickest way of re-living the new Night of Power and Destiny is to enter the sphere of spiritual existence and unite past and future in the present moment. But this can be attained only through nearness to God, for the nearer people are to God, the freer they are of all time and space restrictions.

Another analogy is the sun's nearness to us, despite our distance from it, through its reflected light and heat. If we feel its nearness in its reflections and perceive its identity and relation to us through its reflected form in our mirror, we draw nearer to it and establish nearer relations. But if we try to reach and know it from our remote starting-point, we must make a long journey of thought and research. In other words, we will need a very demanding, long scientific study of its formation, heat, light, and seven colors.

²⁷ The Night of Power: Mentioned in *Surat al-Qadr* (97), it is one of the most important events in the Islamic calendar, for this was when God began to reveal the Qur'an through Archangel Gabriel. Moreover, on this night Hell is closed and Heaven is wide open to people's prayers. Tradition says that it falls on one of the odd-numbered nights of Ramadan's last 10 days. Many believe that it falls on the night of Ramadan 27. The night is so holy that all good deeds performed on that day are equal to those performed over the course of 1,000 months in God's sight. (Ed.)

In just this way, sainthood attained through direct inheritance of the Prophet's mission enables people to draw nearer to God because of this direct, unrestricted relation. Accordingly, major sainthood is much greater than minor sainthood, which can be attained only through long years of spiritual discipline within an order.

SECOND POINT: The seditious and plotting people within the Muslim community during the time of the Companions were not limited to a few easily controlled Jews. Many people of different religions and cultures joined Islam during the rapid Muslim conquests, and some of their seductive and misleading views and trends of thought entered Islam's pure body. Some sought revenge for their national honor and dignity, which had been wounded severely by 'Umar's military victories. Some clever and scheming hypocrites are reported to have taken advantage of the prevailing social conditions. Given this, conspiracies could not be dealt with through suppression but only by improving social conditions and channeling the different trends of thought into the right way.

QUESTION: 'Umar had such deep, wonderful insight and wisdom that he helped the Muslim army fighting in Iraq gain victory by shouting: "Retreat to the mountain!" from the pulpit in the Mosque of Madina. This shout was heard by his commander Saria. Given this, how could he not be aware of his assassin, who lived in 'Umar's own neighborhood?

ANSWER: Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) was asked why he had not seen Yusuf (Joseph) in a nearby well in Canaan, although the fragrance of his shirt reached him from Egypt. He replied:

Our state, especially with regard to miracle-working, is like lightning that is sometimes visible and at other times hidden. Sometimes it is as if we were sitting on the highest point with the whole universe spread out before us, but at other times we cannot see what lies just ahead of us.

Although people are free in their actions, Divine Destiny has power over everything: *You cannot will unless God wills* (76:30). So Divine Will prevails necessarily. Where Destiny speaks, human free will has no say. When Destiny's decree is enforced, people are blinded to it.

YOUR SECOND QUESTION: What about the internal wars during 'Ali's caliphate, and those participants who killed and were killed?

ANSWER: The Battle of Camel, which occurred between 'Ali (on one side) and 'A'isha, Zubayr, and Talha (on the other), was a clash between

absolute justice and relative justice.²⁸ ‘Ali believed that absolute justice had to be the rule, just as it had been during the time of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, while his opponents asserted that relative justice should prevail. They argued that prevailing conditions did not allow absolute justice to be enforced, because people’s sincere beliefs and pure intentions had been muddied by the incomplete assimilation of new Muslims and the passage of time. Since both sides sought God’s approval and acted for Islam’s good, although ‘Ali was more perfect in his opinions, all participants will enter Paradise, whether they killed or were killed.

Jurists who strive for the truth in those legal matters left open by the Qur’an and the Prophet will receive a double reward from God if the correct judgment is given. If an incorrect judgment is given, they will receive one reward and not be punished. A person known to be trustworthy, whose word is accepted as authoritative in our region, is reported to have said: “Do not gossip about the war between the Companions, for both the killer and the killed are counted among the people of Paradise.”

To explain absolute justice, the verse: *Whoever slays a soul—unless it be for murder or spreading mischief in the land—will be as if he had slain humanity* (5:32), implies that no innocent person can be deprived of his or her right to life or sacrificed for the community’s sake. Any right is a right in God’s sight, and thus cannot be abolished for one considered just as great or fundamental.

Relative justice means that the part can be sacrificed for the whole. It does not consider the individual’s rights if these harm the community, and maintains that a lesser evil is preferred to avoid a greater evil. However, it is wrong to make relative justice the rule if absolute justice is possible. Imam ‘Ali wanted to continue establishing the caliphate on absolute justice, while his opponents insisted on relative justice, saying that the other was no longer possible.

²⁸ The Battle of the Camel (656): When ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib was elected as the fourth caliph after ‘Uthman’s assassination, some Muslims led by ‘A’isha (d. 678), one of the Prophet’s widows and the daughter of Abu Bakr (the first caliph), Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwam (d. 656), and Talha ibn ‘Ubaydullah (d. 656) demanded that he punish ‘Uthman’s killers. But ‘Ali was of the opinion that since the matter did not consist in opposition to ‘Uthman only and there was a general unrest, he had to establish security in the country first and then deal with ‘Uthman’s murder. However, the others insisted upon their opinion and headed for Basra, where they collected an army. ‘Ali, the caliph, marched upon them. ‘Ali persuaded Zubayr and Talha to withdraw from the actual fighting, but both were killed by soldiers within their ranks. The battle ended with ‘Ali’s victory. (Tr.)

QUESTION: Why was Imam ‘Ali, despite his extraordinary abilities, wonderful intelligence, and great merits, less successful in state administration than his predecessors?

ANSWER: That blessed man was destined for a more important task. Had he been successful in politics, he could not have become the “prince of saints.” He secured for himself a spiritual kingdom higher in rank than the greatest worldly position, one that will survive until the Day of Judgment.

The war between ‘Ali and Mu‘awiya at Siffin (657) was one between caliphate and sultanate.²⁹ Imam ‘Ali defended some religious commandments and Islamic truths against some principles of sultanate and political expedience, preferring the world to come over the present life. Mu‘awiya based his case on a dispensation from strict adherence to certain religious commandments so that he could reinforce Islamic social life through sultanate. Trying to pursue certain political policies even at the price of some religious principles, Mu‘awiya’s group fell into error.

The struggle of Hasan and Husayn against the Umayyads was one of religion against nationalism.³⁰ The Umayyads based the Muslim state on nationalism and thus preferred the bonds of kinship over those of Islam. This harmed the Muslim community in two ways: It annoyed and frightened the non-Arabs, and prevented serious thought about what was right and just. Racist rulers cannot practice justice, since they give priority to fellow nationals over co-religionists when dispensing rights and justice. Islam

²⁹ Mu‘awiya ibn Abi Sufyan (d. 680): Successor to the caliphate after ‘Ali’s martyrdom (661) and founder of the Umayyad Dynasty (661-750). He moved the capital to Damascus, where he had served as governor since 640. He restored unity in Muslim lands. However, by ensuring his son Yazid’s ascension before his death, he changed the caliphate into a hereditary sultanate. (Tr.)

³⁰ Hasan (624-80) and Husayn (626-80) were the Prophet’s grandsons through his daughter Fatima and her husband ‘Ali. Upon his father’s death, Hasan was elected caliph. He fielded a sizeable army against Mu‘awiya, but was plagued by defections. He opened peace negotiations and, in 661, renounced his claim and, together with his brother, totally withdrew from politics.

Husayn rejected Yazid, Mu‘awiya’s son, as the rightful head of the state on the grounds that he lacked the necessary qualifications. Invited by the people of Kufa (Iraq) to lead a campaign to restore the just, purely Islamic system of government, he set out with a small band of relatives and followers. However, most Kufans did not lend their support. The governor of Iraq soon surrounded the force and killed most of them at Karbala. Husayn was decapitated, and his head was sent to Yazid.

Both Hasan and Husayn were enthusiastically loved by all Muslims, and the Shi‘a consider them to be their second and third imams, respectively, ‘Ali being the first. (Tr.)

forbids this, as stated in a Tradition: “Islam forbids the racism of the Age of Ignorance and commands that there be no disparity between an (Abyssinian) black slave and a Qurayshi lord, provided both are Muslims.” Thus, Husayn rightly fought the Umayyads to re-establish the religious bond, and consequently attained the rank of martyrdom.

QUESTION: If he was on the right side, why did he fail? Why did Divine Destiny and Compassion allow him to be subjected to such a tragic end?

ANSWER: Some of his non-Arab supporters wanted to avenge their wounded national pride. This vindictiveness muddied the pure mission and sacred cause of Husayn and his close friends. The result was defeat. Divine Destiny allowed them to suffer such a painful end because Hasan, Husayn, and their descendants were destined for a spiritual kingdom. As it is usually hard to combine a spiritual and a worldly kingdom, they were made to stand aloof from worldly concerns and empty their hearts of worldly ambition. As a result, they were rewarded with a permanent spiritual kingdom and were chosen to lead the way followed by the greatest saints.

YOUR THIRD QUESTION: Why were they treated so harshly?

ANSWER: Three of the Umayyads’ principles of government caused some degree of wrong: People can be sacrificed to ensure the government’s security (a principle of ruthless politics); administration should be based on racial or national preference (ideological racism sacrifices anything for the good of the race or nation); and the traditional Umayyad– Hashimite rivalry, which continued under Mu‘awiya’s son Yazid and his like.

There is also another factor. Some of Husayn’s non-Arab supporters hoped to avenge their wounded national pride and unjust treatment as virtual slaves under the Umayyads. Such people provoked the Umayyads’ racial feelings. From the viewpoint of Divine Destiny, however, Husayn and his relatives were rewarded with a spiritual kingdom so valuable and a spiritual rank so elevated that the suffering they endured at Karbala pales in comparison and would seem to them easy enough to bear. Consider the rank that privates may attain through martyrdom after an hour’s torture, which others obtain only after a decade of effort. If these martyred privates were asked how God treated them, they would answer that they had earned too much in return for too little a cost.

YOUR FOURTH QUESTION: Shortly before the end of time, Jesus will return and kill Dajjal (the Antichrist), and most people will embrace Islam. However, another Tradition states that the Day of Resurrection will not come

if some people still remember and mention God. How will people apostatize after an almost universal conversion?

ANSWER: Those with weak belief in Islam's pillars regard it as almost impossible that Jesus will return before the end of time, practice the Sharia, and kill Dajjal, all of which is predicted in an authentic Tradition. This and similar Tradition about Jesus' return, Sufyan (another Dajjal who will appear in the Muslim world), and the Mahdi indicate that two trends of unbelief will appear before the end of time.

ONE: A terrible person acting under the veil of hypocrisy will appear in the Muslim world. Leading the hypocrites and denying the Prophet's Messengership, he will try to destroy the Sharia. Fortunately, a blessed descendant of the Prophet's Family³¹ will oppose him and, at the head of the people of sainthood and spiritual perfection, will eradicate this trend of hypocrisy.

TWO: The second trend is atheism, a consequence of naturalist and positivist philosophy strengthened by materialist philosophy. Just as wild, primitive people do not recognize the king or his army's divisions, they have to attribute to each soldier a sort of independent kingship and sovereignty. Such people eventually will give themselves some kind or degree of divinity. As a result their leader, supported by some material and psychic means like spiritism and hypnotism, will deify himself. Prophetic Traditions call him Dajjal. How stupid for someone to claim divinity when he cannot make even a gnat's wing or is defeated by a fly or a germ!

When this trend of atheism is seen as almost at its peak, the true, original religion of Jesus will re-appear. That is, it will come down from the heaven of Divine mercy, and the present version of Christianity, purified of its borrowed elements, will unite with the truths of Islam or be transformed into it, and will follow the Qur'an. The true religion will gain great strength from this union and defeat the atheistic trend. Based on the promise of the All-Powerful One, The Prophet, truthful in his every word and report, informed that Jesus would come down toward the end of time. Since he informed us of this, it is true. Since God promised, He will fulfill His promise.

Given this, how can anyone deny that the All-Wise One of Majesty, Who sends certain angels to the world for specific purposes, sometimes in the form of human beings, Who sends some spiritual beings in the form of

³¹ The Prophet's Family: The Prophet, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn. These people are known as the Ahl al-Bayt, the Family (or People) of the House. The Prophet's wives are not included in this designation. (Tr.)

people, as well as the spirits of some dead saints in their “energy envelopes,” will return Jesus to the world before the end of time for an important purpose related to Islam?³²

God Remember that Jesus is in the nearest heaven with his refined corporeal body and enjoying a particular degree of life, as explained in The First Letter. Even if he had died “completely” and gone to the other world’s farthest corner, it would conform with Divine Wisdom for God to resurrect him and send him here. God promised this, and so it will happen. Moreover, the Prophet foretold all this on the basis of that promise. However, only those nearest to Jesus will recognize him, through the light of belief, when he returns.

QUESTION: Some Traditions report that Dajjal will have a false paradise for his friends and a false hell for his opponents. He also will have a donkey, one of whose ears is like Paradise and the other one like Hell. Other Traditions say he will have a huge physical stature. What does this all mean?

ANSWER: Dajjal is a person, a conspirator, a stupid devil who has forgotten God. He deifies himself because of his tyrannical rule and the apparent splendor of his despotism. The trend of atheism, which he represents, is mighty and comprehensive. The Traditions describing him as an enormous man are actually about this trend, not about the person of Dajjal himself. I once saw a picture of the Japanese commander-in-chief, who had one foot in the Pacific Ocean and the other in Port Arthur [now Lushun, China]. This demonstrated Japan’s power and vast influence.

Dajjal’s false paradise is modern civilization’s passing fancies, charming playthings, and amusements. His donkey represents modern vehicles of transportation from trains [to spaceships]. One end car is a coal-burning engine, a “fireplace” into which he throws his opponents, while the other end car is richly furnished like Paradise, into which he admits his followers. Trains, a very important “mount” of modern corrupt civilization, bring a false paradise to corrupt worldly people and help colonize Muslim countries, exploit their riches, and enslave Muslims.³³

During this dramatic episode, Islam will be far stronger due to its union with a purified Christianity and will spread its light to the majority of peo-

³² Archangel Gabriel sometimes came to the Prophet in the form of his Companion Dihya. God sends some spiritual beings here in the form of people, as well as the souls of some dead saints in their “energy envelopes.” (Tr.)

³³ In other words, Dajjal uses of modern vehicles, weaponry, and technology to colonize Muslim countries and enslave Muslims. Said Nursi specifically cites trains because they

ple. But shortly before the end of time, a new trend of unbelief will appear and have an overwhelming influence. As a result, the great majority will slip into unbelief and only a few will preserve their belief until the Last Day. Nevertheless God, out of His mercy for believers, will make them die just before the world is destroyed so that they will not experience this terrible event. The world will be destroyed over the heads of unbelievers.

YOUR FIFTH QUESTION: Will souls that have gained permanence through death be influenced by the events of Doomsday?

ANSWER: They will be influenced according to their ranks, just as angels are influenced when God manifests His Attributes of Majesty and Overwhelming by destroying sinners. Just as the hearts and minds of people sitting in a hot room are influenced by the sight of people trembling from the cold outside, so those conscious souls that have gone into eternity will be affected, as indicated by the Qur'an, by those important events in the universe with which they have some relation. The people of torment will be affected by them in agony, while the people of happiness will be affected by them in wonder and amazement, and even in a joyful expectation as the final, endless bliss approaches.

Many Qur'anic verses threaten humanity (and jinn) with Doomsday's shocking events and stress that everyone will experience them. Those who are alive at that time will experience them physically, while those souls whose bodies have or will have melted away in their graves also are encompassed, to some extent, within this Qur'anic threat.

YOUR SIXTH QUESTION: Is: *All things are perishable, except His Face* (28:88) also related to Paradise, Hell, and their inhabitants?

ANSWER: Many qualified scholars, saints, and people of deep perception and insight have discussed this subject. Some maintain that the permanent world's inhabitants are not included, while others hold that these

were the main vehicles of transportation when he wrote this Letter. He also did so because communism, or in a wider sense, materialism or atheism are included in the meaning of Dajjal. Masses of innocent Muslims were carried to Soviet concentration camps by trains. Trains were of great importance for modern corrupt civilization, especially during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, and retain their importance even today. While they carried the privileged supporters of this corrupt civilization and of the anti-Islamic regimes in the Muslim world to places of enjoyment in richly furnished compartments, the imperialist powers used them to colonize, exploit, and enslave Muslim countries and, as in Asia and Africa, carry them in barn-like compartments to work or to concentration camps. In the Soviet Union and elsewhere, most of them died. (Tr.)

people also will enter an annihilation, albeit for such a brief period that they will not feel it. Some saints of spiritual discovery who go to extremes argue that all existence—except God—will perish permanently. But this cannot be, for the Divine Essence and God's Attributes and Names are permanent. Thus permanent beings in the World of Permanence cannot experience absolute annihilation, for they are the manifestations of God's permanent Attributes and Names and the mirrors in which they are reflected.

I now briefly mention two points that have just come to mind from the infinite ocean of the Qur'an's meanings:

FIRST POINT: The All-Mighty is absolutely All-Powerful, and so creation and destruction are equally easy for Him. He can annihilate or re-create all of creation in an instant. In addition, absolute non-existence cannot exist, for there is an encompassing knowledge. As everything is contained or has a kind of existence or an ideal form within the infinite Divine Knowledge, there is no room for non-existence. Within the encompassing circle of Divine Knowledge, relative non-existence is, in essence, a nominal veil reflecting the manifestations of Divine Knowledge.

Some people of profound understanding have called such ideal forms of existence “archetypes.” Based on this, going into non-existence means taking off an outer dress (the body) and returning to the circle of spiritual existence or existence in Divine Knowledge. In other words, that which perishes by leaving its physical body puts on a spiritual body and, leaving the circle where (Divine) Power operates, enters the circle of (Divine) Knowledge.

SECOND POINT: As nothing can exist by itself, everything's existence depends on God. Since it exists as a manifestation of the permanent Divine Names, it has a permanent, sublime reality due to its reflecting the Divine Name causing its existence. The verse: *All things are perishable, except His Face* (28:88) also serves as a sword that liberates people from that which is not God (e.g., the world, the flesh, and life's vanities). Thus whatever people have or do for God's sake is not included in the meaning of this verse.

In sum, if people find God and act only for His sake, there will be nothing left to be included in the meaning of *All things are perishable, except His Face* (28:88). So if they want to make their deeds eternal and be rewarded with permanent happiness, they must seek God and live for His sake and good pleasure.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Seventeenth Letter*

The Seventeenth Letter

Consolation on the death of a child

In His Name.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

 Y DEAR BROTHER AND FELLOW-TRAVELER ON THE ROAD TO THE
Hereafter, Hafiz Khalid Effendi,

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Give good tidings unto the patient who, when they are visited by an affliction, say: "We belong to God, and it is to Him that we are returning." (2:155-56)

The death of your child has grieved me. But since the judgment is God's, accepting His decree with resignation is one of the pillars and signposts of belief. May the All-Mighty enable you to endure it in becoming patient. May He make your deceased child the means of your prosperity in the Hereafter. For my part, I would like to take this opportunity to clarify five points to console God-revering, pious believers like yourself and to give them good tidings.

FIRST POINT: What the Qur'an means by *immortal children* is this: If a believer's children die before puberty, they will live eternally in Paradise as lovable children. They will be the eternal means of happiness and pleasure

to their parents, who will enjoy their love for them in their embraces. Some argue that the people of Paradise will enjoy all pleasures except love for children, because Paradise is not the place of generation. However, the Qur'anic expression *immortal children* indicates that they will be eternally rewarded with the pure affection of their deceased children, whereas in this world that love or affection is restricted to 10 years at most, and then is wounded frequently by grief and filial ingratitude.

SECOND POINT: Once a man was thrown into prison along with his child, for whom he was responsible. Not only did he have to endure his own affliction, but he had to care for his child as well. While he was suffering, the country's compassionate ruler sent a messenger with an offer to care for the child in the palace, because the child was his subject.

The man's response was the aggrieved cry: "This child is my only means of consolation. I cannot give her up." His fellow prisoners, however, advised him:

Your grief makes no sense. If you pity your child, let her be taken out of this suffocating, dirty prison to a beautiful, spacious palace. If you prefer to have her stay here for your own advantage, consider how much effort it costs you to look after her. It is in your interest to give her to the ruler, whose compassion and sympathy she will certainly arouse, so that he will wish to meet you. The ruler will not send her to prison, but instead will summon you on the condition that you obey and trust in him.

It is as in the parable above, my brother, that all believers whose child or children have died should think thus: (Prepubescent) children are innocent. Their All-Compassionate and All-Munificent Creator has taken them into His care out of His perfect Compassion, whereas I would be unable to give them adequate training in mind or morals. Also, their Creator is much more affectionate toward them than I could be.

How happy the children are, since God has taken them from this world's wearying life to the highest Heaven. If they had lived longer, they might have been led astray. So I should not grieve. They might have done me some good if they had grown up to be righteous people, but now they are enjoying eternal happiness. Moreover, they will be the means of everlasting pleasure for me through parental love and will intercede with God for my eternal hap-

piness in Paradise. Thus one who obtained a reward far greater than a merely probable reward should not weep and wail.

THIRD POINT: Children are God's creatures and servants, and so belong to Him. He has placed them in their parent's care for a fixed term and for their own sake. In return, God has caused their parents to feel a pleasure-giving affection toward them. Therefore believers should not wail for their children when God, the All-Compassionate Creator, takes them away out of His Compassion.

FOURTH POINT: Parents might have some right to wail for deceased children if the world were eternal and humanity lived forever. But as this world is only a guest-house, eventually death will take us to where they have gone. As separation is temporary and reunion has been decided in the Intermediate World (between death and the Last Judgment) and Paradise, believers should thank God for everything and endure every calamity in the full conviction that the Judgment is His.

FIFTH POINT: Affection, one of the sweetest and most beautiful manifestations of Divine Compassion, is a kind of water of life that leads humanity to God more quickly than love. As love for temporal beings can change into love for God, although after much difficulty, affection can make one's heart sincerely devoted to God, but without as much difficulty. Parents love their children as much as they love everything connected with their world. If they are believers, they will renounce the world when their children are taken away from them and turn completely to God. They will come to feel great interest in the place where their children have gone and, convinced that this transitory world deserves no heart-felt interest, will attain a high spiritual state.

Misguided people, however, are in a very poor state after losing their children. They lead dissolute lives and neglect God's commands. As a result, they believe that death takes their children from a soft bed to the dark soil of the grave and so are quite dismayed and aggrieved. Their unbelief in Paradise, which God has prepared for His servants out of His Compassion, increases their grief. But believers are convinced that the Compassionate Creator of the children has taken them to Paradise out of this foul world, and so endure the children's death with "becoming patience."

So do not worry, my brother. This is a temporary separation. Say: “The Judgment is God’s. *We belong to God, and it is to Him that we are returning*”—and be patient.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Eighteenth Letter*

The Eighteenth Letter

Unsound geographical claims • The Doctrine of the Unity of Being • Divine purposes for the amazing, incessant activity in the universe

In His Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with praise.

Three important matters

IRST IMPORTANT MATTER: SUCH FAMOUS SAINTS AS MUHIY AL-DIN ibn al-'Arabi, author of *Al-Futuhat al-Makkiya* (The Makkan Conquests), and Sayed 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili, author *Al-Insan al-Kamil* (The Universal Man), discuss Earth's seven layers, a place after Mount Qaf (the White Earth), and a strange thing they name Mashmashiya.³⁴ Geographers and geologists do not recognize such places, and no places on this planet bear such names. If these assertions are false, how can they be considered saints and people of the truth?

³⁴ Muhiy al-Din ibn al-'Arabi (1165-1240): A celebrated Muslim Sufi- philosopher famous for the doctrine of the Unity of Being; Sayed 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili (1365-c.1424): A Sufi whose doctrines of the “perfect, universal man” became popular throughout the Islamic world. His ideas were influenced strongly by al-'Arabi. (Ed.)

ANSWER: They are both saints and people of the truth. What they saw has a reality, but they may have erred in interpreting and naming their visions. People of vision cannot interpret their visions while in a trance-like state, just as people cannot interpret their dreams while dreaming. Their visions can be interpreted only by pure people of truth and verification who are true heirs of the Prophetic mission (*Asfiya*). When such people of vision attain the rank of people of pure truth and become aware of their mistakes in the light of the Qur'an and Sunna, they correct them.

Consider the following parable: Two pious shepherds milked their animals and collected the milk in a wooden bowl. After a shepherd laid a flute across the bowl, one of them went to sleep. While he was sleeping, the other noticed that something like a fly flew from his friend's nose and, after buzzing around the milk for a while, went through the flute and disappeared into a hole at the foot of a gum-tree. Shortly afterwards, the fly-like thing came out of the hole, passed through the flute, returned to the sleeping shepherd's nose, and caused him to wake up.

After he woke up, the shepherd related his strange dream. "May God turn it to goodness," his friend said, and asked him what he had seen. The man replied: "I saw a milky lake across which stretched a strange covered bridge with windows. Passing along the bridge, I saw a place covered with tipped bushes, at the foot of which was a cave. I went into the cave and found a treasure therein." His wise friend interpreted the dream: "The milky lake is that wooden bowl, and the strange bridge is the flute lying across it. The bushes are that gum-tree over there, and the cave is that small hole. Now fetch the ax so I can show you the treasure." They dug up the tree and found the treasure, which made them both happy in this world.

Although what the sleeping shepherd saw is not unreal, he cannot make his vision correspond literally to reality, since he might confuse the non-material world with the material one. The shepherd who stayed awake can interpret the dream, because he can distinguish between the two worlds. Thus in order to reach the reality, one must distinguish between the material and spiritual worlds. Imagine yourself in a small room with a mirror on each wall. Entering it, you will see multiple images of it, just as if it were a whole neighborhood. You can say that you see your room as being as big as a whole neighborhood, but claiming that your room really is that big is wrong, for you can do so only if you confuse the World of Ideas with the material world.

Descriptions given by some discerning, pious people about Earth's seven layers or strata should not be considered only in geographical terms. For instance, they speak of the stratum of jinn, which is thousands of times as vast as Earth. This is unrealistic. But if we consider Earth to be like a pine tree's seed, the ideal Earth "tree" growing from it in the World of Ideas or Spirits would be like a huge pine. For this reason, during their progress on the spiritual path some people of spiritual vision see some of Earth's strata as very vast in the World of Ideas. Since that world and the material world resemble each other in appearance, visionaries confuse them and record their visions as material facts. Thus their descriptions are considered unrealistic. Just as a huge palace or garden is reflected in a mirror, the World of Ideas or Spiritual Realities, when reflected in Earth's domain, appears to be thousands of times larger than Earth.

In conclusion, this reveals that the rank of spiritual vision is lower than that of belief in the Unseen. Thus a saint's conclusions reached through spiritual discovery carry little weight when compared with those witnessed by pure people of truth and verification, who rely on the Qur'an and Sunna. In other words, all spiritual states, visions, and conclusions reached via contemplation, intellectual intuition, or spiritual discovery should be judged according to the principles of the Qur'an and the Sunna, and the standards derived from them by pure people of truth.

SECOND IMPORTANT MATTER: Most people regard the rank of those who assert the transcendent Unity of Being as the highest and most perfect. But no Imams descending from the Prophet's Family, no Companion, or Imams of the following generation (the Tabi'un), including the founders of the four schools of jurisprudence,³⁵ ever mentioned this. Is this view correct?

ANSWER: God forbid that anyone could be greater than those pure scholars who are "the nearest stars to the sun of Prophethood." Besides, the way of the Prophet's pure successors is the most perfect and the safest. The transcendent Unity of Being is only an assertion made by some saints while in a state of spiritual ecstasy. Its followers, although their way is imperfect, go into spiritual ecstasy when they attain this rank and regard it as the highest. If they enter the spiritual state in which they can discern some hidden truths, attribute every occurrence solely to God, ascribe nothing to causes

³⁵ The founders of Islam's four legal schools are Abu Hanifa (c.699-767), Malik ibn Anas (712-95), al-Shafti'i (767-820), and Ibn Hanbal (780-855). They agree on all fundamentals of Islamic belief, and differ only in minor matters related to practice. (Ed.)

either in their lives or in the universe's operation, and discern God's direct manipulation of affairs, then they can attain some degree of perfection by accepting the transcendent Unity of Being.

However, this acceptance should depend on their spiritual state and not on scientific knowledge. They may go so far as to deny the universe's existence in God's name, because they see everything as annihilated in God. However, those who believe strongly in causality, and so see the universe as subject to this law and are immersed in materialism, they may incline to monism or pantheism (denying God in the name of the universe). The safest and broadest way is that established by the Companions and followed by their followers. They taught that each thing has a definite, objective reality and that nothing resembles God: *Nothing is like Him* (42:11).

God is above being divided or included in space, for He is the Creator Who created everything. Existence is not an illusion, as asserted by the transcendent Unity of Being, for everything is a work of the Creator. Existents are not God Himself, but are all from God. All natural phenomena or all of existence cannot be eternal, for they are created over time and so contained in time and space. Two comparisons will clarify this.

FIRST COMPARISON: Picture a just ruler whose role of dispensing justice is manifested in his government's department of justice. In his role as caliph, his function of administering religious affairs is manifested in the department of religious affairs and sciences. As the supreme commander of the imperial armies, he is represented by the department of military affairs. If someone claimed that he is only a just ruler and thus limited to dispensing justice, this would involve denying the actual existence of the government's other departments. The departments of religious and military affairs would be seen as "ideal" or "nominal" instead of "actual," or as being nominally represented by some officials therein.

This assertion also means that the monarch is "the just," with his rule restricted to the department of justice, and holds his other names (caliph, supreme commander) only nominally, ideally, or theoretically. But the nature of monarchy requires real names, and these should show themselves in real departments. By way of analogy, the Divine Kingdom should have such real holy Names as the All-Merciful, the All-Providing, the All-Bestowing, the Creator, the Ever-Active, the All-Munificent, and All-Compassionate. These Names, in turn, require real mirrors in which they are reflected.

Thus the Unity of Being, which is based on the assertion that only God exists, reduces things to illusions.

However, if those asserting the Unity of Being concentrate on the Divine Existence together with His Names, the One and the Unique but ignore the manifestations of the One and the Unique regarding them to be imaginary or illusory, this may not be harmful. For the “illusory” manifestations of the these Names will not add to or reflect on the mirror of the Divine Existence a shadow of actual existence, thus causing this mirror to be brighter. But according to the Unity of Being, manifestations of such Names as the All-Merciful, the All-Providing, the All-Overwhelming, the All-Compelling, and the Creator are also illusory, whereas in fact they have substantial reality and must manifest themselves through their actual operations in the universe. As a result, their manifestations are also actual.

The Companions and pure jurists and Imams descending from the Prophet’s Family were convinced that things have a definite, objective reality. This means that God really manifests Himself through His Names and that everything has an accidental (non-substantial) existence as the result of His creation. This existence, no matter how weak, unstable, and temporary when compared with the Necessarily Existent Being’s existence, is not an illusion. The Almighty confers existence by manifesting His Name the Creator and causes His creation to subsist.

SECOND COMPARISON: Imagine a four-walled room with a full-length mirror on each wall. The room is reflected separately in each mirror and, accordingly, assumes the mirror’s quality and color. Two people enter this room. One looks in a mirror and says that everything is in it. Although the other explains that other mirrors contain different reflections, the first one insists that there is only one mirror and one reflection. Furthermore, in his view, the other reflections—if they really exist—can be no more than insignificant and secondary ones visible in a corner of the mirror into which he is looking. He adds: “This is how I see it, so this is the reality.” The other responds: “I admit what you see. But you see only an aspect of the reality, for there are other mirrors resembling yours, and none of them is as small and insignificant as you claim.”

Likewise, each Divine Name demands a special mirror in which it will be reflected. The Names the All-Merciful and the All-Providing, being essential to God, require the existence of creatures needing mercy and provision.

Just as the All-Merciful demands the existence of real creatures needing mercy and provision, the Name the All-Compassionate requires the existence of Paradise. So if one regards the Names the Necessarily Existential Being, the One, and the Unique, as the only essential and really existent ones, and all other Names as nominal or theoretical, one must hold these Names in very low esteem.

This is why the way of the Companions and their followers, and of the pure scholars, the Imams descending from the Prophet's Family, and the leading jurists is the safest and the most perfect. These most prominent students of the Qur'an have attained the highest rank of sainthood.

Glory be to You. We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Our Lord, do not cause our hearts to swerve after You have guided us. Bestow us the gift of mercy from You, for You are the Bestower of Gifts. My God, bestow blessings on him whom You sent as a mercy for all worlds, and on his Family and Companions.

THIRD IMPORTANT MATTER: This cannot be grasped by reason and philosophy.

Every (moment of every day) He is in a new manifestation. (55:29)

One Who freely and incessantly does whatever He wills. (85:16)

QUESTION: What is the Divine purpose for the universe's incessant, amazing activity? What is the reason for the whirl of creation, for its constant renewal?

ANSWER: It would take almost 1,000 pages to elaborate this matter adequately, but I will be brief and hold the explanation to a couple of pages. If someone enthusiastically performs a natural or social duty, an observer may infer two reasons: the ultimate cause (what can be obtained from doing so) and the motive or necessary cause (one's yearning to do it and subsequent enjoyment in doing it). For example, eating when hungry gives some satisfaction [necessary cause], while food nourishes the body [ultimate cause].

Likewise, this incessant, amazing activity is caused by two kinds of Divine Names and is done for two comprehensive purposes or results. The first purpose and cause is that God's Beautiful Names manifest themselves in countless ways and kinds. This causes multiplicity in creation. Further, the Divine Names manifest themselves incessantly and seek to display their works con-

tinuously. This causes the Book of the Universe,³⁶ with all its “sentences, words, and letters” to be renewed constantly. Each part of this Book, which is the manifestation of the Divine Names, is a sign or indication of the Sacred Divine Essence so that conscious living beings can know Him.

The second cause or purpose is that every creature is active because it yearns for and takes pleasure in activity. There is a definite pleasure in all activity, rather all activity is some sort of pleasure. Likewise God, the Necessarily Existent Being, in conformity with His essential independence of creation and absolute perfection, has infinite sacred affection and love. Such affection and love cause an infinite sacred enthusiasm, which engenders a limitless sacred joy that is the source of infinite sacred pleasure. Due to this pleasure special to His Divine “Essence,” God has infinite compassion. In turn, this compassion causes His creatures to attain their relative perfection by enabling them to realize their full potential. The perfection and the pleasure they find in attaining it pleases God so much that His infinite sacred pleasure requires the whirl of creation.

I am amazed at the followers of materialistic philosophy and secular natural sciences. Unaware of this delicate Divine wisdom, they attribute such activity, which displays perfect knowledge, wisdom, and insight, to unconscious nature, blind coincidence, and causality. And so they fall into the dark pits of misguidance.

Say: “God,” and leave them alone to play their game of plunging.

Our Lord, do not cause our hearts swerve after You guide us. Bestow us the gift of mercy from you, for You are the Bestower of Gifts. My God, bestow peace and blessings, as many as the particles of the universe, upon him who solved Your creation’s mystery, and upon his Family and Companions, so long as Earth and heavens exist.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

³⁶ See footnote 5. (Ed.)

*The
Nineteenth Letter*

The Nineteenth Letter

The miracles of Prophet Muhammad

(NOTE: All Traditions related in this treatise are from memory, for I have no reference books to consult. If there are mistakes in the wording, please correct them or consider them as paraphrases. According to the prevailing opinion among Tradition scholars, such paraphrasing is permissible.)

 HIS TREATISE ILLUSTRATES MUHAMMAD'S MIRACULOUS MESSENGERSHIP through more than 300 miracles that he worked, and is a marvel because of the following:

FIRST: Although this treatise covers more than 100 pages and is based on Traditions and narrations, I wrote it while in the countryside, working 2 or 3 hours each day. I finished it in 2 or 3 days, working completely from memory.

SECOND: Despite its length, this treatise does not bore the scribes and it is pleasant in its readers' eyes. In fact, it has aroused such enthusiasm, even in some lazy scribes, that in these hard and distressing times as many as 70 copies have been hand-written in this neighborhood within a year.³⁷ Those aware of this treatise's distinction conclude that it must be a marvel coming from his Messengership's miraculousness.

³⁷ The *Nur* (Light) treatises were hand-copied secretly until 1950, because the government of that time was hostile to Islam and persecuted Muslims. (Tr.)

In the copies hand-written by nine scribes, including one inexperienced and unaware of *tawafiq*,³⁸ the words referring to the Prophet were found to be arranged unintentionally beneath one another throughout the treatise. This is the same in the Fifth Part for the words referring to the Qur'an. The fair-minded will not see this *tawafiq* as mere coincidence, but rather as a mysterious sign and a wonder derived from his miraculous Messengership. The essentials explained at the treatise's beginning are very important. The Prophetic Traditions related in it are all authentic, according to the Traditionists, and report the most established phenomena concerning his Messengership. To enumerate this treatise's usefulness, another one of the same length would be needed. Therefore we invite those who desire to discover its usefulness to read it.

Said Nursi

[Said Nursi sometimes draws attention to his writings. This is not done out of self-praise. Rather, as a Muslim guide and inspired scholar dedicated to explaining the pillars of Islamic belief, worship, and morality as well as to establishing them in people's minds and hearts, and being completely confident of the truth of what he writes, he follows a style required by guidance. We should keep this in mind, as well as the period during which he wrote—a very difficult time during which there was severe persecution of Islam. (Tr.)]

His miracles

In His name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

He has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He might uplift it above every religion. God suffices as a witness. Muhammad is the Messenger of God. (48:28-29)

³⁸ *Tawafiq*: God's arranging things and events so that His servants obtain a good effect, such as the unintentional arrangement of key words one beneath the other on a page or in the same place on different pages. (Tr.)

Since Muhammad's Prophethood is proved in the Nineteenth and Thirty-first Words, here we point out only some of the gleams of that great truth in 19 signs as an addendum.

FIRST SIGN: The universe's Owner and Master does everything with knowledge, controls every affair with wisdom, directs everything perfectly, regulates everything all-knowingly, and arranges everything in a way to display the purposes and uses He wills for them. As the One who creates knows, the One who knows will speak. Since He will speak, He will speak to those having consciousness, thought, and speech. Since He will speak to such beings, He will speak to humanity, whose nature and awareness are the most comprehensive of all conscious beings. Since He will speak to humanity, He will speak to those most perfect and worthy of address.

Since He will speak to the one most perfect and worthy of address, of the highest morality and who will guide humanity, He will speak to Muhammad, who has the highest disposition and morality and is followed (most sincerely) by one-fifth of humanity. Half of the globe has submitted to his spiritual rule, and his light's radiance has illumined humanity for more than 13 centuries. Believers, the illumined section of humanity, renew their oath of allegiance five times a day, pray for his happiness, invoke God's blessings upon him, and admire and love him. Given this, He will speak to Muhammad and make him His Messenger and humanity's guide. Indeed, He has done so.

SECOND SIGN: The Prophet declared his Prophethood and proved it by presenting the Qur'an and nearly 1,000 miracles. Their occurrence is as certain as his declaration of Prophethood. Another proof is that the Qur'an states that the most obstinate unbelievers charged him with sorcery. Unable to deny the miracles, they called them sorcery to satisfy themselves or to mislead their followers.

Muhammad's miracles are so certain that the Traditionists confirmed and reported them unanimously. A miracle is the Creator of the universe's confirmation of his Prophethood and has the effect of: "You have spoken the truth." For example, if one claims in the ruler's presence that the ruler has appointed him to a particular position, the ruler's "Yes" is enough to prove the person's claim. Furthermore, if the ruler changes his usual practice and attitude at that person's request, this makes his claim firmer.

The Messenger claimed to be the Creator of the universe's envoy, and God, in turn, changed His unbroken order at his prayer and request so that the resulting miracles would prove his claim. Some of his hundreds of miracles are water running from his fingers, splitting the moon with a gesture of his finger, having a tree draw close to him to confirm and bear witness to him, and feeding 200 or 300 people with only enough food for 2 or 3 people.

However, the evidence of his truthfulness and his Prophethood's proofs are not restricted to his miracles. In fact, all of his deeds and acts, words and behavior, moral conduct and manners, as well as character and appearance, prove his truthfulness and seriousness. Indeed, such people as 'Abdullah ibn al-Salam, a famous Jewish scholar of that time, believed in him at first sight, saying: "No lie can hide in this face, nor can any guile be found in it."

Profound scholars say that the evidences of his Prophethood and his miracles amount to about 1,000; in reality, however, this is only the beginning. Countless people have affirmed it in their own particular ways, and the Qur'an itself provides thousands of such proofs in addition to its own 40 aspects of miraculousness. Since Prophethood is a fact, and more than 100,000 persons have claimed it and worked miracles, Muhammad's Prophethood is established more securely than any other Prophet's Prophethood. All evidence, qualities, and attributes related to the other Messengers' Prophethood are found in a more perfect and comprehensive manner in the person of Prophet Muhammad. Given this, he must be far more worthy to be chosen as a Prophet.

THIRD SIGN: The Prophet's miracles are very diverse. Since his Messengership is universal, he is distinguished by miracles connected with nearly all species of creation. When a glorified ruler's aide-de-camp enters a city bearing diverse gifts, a representative from each section of the population welcomes him cheerfully and in its own language.

Likewise, when the Eternal Sovereign's supreme Messenger honored the universe as an envoy to humanity and came bearing the Creator's light of truth and spiritual gifts related to the truths of the universe, he was welcomed as the Prophet by each species—from mineral elements to plants, animals and human beings, and from the moon and sun to stars—each in its own language and bearing one of his miracles. It would require many volumes to mention all of his miracles. Pure-souled meticulous scholars have

compiled many volumes concerning his Prophethood's proofs, so here we point out only briefly the main categories of those miracles unanimously accepted as authentic.

These proofs fall into two main categories. The first (*irhasat*) includes miraculous events before his birth, at his birth, and before he declared his Prophethood. The second category pertains to all other proofs and has two sub-categories: the wonderful events after his death and those manifested during his Prophethood. This latter group is subdivided into proofs manifested in his own person, moral conduct, and perfect character, and those miracles concerned with the outer world. This second subgroup consists of miracles related to spirituality and the Qur'an, and those related to material reality and creation. The latter category is subdivided further into miraculous events during his mission that either broke the unbelievers' recalcitrance or reinforced the believers' belief. This branch has 20 different kinds, each having many instances and having been, at least in meaning, confirmed unanimously (e.g., splitting the moon, water flowing from his fingers, satisfying many people with little food, and being addressed by animals, trees, and rocks). The second branch includes some future events that happened just as he foretold.³⁹

FOURTH SIGN: The future events he foretold, through the All-Knowing of the Unseen's instruction, are beyond counting. Since his true reports about preceding ages, Prophets, and their nations are mostly found in the Qur'an, here we point out only a few of his correct predictions concerning his Companions, Family, and community. To ensure a complete understanding of the subject, we explain six essentials as a prelude.

FIRST ESSENTIAL: The Prophet's every act and state bears witness to his Prophethood and faithfulness. But not all of them need to be miraculous, for he was sent by the All-Mighty as a human being to guide and lead human beings in their collective affairs and individual deeds to happiness in both this world and the next, and to disclose the wonders of God's art and the works of His Power, each of which is a miracle although it appears to us as ordinary and familiar. If he were extraordinary in all of his acts, he could not guide human beings and instruct them through his acts, states, and attitudes.

³⁹ Unfortunately, I could not write as I had intended, and so wrote as my heart dictated. I could not follow the order of this classification.

Being supplied with some extraordinary phenomena to prove his Prophethood to obstinate unbelievers, he worked miracles when necessary. But his miracles were never such that people were forced to believe against their will, as that would annul human free will in this arena of test and trial. If this were not so, there would have been no choice, meaning that Abu Jahl would have believed as did Abu Bakr and that no one could have been held responsible, in this life and the next, for their deeds.

It is surprising that while so many people believed in him through a single sign such as a miracle, a few words, or a glimpse of his face, some people today go astray as if thousands of proofs of his Prophethood were not enough, although they have reached us through authentic lines of transmission and caused countless discerning people to accept Islam.

SECOND ESSENTIAL: The Messenger is a human being and so acts as a human being. He is also a Messenger of God and thus an interpreter and envoy of the All-Mighty.

His message is based on the two kinds of Divine Revelation: explicit and implicit. In the case of explicit Revelation, the Messenger merely interprets and announces—he has no share in its content. The Qur'an and those Sacred Traditions (*hadith qudsi*) whose meaning and content belong to God exclusively but whose wording belongs to the Prophet, are included here. In the case of implicit Revelation, the essence and origin of which is based on Divine Revelation and inspiration, the Prophet is allowed to explain and describe them. When he does so, he relies either on direct Revelation and inspiration or on his own insight. When giving his own interpretation, he either relies on the perceptive power bestowed upon him due to his Prophetic mission or speaks as a person conforming to his time's common usages, customs, and kinds of comprehension.

Thus not all details of every Prophetic Tradition are necessarily derived from pure Revelation, nor are the sublime signs of his Messengership to be sought in his human thoughts and transactions. Since some truths are revealed to him in a brief and abstract form, and he describes them through his insight and in accord with normal understanding, the metaphors, allegories, or allusions he uses may need explanation or interpretation. Remember that the human mind can grasp some truths only through analogy. For example, once a loud noise was heard in the Prophet's presence. He said: "This is the noise of a rock that has been rolling downwards for 70

years and now has reached Hell's lowest depths." An hour later, news came that a notorious hypocrite who recently had reached the age of 70 had died and gone to Hell. This report showed the interpretation of the Prophet's eloquent parable.

THIRD ESSENTIAL: A Tradition related by numerous reliable authorities is indisputable. This form of relation (*tawatur*) has two kinds: obvious *tawatur* (a Tradition with numerous chains of transmission by reliable authorities) and *tawatur* with respect to meaning. This second one also has two kinds: those agreed upon by silence and those unanimously related by different people but with different words. In the first case, a Tradition related in the presence of others without engendering any dispute or is met with silence enjoys an implied acceptance. If those remaining silent are interested in the narration and are known to be very sensitive to errors and lies, their silence implies acceptance with far more certainty. The second kind, *tawatur* with respect to meaning, occurs when an incident is related unanimously by different people but with different words, as this also implies its actual occurrence. In addition, a report with only one chain of transmission sometimes amounts to the degree of *tawatur* in certain conditions or through some external signs.

Most of the Prophet's miracles and his Prophethood's proofs fall into either category. Although a few are related through only one chain of transmitters, they can be regarded as certain as if related through *tawatur*, since they have been accepted by confirmed authorities. Among such authorities were those who memorized more than 100,000 Traditions, who were so God-conscious that for 50 years they performed the morning prayer with the night prayer's *wudu'* (ablution) (spending night awake in long vigils), and who compiled the six authentic books of Tradition.⁴⁰

Any Tradition accepted by those authorities after much scrutiny has the certainty of *tawatur*, even if it had only one chain of transmitters, for such people were so familiar with the Prophet's Traditions and exalted style that they could instantly spot and reject one false Tradition among 100 reports. Like an expert jeweler recognizes a pure diamond, they could not confuse other words with those of the Prophet. However, such meticulous authorities as Ibn al-Jawziya were so excessive in their criticism that they consid-

⁴⁰ These are the books of Traditions compiled by Bukhari (d. 870), Muslim (d. 875), Abu Dawud (d. 888), Tirmidhi (d. 892), Ibn Maja (d. 886), and al-Nasa'i (d. 915). (Ed.)

ered several authentic Traditions to be false. This does not mean that the meaning of every false wording is wrong; rather, it means that the wording does not belong to the Prophet.

QUESTION: What is the benefit of relating every Tradition through a chain of transmitters, so that they say, even for a well-known incident: "It is related from so-and-so and from so-and-so, etc."?

ANSWER: This has many benefits, such as showing the consensus of the truthful and reliable narrators, meticulous Traditionists, as well as the unanimity of the discerning authorities mentioned. Also, it shows that each scholar in the chain puts his seal on its authenticity.

QUESTION: Why were miracles not transmitted with as great an emphasis as the Sharia's basic rules?

ANSWER: The Sharia's rules are used by most people to guide their lives and are applicable to everyone. Miracles, on the other hand, do not need to be known to everyone and only need to be heard once. For example, some religious obligations (such as the funeral prayer) only need to be observed by a few people and not the entire community. In the same way, only some people need to know about the miracles. This is why a miracle, no matter how much firmer its establishment is than a Sharia rule, is transmitted by only one or two narrators, while a Sharia rule is transmitted by ten or twenty people.

FOURTH ESSENTIAL: The Messenger predicted some future events that are recurring, as opposed to isolated events having a particular significance in human history. They also have numerous aspects, each of which is explained through a different Tradition. A reporter combines these aspects as if a single narration, thereby making the Tradition appear to be at variance with reality.

For example, many narrations about the Mahdi have different details and descriptions. But the truth of the matter is that God's Messenger, relying on Revelation, told of a Mahdi who would appear in every century to preserve believers' morale, prevent them from falling into despair over social upheavals, and secure their heart-felt devotion to members of the Prophet's Family (a most-illustrious lineage). He foresaw a Mahdi in every century similar to the Great Mahdi promised for the end of time. The 'Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi, for example, regarded as belonging to the Prophet's Family, had many of the Great Mahdi's characteristics. So, narrations about the Mahdi

differ due to confusing the Great Mahdi's qualities with those great caliphs or saints who came before him.

FIFTH ESSENTIAL: Since only God knows the Unseen, The Prophet did not know it by himself. He told his Companions whatever God, the All-Mighty, related to him about the Unseen.

The All-Mighty is also All-Wise and All-Compassionate. Thus His Wisdom and Compassion require the veiling of most future events, for as people consider many of them unpleasant, any prior knowledge of them would be painful. This is why we do not know when we will die and why the misfortunes we will experience remain behind the veil of the Unseen.

Divine Wisdom and Compassion also require that the Prophet not know the details of what will happen to his household and Companions after his death because of his deep compassion and tender-heartedness.⁴¹ Nevertheless the All-Mighty had a Divine purpose for telling him about some of them, albeit not in all their tragic aspects. He communicated pleasant events to the Prophet, either in outline or in detail, which he then related to his Companions.

Finally, his tidings were transmitted accurately to our own era by the great Traditionists who were at the height of piety, justice, and truthfulness, and who trembled with fear at such specific warnings as: "Whoever intentionally lies about me should prepare for a dwelling in the Fire"⁴² and *But who does greater wrong than one who lies against God?* (39:32).

SIXTH ESSENTIAL: Many history books and biographies describe the Prophet's behavior and characteristics. But most discuss his human nature, and thus ignore his spiritual persona and his being's sacred nature, both of which are very sublime and illustrious. For, according to the rule of "the cause is like the doer," the rewards of all Muslims' prayers are added to the accounts of his perfections from the day he declared his Prophethood (until the end of time). Every day he receives countless invocations by Muslims as well as God's infinite mercy, which he draws in like measure.

⁴¹ For example, God's Messenger once said to his wives: "I wish I knew which of you will take part in that event," which shows that he did not know that 'A'isha would participate in the Battle of Camel. If he had known, his love and affection for her would have been hurt. However, later on he was informed of this somehow and told 'Ali: "There probably will be a matter between you and 'A'isha. Treat her gently and return her to her abode safely."

⁴² Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Jami' al-Saghir*; related from 70 Companions.

Further, since he is creation's result and most perfect fruit, as well as the beloved and interpreter of the Creator of the universe, his true nature and true perfections cannot be contained in accounts of his recorded human qualities. Certainly the stature of one served by archangels Gabriel and Michael as aides-de-camp during the Battle of Badr cannot be sought in accounts of, for example, his bargaining over the price of a horse.

To avoid falling into error, we must focus on his true nature and illustrious spiritual persona in his rank of Messengership. Otherwise we may risk showing him disrespect or entertain uncertainties about his persona.

Consider the following analogies: Suppose a planted date-stone sprouts and becomes a tall, fruitful tree growing upward and outward; or that a chick from an incubated peacock egg hatches, grows into a beautiful peacock, and, adorned with the Pen of Divine Power, grows bigger and prettier still. The date-stone and egg possess qualities, properties, and precisely balanced elements, but they are not as striking and significant as those of the tree and the peacock that grew from them. Given this, while describing the date-stone's and the egg's qualities along with those of the tree and the peacock, each item's qualities must be distinguished so that anyone following the description may find it reasonable. If this is not done (e.g., claiming that one date-stone [and not the tree] produces thousands of dates, or that the egg is [already] the prince of birds), people will be led to contradiction and denial.

The human nature of God's Messenger may be likened to that date-stone or egg, but his true nature, illumined with the Prophetic mission, is like the Touba tree or the Royal Bird of Paradise. Moreover, His true nature continues to grow more and more perfect. Given this, when one thinks of that exalted person bargaining with a Bedouin in the marketplace, he should gaze upon his illustrious essential nature, the one who rode the Rafraf during the Ascension, left Gabriel behind, and reached the Divine Presence. Otherwise, one risks showing insufficient respect to or failing to convince one's earth-bound soul of his true nature.

FIFTH SIGN: We will mention several Prophetic Traditions that predict future events, as follows:

- The Prophet announced from the pulpit in the presence of his Companions: "My grandson Hasan is a noble one. Through him, God will

reconcile two large hosts.”⁴³ Forty years later, when the two largest Muslim armies faced each other, Hasan made peace with Mu‘awiya and fulfilled this prediction.

- The Prophet told ‘Ali: “You will fight the oath-breakers, the unjust, and the deviators.”⁴⁴ In this way he predicted the battles of the Camel and Siffin, as well as those fought against the Kharijites.⁴⁵ Once when conversing with Zubayr in good, affectionate terms, the Prophet told ‘Ali: “Zubayr will fight you, but he will be in the wrong.”⁴⁶
- He also told his wives: “One of you will lead a serious rebellion. Many around her will be killed, and the dogs of Haw‘ab will bark at her.”⁴⁷ All these predictions were proved by ‘Ali’s battles against ‘A’isha, Talha, and Zubayr during the Battle of the Camel; against Mu‘awiya at Siffin; and against the Kharijites at Haroura and Nahrawan.
- The Prophet told ‘Ali that ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam al-Khariji, whom he knew, would stain Ali’s beard with the blood of his own head.⁴⁸ In addition, he also mentioned a bodily mark possessed by the Kharijite Dhul-Thadya. When that man’s corpse was found among the dead Kharijites, ‘Ali showed it to others as a proof of the rightness of his cause, thus making the miracle public.⁴⁹
- Umm Salama and others related that the Messenger prophesied Husayn’s death at Taff (Karbala’),⁵⁰ a tragic event that occurred 50 years later. He also repeatedly predicted, with some details, that his Family would be subjected to killing and exile after his death.⁵¹ All that he predicted came true.

⁴³ Bukhari, *Kitab al-Suh*, 3:244; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 5:37.

⁴⁴ Hakim, *Mustadrak*, 3:139; Bayhaqi, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, 6:414.

⁴⁵ The Kharijites held that those who commit a grave error or sin and do not repent sincerely are no longer Muslims. Mere profession is not enough, for belief must be accompanied by righteous deeds. They also considered jihad as one of Islam’s pillars, due to their belief that “enjoining good and forbidding evil” meant vindicating truth through the sword. Although wiped out during the first two Islamic centuries for their almost constant rebellion against established authority, they still are found today in small pockets in Oman as well as in northern and eastern Africa. (Ed.)

⁴⁶ Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, 6:213; Hakim, *ibid.*, 3:366.

⁴⁷ Bayhaqi, *ibid.*, 6:405-410; Hakim, *ibid.*, 3:120.

⁴⁸ Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 1:102; Haythami, *Majma'*, 9:138; Hakim, *ibid.*, 3:113.

⁴⁹ Bukhari, 9:22; Muslim, 7:745; Bayhaqi, *Dala'il*, 6:426.

⁵⁰ Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 6:294; Haythami, *Majma'*, 9:188; Bayhaqi, *ibid.*, 6:468.

⁵¹ Hakim, 4:482; *al-Jami' al-Saghir*, no. 2558.

QUESTION: ‘Ali’s extraordinary courage and profound knowledge, in addition to his kinship with the Messenger, qualified him to be caliph. So why did Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthman reign before him? And why did the Muslim community experience so much disorder during his caliphate?

ANSWER: A great saint descended from the Prophet’s Family is reported to have said: “God’s Messenger desired ‘Ali’s caliphate, but was informed through inspiration that God willed otherwise. Upon this, he abandoned his desire and submitted to God’s Will.”

One reason why God’s Will differed must have been this: If ‘Ali had become caliph right after the Prophet’s death, a time when the Companions were more in need of agreement and unity than ever, there probably would have arisen, as happened during his caliphate, a tendency in many persons and tribes to compete because of his pure, uncompromisingly fearless, heroic, and independent behavior and attitude, as well as his widely known courage. Such competition might have divided the believers.

Another reason is that the young Muslim community, which spread rapidly through tribal and ethnic intermingling, gradually caused 73 sects to emerge, just as the Prophet predicted. Thus, in circumstances that foster internal conflict and turbulence, a person of ‘Ali’s courage and sagacity was needed, someone who enjoyed the force and esteem of the Hashimites and the Prophet’s Family. ‘Ali, by fighting every hardship, fulfilled the Prophet’s prediction: “I fought for the Qur’an’s revelation. You will fight for its correct explanation against its forced, false interpretation.”⁵²

In ‘Ali’s absence, the pomp of worldly kingdom probably would have led the Umayyads completely astray. But his presence and that of the Prophet’s Family made the Umayyad leaders restrict themselves, preserve their standing before the Muslim community, and do their best (if not willingly) or at least encourage their subjects and followers to protect and propagate Islam’s truths and principles and the Qur’an’s commandments. As a result, countless meticulous Muslim jurists, distinguished Traditionists, saints and pure people of piety emerged during their reign. If they had not faced the perfect piety, sainthood, and virtue of the Prophet’s Family, they probably would have gone completely astray from the very beginning, as happened toward the end of both their and the ‘Abbasids’ rule.

⁵² Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 3:83; Haythami, *Majma‘*, 9:133; Tirmidhi, 5:635.

QUESTION: Why did the caliphate not remain in the Prophet's Family, although its members were the most deserving?

ANSWER: Worldly kingdom is deceptive, and the Prophet's Family was appointed to preserve Islam's truths and the Qur'an's injunctions. In order not to be deceived by caliphate or kingdom, one should be either infallible like a Prophet or as extraordinarily pure-hearted as the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, the Umayyad caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, or the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi. The Fatimids in Egypt, the al-Mohads in North Africa, and the Safawids in Persia all show that worldly kingdom is not suitable for the Prophet's Family, for it causes them to neglect their essential duty of protecting and serving Islam. When they refrained from worldly kingdom, they served Islam and the Qur'an brilliantly and successfully.

Consider the leading saints descended from Hasan, particularly the four most eminent (Hasan al-Kharaqani, Hayat ibn Qays al-Harrani, Shaykh Hasan al-Shadhezili, and especially 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani) and the Imams descending from Husayn, especially Zayn al-'Abidin and Ja'far al-Sadiq. Each became a spiritual guide of the highest rank and, dispelling the dark clouds of wrongdoing, spread the Qur'an's light and Islam's truth. They showed themselves to be true heirs of the Prophet.

QUESTION: What was the Divine Wisdom behind the terrible and bloody upheavals, and why did Divine Compassion allow such things to happen to those Muslims who cannot have deserved them?

ANSWER: A strong spring rain activates and develops predispositions inherent in vegetables, seeds, and trees so that each will bloom and flourish in its own fashion and realize its natural function. In the same way, upheavals during the time of the Companions and their successors activated various talents. Many people rose to preserve Islam, fearing that it was in danger. Women and men shouldered a duty to be performed in the Muslim community and strove to fulfill it to the best of their ability. Each group performed a different function, such as striving to preserve the Prophetic Traditions, to protect the Sharia, to maintain the Qur'an and the truths of belief, and so on. This caused many branches of the religious and natural sciences to flourish, as well as many people of learning to appear. The seeds of a brilliant civilization were scattered throughout the vast Muslim world, and half of the ancient world changed into "rose gardens." Nevertheless, "thorns" (deviant sects) also appeared in these rose gardens.

It was as if Divine Power shook that age through glory, turned it over vigorously, and thus electrified all people of zeal. Activated by that movement's centrifugal force, large numbers of illustrious jurists, enlightened Traditionists, blessed memorizers of the Qur'an and Traditions, people of purity and chiefs of saints dispersed throughout the Muslim world. Thus Divine Power inspired Muslims with enthusiasm and awakened them to the Qur'an's treasures.

Now we return to our subject. The Messenger predicted thousands of events, all of which came true. Here we mention only a few. Most are agreed upon by the six most authentic books of Traditions, including the two most famous: *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*. Many have the certainty of *tawatur* with respect to their meaning, while others, on account of verification by meticulous researchers, may be considered as certain as if narrated through *tawatur*. All are authentic.

- “You (the Companions) will defeat all your enemies and conquer Makka, Khaybar, Damascus, Jerusalem, Iraq, and Persia. You will share the treasures of the Persian and Byzantine rulers among yourselves.”⁵³ These empires were the superpowers of their time. The Prophet did not say “I think” or “I guess”; rather, he said it as if he had seen it. He predicted this while he was in severest circumstances with a handful of followers due to pervasive hostility in and around Makka.
- “After my death, you should follow the way of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar.”⁵⁴ In other words, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar would succeed him as caliphs and act so perfectly as to please God and His Messenger. He also declared that Abu Bakr’s reign would be short, but that ‘Umar would reign for a longer time and make many conquests.
- “Earth was laid out before me, and I was shown its remotest corners in the east and west. My nation will extend over whatever was laid out before me.”⁵⁵
- Before the Battle of Badr, he indicated the exact places where the polytheistic Qurayshi leaders would be killed, and said: “Abu Jahl will be killed here, ‘Utba here, Umayya here,” etc., and added: “I will kill Umayya ibn al-Khalaf.”⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 3:83; ‘Ali al-Qari’, *Sharh al-Shifa’* (from Bukhari, Muslim and others), 1:678-79.

⁵⁴ Hakim, 3:75; also related by Tirmidhi, Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Maja, and Bayhaqi.

⁵⁵ Muslim, 4:2215; Hakim, 4:445; also related by Tirmidhi, Ibn Hanbal, and Ibn Maja.

⁵⁶ Muslim, no. 1779; Ibn Hanbal, 1:390; Qadi ‘Iyad, *Shifa’*, 1:343; Hakim, 2:327.

- He informed his Companions of what was happening during the Battle of Muta (near Damascus), as if watching it, even though it would take someone one month to reach it on foot. He said: "Zayd has taken the flag and been hit; now Ibn Rawaha has taken it and been hit; now Ja'far has taken it and been hit; now one of God's swords (i.e., Khalid) has taken it."⁵⁷ Two or three weeks later, Ya'la ibn Munabbih returned from the battlefield. In his presence, the Prophet described the fighting in detail and Ya'la swore by God that everything had happened exactly as described.
- "The Caliphate after me will last for 30 years and then be replaced by a biting monarchy.⁵⁸ This affair certainly began with Prophethood and as a mercy. Then it will be mercy and caliphate, after which it will change into a biting monarchy, and finally into iniquity and tyranny."⁵⁹ In other words: the caliphates of four Rightly-Guided Caliphs and the 6-month caliphate of Hasan, after which the caliphate became a monarchy, which later was transformed into tyranny and the corruption of his nation.
- "'Uthman will be killed while reading the Qur'an. God probably will dress him in a shirt, but they will want to remove it from him.'⁶⁰ By this he meant that 'Uthman would become caliph, his deposition would be sought, and that he would be martyred while reading the Qur'an.
- According to an authentic narration, when the Prophet was cupped, he ordered 'Abdullah ibn Zubayr to bury the blood. Upon learning that Ibn Zubayr had drunk it as a blessing, he said: "Woe unto the people for what will befall them because of you, and woe unto you for what will befall you because of the people."⁶¹ Thus he prophesied that the courageous Ibn Zubayr would lead the Muslims and that they would face awful attacks so that people would suffer great disasters. Ibn Zubayr declared his caliphate in Makka during the Umayyads' rule and fought heroic battles against them, until finally Hajjaj the tyrant martyred him after a fierce battle.

⁵⁷ Bukhari, 5:182; Hakim, 3:298; Abu Nu'aym, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, 2:529.

⁵⁸ *Al-Jami' al-Saghir*, no. 3336; Ibn Hanbal, 4:273; Ibn Hibban, Sahih, 8:227; Abu Dawud, Sunna, 8; Tirmidhi, *Fitan*, 48.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Hakim, 3:100; Ibn Hanbal, 6:114; Tirmidhi, no. 2706; *Majma'*, 5:188.

⁶¹ Hakim, 3:554; *al-Matalib al-'Aliya*, 4:21; Qadi 'Iyad, *Shifa' al-Sharif*, 1:339.

- The Messenger foretold the founding of the Umayyad state and that most of its rulers, including Yazid and Walid, would be unjust.⁶² He also foretold that Mu‘awiya would rule the Muslims and advised him to be just and mild: “When you rule, act gently.”⁶³ The Prophet also predicted the Abbasids’ long rule after the Umayyads, saying: “The descendants of ‘Abbas will appear with black flags and rule for many times longer than them (the Umayyads).”⁶⁴
- He prophesied the dreadful destruction of Genghis Khan and Hulagu, which caused the ‘Abbasid state to collapse: “Woe to the Arabs for the evil that has approached.”⁶⁵
- The Prophet said to Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas, when the latter was gravely ill: “Hopefully you will be spared so that some may benefit through you and others be harmed through you,”⁶⁶ suggesting that Sa‘d would be a great commander and make many conquests. While many would benefit from him by converting to Islam, many others would be harmed through him because he would destroy their states. Later on, Sa‘d commanded the Muslim armies that destroyed Persia’s Sassanid Empire and brought many peoples within the guidance of Islam.
- When Negus, the Abyssinian ruler who embraced Islam, died 7 years after the Prophet’s emigration to Madina, he told his Companions what had happened and prayed the funeral prayers for him. A week later, news arrived announcing the Negus’ death on the very day it was announced by the Messenger.⁶⁷
- When the Messenger was on top of either Mount Uhud or Nur with his four closest friends, the mountain trembled. He said: “Steady, for on you are a Prophet, a truthful one (Abu Bakr) and martyrs (‘Umar, ‘Uthman, and ‘Ali).”⁶⁸

Now O miserable, unfeeling, and wretched one who says that Muhammad was a wise man and then closes your eyes to that sun of the truth! Of his 15 kinds of major miracles, so far you have heard only a tiny part of one

⁶² *Al-Jami‘ al-Saghir*, no. 412, 2579; *Shifa'*, 1:338; related by Tirmidhi and Hakim.

⁶³ Ibn Hajar, *Matalib al-‘Aliya*, 4085, related by Ibn Hanbal and Abu Ya‘la.

⁶⁴ Ibn Hanbal, 3:216; Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:326; Bayhaqi, *Dala'il*, 6:513.

⁶⁵ Bukhari, *Kitab al-Fitan*, 9:60; Muslim, no. 2880; Hakim, 1:108.

⁶⁶ Abu Nu‘aym, *Hilyat al-Awliya'*, 1:94, also related by Bukhari and Muslim.

⁶⁷ Bukhari, 2:109; also related by Muslim, Ibn Malik, Abu Dawud, and Nasai.

⁶⁸ Muslim, 4:1880; also related by Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Hakim, and Abu Dawud.

kind—that which is related to his predictions having the certainty of *tawatur*. One who predicts even only one-hundredth of such future events with his own insight would have to be of the highest genius. Even if we merely regarded him as a genius, as you do, could such a person with the insight of a hundred geniuses have perceived anything false or so far abase himself as to give false information? Not to heed the words of such a person concerning happiness in both worlds is pure stupidity.

SIXTH SIGN:

- The Messenger told his daughter Fatima: “You will be the first Family member to join me (after my death).”⁶⁹ When she died 6 months later, his words proved true. He also said to Abu Dharr: “You will be expelled from here (Madina), will live alone and die alone.”⁷⁰ What he said happened 20 years later.
- Once he woke up in Umm Haram’s house (Anas ibn Malik’s aunt) and said with a smile: “I dreamed that my community was fighting in the sea like kings sitting on thrones.” Umm Haram asked: “Pray that I may be with them.” He replied firmly: “You shall be.”⁷¹ Forty years later she accompanied her husband ‘Ubada ibn Samit during the conquest of Cyprus. She died there, and her tomb remains a visited place.
- “The Thaqif tribe will produce a liar who claims Prophethood, as well as a bloodthirsty tyrant.”⁷² In other words, the notorious Mukhtar (who claimed Prophethood) and the criminal Hajjaj (who killed 100,000 people).
- “Constantinople (Istanbul) will be conquered (by my community). How blessed is the commander who conquers it, and how blessed his army.”⁷³ Constantinople fell to Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, who thereby attained a high spiritual rank, in 1453.
- “If religion were hung on the Pleiades, descendants of the Persians would reach it and get ahold of it,”⁷⁴ indicating Persia’s matchless scholars and saints such as Abu Hanifa.

⁶⁹ Bukhari, 4:248; Muslim, 4:1904; Ibn Hambal, 6:77, Bayhaqi, 7:164.

⁷⁰ *Shifa' al-Sharif*, 1:343, related by Ibn Hambal, Ibn Hibban, and Ibn Kathir.

⁷¹ *Al-Jami' al-Saghir*, 6:24, related by Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, among others.

⁷² Hakim, 3:453, also related by Muslim, Ibn Hanbal, and Tirmidhi.

⁷³ Bukhari, *Tarikh al-Saghir*, 139; Hakim, 4: 422, also Ibn Hanbal and Haythami.

⁷⁴ *Al-Lu'lhu' wa al-Marjan*, 3:183, related by Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi.

- “A scholar from the Quraysh will fill the parts of Earth with knowledge.”⁷⁵ This refers to Imam Shafi‘i, who founded one of Islam’s four legal schools.
- “My community will be divided into 73 sects, and only one of them will be saved.” When asked who they were, he replied: “Those who follow me and my Companions,” by which he meant the people of the Sunna and Community (Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama‘a).⁷⁶
- “The Qadariya are the Magians of this community,”⁷⁷ thereby predicting the Qadariya sect,⁷⁸ which would split into several branches and reject Destiny.
- He predicted several groups that would split into many factions, when he told ‘Ali: “On account of you, as with Jesus, two groups will perish: One because of excessive love (for you), and the other because of excessive enmity (for you).”⁷⁹ Christians, due to their excessive love for Jesus, transgressed the limits and regarded him as God’s “son,” while Jews went so far in their enmity as to deny his Prophethood and perfections. This refers to the Rafidites,⁸⁰ and the Kharijites, and the Nasiba, extremist partisans of the Umayyads, respectively.

QUESTION: The Qur'an demands that we love the Prophet's Family, and the Prophet greatly encouraged this. The Shi'a's' love for them may serve as an excuse, for people of love may be likened to people of intoxication. So why cannot the Shi'a, especially the Rafidites, benefit from their love? Why did the Prophet condemn them for their excessive love?

ANSWER: There are two kinds of love. The first is loving somebody as a means to attain true love, which is love for the Prophet's Family in the name of God and his Messenger. Such love increases one's love of the Prophet and becomes a means to love God Almighty. Therefore it is lawful, its excess is harmless and not considered a transgression, and it does not call for reproach and enmity toward others.

⁷⁵ *Kashf al-Khafa'*, 2:53, related by Ibn Hanbal, Tayalisi, Ibn Hajar, and Bayhaqi.

⁷⁶ Ibn Hanbal, 2:332; also related by Abu Dawud, Ibn Maja, and Tirmidhi.

⁷⁷ *Al-Jami' al-Saghir*, 4:150, related by Abu Dawud, Hakim, and Ibn Maja.

⁷⁸ This sect, appearing during the second Islamic century, advocated free will, argued that people can create their own conduct (both good and evil), and accepted causality as a necessary part of human conduct, thus rejecting Divine Destiny.

⁷⁹ Hakim, 3:123; also related by Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Hibban, and Bazzar.

⁸⁰ *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, 10:22; *Fath al-Rabbani*, 24:20; *Nasa'i*, *al-Khasa'is*, 3:19.

The second takes the means as its real object. Such people “forget” the Prophet and devote their love to ‘Ali (the Rafidites) due to his heroic acts and perfections, and to Hasan and Husayn on account of their extraordinary virtues, regardless of whether they recognize God and His Prophet. This love is not a means to love God and His Messenger. Moreover, its excess leads to reproach and enmity toward others. The Rafidites’ excessive love for ‘Ali caused them to reject the caliphates of Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, deny their perfections, and eventually to deviate from the Straight Path. Such excessive and negative love causes spiritual ruin.

- “When Persian and Roman girls serve you, you will be exposed to internal conflicts and civil war, and the wicked will come to power, preying on the good.”⁸¹ This came true after 30 years.
- “‘Ali will conquer Khaybar.”⁸² As a miracle of the Prophet and beyond all expectation, the following day ‘Ali reached the gate of Khaybar’s fortress, used it as a shield, and finally conquered Khaybar. When he threw the gate aside after the conquest, eight (another version says 40) strong men could not lift it.⁸³
- “The Hour will not come before two parties (of Muslims) fight (each other), although they make the same claims,”⁸⁴ predicting the Battle of Siffin between ‘Ali and Mu‘awiya.
- “Ammar will be killed by a rebellious group.”⁸⁵ When ‘Ammar was killed at Siffin, ‘Ali mentioned this as evidence that Mu‘awiya and his followers were rebels. However, Mu‘awiya and ‘Amr ibn al-‘As interpreted it as: “The rebels are his murderers, not all of us.”
- “Disorder will not appear (among my community) as long as ‘Umar is alive.”⁸⁶
- When Sahl ibn ‘Amr was taken prisoner before his conversion to Islam, ‘Umar told the Messenger: “Let me pull out his teeth, for his eloquent speech incites the Qurayshi unbelievers to fight us.” The Messenger replied: “‘Umar, maybe he will assume a position pleasing to you.”⁸⁷ When

⁸¹ Haythami, 10:237; *al-Jami‘ al-Saghir*, 813; *Shifa'*, 1:237; Ibn Hibban, 8:253.

⁸² Bukhari, 5:171; Muslim, no. 2406; Ibn Hanbal, 5:333; Hakim, 3:109.

⁸³ Suyuti, *Tarikh al-Khulafa'*, 164; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya*, 4:189, also related by Hakim, Ibn Ishaq, and Bayhaqi.

⁸⁴ *Al-Jami‘ al-Saghir*, 6:174; related by Bukhari, Muslim, and Abu Dawud.

⁸⁵ Muslim, 4:2236; Bukhari, 1:122; related from about 30 Companions.

⁸⁶ Bayhaqi, 6:386; Muslim, 4:2218; also related by Bukhari.

⁸⁷ Hakim, 4:282; Ibn Hajar, *al-Isaba fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba*, 2:93; *Shifa'*, 1:344.

the Prophet died, Sahl delivered an eloquent sermon in Makka to steady and console the grief-stricken Companions. Remarkably, this sermon was almost the same in meaning and wording as that delivered, at the same time and for the same purpose, by Abu Bakr in Madina.

- “I wonder (Suraqa), how it will be with you when you wear the two bracelets of Chosroes (the Persian king).”⁸⁸ Chosroes was defeated during the reign of ‘Umar, who put the bracelets on Suraqa and said: “Praise be to God, Who took these off Chosroes and put them on Suraqa.”⁸⁹ The Prophet also declared: “Once (the rule of) Chosroes (meaning the Sassanid dynasty) is gone, there will be no other Chosroes,”⁹⁰ (thus predicting the end of the Sassanid rule in Iran).
- When the envoy of Chosroes (the Sassanid king during the Prophet’s time) reached Madina, the Prophet told him: “Chosroes has been killed by his son Shirviya Parwiz.”⁹¹ After confirming this, the envoy (reported to be Firouz) accepted Islam.
- When God’s Messenger was about to set out for the conquest of Makka, a secret letter sent by Khatib ibn Abi Balta‘a was already on its way to the Quraysh. He sent ‘Ali and Miqdad, telling them: “The letter-carrier is in such-and-such a place. Go and bring it.” They did as he asked. When the Messenger asked Khatib why he had sent the letter, Khatib gave an excuse and was pardoned.⁹²
- God’s Messenger prayed: “May he (‘Utba ibn Abi Lahab) be devoured by one of the dogs of God.”⁹³ Later on, this man was devoured by a lion while traveling to Yemen.
- After the conquest of Makka, Bilal al-Habashi stood on the Ka‘ba’s roof and called the people to prayer (*adhan*). Several Qurayshi leaders, namely, Abu Sufyan, ‘Attab ibn Asid, and Harith ibn Hisham, were sitting together near the Ka‘ba. ‘Attab said: “My father is fortunate not to witness this moment.” Harith asked contemptuously: “Could not Muhammad find someone other than this black crow to be the *mu’azzin*?” Abu Sufyan did not comment, saying: “I am afraid that he will come

⁸⁸ Ibn Hajar, *ibid.*, no. 3115; ‘Ali al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shifa*, 1:703.

⁸⁹ *Shifa*, 1:344; also *al-Isaba*, no. 3115.

⁹⁰ Muslim, 4:2236; also related by Bukhari, Tirmidhi, and Tabarani.

⁹¹ ‘Ali al-Qari, *ibid.*, 1:700; *al-Jami‘ al-Saghir*, 875; Abu Nu‘aym, 2:348.

⁹² Bukhari, 5:184; Muslim, No. 2494; Ibn Hanbal, 1:80.

⁹³ *Shifa*, 1:343; related by Hakim, Bayhaqi, and Ibn Ishaq.

to know whatever I say, and so will say nothing. Even if no one informs him, the rocks of this Batha (i.e., Makka) will do so.” Shortly thereafter, God’s Messenger came to them and repeated their conversation word for word. At that very moment ‘Attab and Harith embraced Islam.⁹⁴

Now, those of you who do not recognize the Prophet! Consider that two stubborn Qurayshi leaders believed after witnessing only one miracle. Consider how far you have been ruined so that you are not convinced even after hearing hundreds of his miracles, like this one, that came through *tawatur*. But let’s return to our subject.

- The Muslims captured ‘Abbas during the Battle of Badr. When asked for ransom, ‘Abbas said he had no money. God’s Messenger said: “You left that amount of money with your wife Umm Fadl in such-and-such a place (he gave the exact amount of money and named the place).”⁹⁵ ‘Abbas confirmed this: “Only the two of us (i.e., ‘Abbas and his wife) knew this,” and then attained perfect belief.
- Labid, a dangerous Jewish sorcerer, invented a strong and effective spell to harm the Prophet. Winding some hair around a comb, he bewitched it and threw it into a well. God’s Messenger told some of his Companions, including ‘Ali: “Go to such-and-such a well and remove the spell from it.” They did so, and the Messenger’s discomfort lessened as they unwound the hair.⁹⁶
- In the company of some important Companions, including Abu Hurayra and Hudayfa, the Prophet mentioned the fate one of them would meet because of his later apostasy: “One of you will be in the Fire with a tooth bigger than Mount Uhud.” Abu Hurayra would later relate: “I was so afraid, as only two members of that group remained. One of them was me. Finally, the other man was killed in the Battle of Yamama as an apostate in the company of Musaylima.”⁹⁷
- Before converting to Islam, ‘Umayr and Safwan decided to kill the Prophet and collect a large reward. When ‘Umayr came to Madina with this intention, God’s Messenger summoned him, related the plot, and

⁹⁴ Ibn Hajar, *al-Matalib al-‘Aliya*, 4366; Ibn Hisham, *Sira*, 2:413.

⁹⁵ Haythami, *Majma‘ al-Zawa‘id*, 6:85; related by Ibn Hanbal, Hakim, and Bayhaqi.

⁹⁶ Bukhari, 4:148; Muslim, 4:1719; Ibn Maja, 3545; Ibn Hanbal, 4:367.

⁹⁷ *Majma‘ al-Zawa‘id*, 8:289; related by Tabarani and, with a slight difference, by Muslim; *Shifa’*, 1:342.

placed his hand on ‘Umayr’s chest. ‘Umayr confessed and became a Muslim.⁹⁸

Many more of his predictions are recorded with chains of transmission in authentic books of Tradition. Most of the ones related here have the certainty of *tawatur* in meaning, being related in *al-Jami‘ al-Sahih* by Imam al-Bukhari and *al-Jami‘ al-Sahih* by Imam al-Muslim (commonly known as Bukhari and Muslim or *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*, respectively), which are accepted by meticulous researchers as the most authentic sources after the Qur’ān, and in the *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, *Sunan al-Nasa’i*, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, *Musnad al-Hakim*, *Musnad al-Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, and *Dala'il al-Bayhaqi*.

Now then, you bewildered person, do not try to explain this away by calling Muhammad a wise man. His predictions, all of which have come (or will come) true, can be explained in only two ways. The first one is that he had such a keen sight and broad genius that he penetrated into all times and places and thereby learned of the past and the future. If someone had this quality, it would be no more than a wonder, a miraculous gift from the Creator of the universe, and one of the greatest miracles.

The second one is that he is an official instructed by a Being Who controls and observes everything, commands all times and places, and records everything in a great ledger. He then relates to His Messenger whatever and whenever He wills. Thus Muhammad instructs others as he is instructed by his Eternal Instructor.

- While appointing Khalid ibn al-Walid to fight against Umayyad, the chief of Dawmat al-Jandal, the Prophet told him: “You will find him (Umayyad) on a wild ox hunt,” and that he would be captured without resistance.⁹⁹ Khalid found and captured Umayyad in those exact circumstances.
- Some time after the Quraysh hung the leaf containing the articles of boycott against the Bani Hashim (the Prophet’s clan) on the Ka‘ba’s wall, the Messenger told them: “Worms have eaten the leaf, except the parts bearing the names of God.” They went and found it to be so.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Majma‘ al-Zawa‘id*, 8:286; *Shifa‘*, 1:342; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah*, 3:313.

⁹⁹ Ibn Sa‘d, *Tabaqat*, 2:119; Hakim, 4:519; *Shifa‘*, 1:344; Bayhaqi, 2:66.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah*, 3:96; Bayhaqi, 2:311; *Shifa‘*, 1:345; Ibn Hisham, 1:371.

- “A pestilence will break out during Jerusalem’s conquest.” This city was conquered during ‘Umar’s caliphate, and a widespread pestilence broke out and killed about 70,000 people in 3 days.¹⁰¹
- God’s Messenger predicted the establishment of Basra and Baghdad,¹⁰² that treasures would pour into Baghdad from all over the world, and that the Arabs would fight the Turks and the people living around the Caspian Sea,¹⁰³ most of whom would later convert and rule the Arabs in their own lands. He said: “Non-Arabs will predominate among you, consuming your booty and striking off your heads.”¹⁰⁴
- “Young, evil Qurayshis will ruin my community.”¹⁰⁵ This foretold such wicked Umayyad leaders as Yazid and Walid. He also predicted that people in certain areas, such as Yamama, would apostasize,¹⁰⁶ and declared during the Battle of the Trench: “After this, neither the Quraysh nor the Confederates will fight me, but I will fight them.”¹⁰⁷
- The Prophet foretold his death a few months before it happened, saying: “One of God’s servants has been given a choice and has chosen that which is with God.”¹⁰⁸
- “One of his (Zayd ibn Sawhan) limbs will precede him to Paradise.”¹⁰⁹ This came true when Zayd lost a hand during a battle.

These predictions related to the Unseen constitute only one of his 10 kinds of miracles. We did not mention one of these kinds here, and summarized this and the other 4 kinds related to predictions in the Twenty-fifth Word. Anyone with an uncorrupted mind and heart can consider just this one kind together with the other 4 in order to believe that Muhammad is God’s Messenger and was instructed by the All-Majestic One, the Creator of everything and the the All-Knowing of the Unseen.

¹⁰¹ Bukhari, 7:168; Muslim, no. 2219; Ibn Hanbal, 4:195.

¹⁰² Basra: *al-Jami’ al-Saghîr*, 6:268, related by Abu Dawud; Baghdad: *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, 10:102; also related by Abu Nu’aym and Khatib.

¹⁰³ *Al-Shifa’*, 1:337, related by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, and Tirmidhi.

¹⁰⁴ *Majma’ al-Zawa’id*, 7:310, related by Hakim, Tayalisi, and Ibn Hanbal.

¹⁰⁵ Bukhari, 9:60; Ibn Hanbal, 2:288; Hakim, *Mustadrak*, 4:479.

¹⁰⁶ Bukhari, 4:247; Muslim, 4:1781.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Hanbal, 4:262, also related by Bukhari, Ibn Hibban, and Tabarani.

¹⁰⁸ Muslim, no. 2382; also related by Bukhari and Tirmidhi.

¹⁰⁹ *Majma’ al-Zawa’id*, 9:398, related by Bayhaqi, Ibn Adiyy, and Abu Ya’la.

SEVENTH SIGN: We mention a few examples of the Prophet's miracles related to increasing food that have the certainty of *tawatur* in meaning. But before continuing, some introductory comments are appropriate.

Each miracle related below was transmitted through various—sometimes as many as 16—channels. Most took place before large groups and were narrated by many persons of truth and good repute. For example, one of the 70 people fed with four handfuls of food relates the incident while the rest remain silent (i.e., they do not contradict him). Their silence indicates agreement. This is especially true for the truthful, straightforward, and honest Companions who reject and oppose all falsehood. The incidents given below are narrated by many people and confirmed by the witnesses' silence, thus making each incident definite to the degree of *tawatur* in meaning.

Moreover, history books and biographies of the Prophet record that the Companions, next to preserving the Qur'an and its verses, did their best to record and preserve the Messenger's deeds and words, especially those concerning miracles and Divine Commands, and to confirm their authenticity. They never neglected even an apparently insignificant act or state of the Prophet, as confirmed by the books of Tradition.

While the Prophet was alive, the miracles and Traditions forming the basis of religious injunctions were written down by many Companions, especially the "Seven 'Abdullahs," notably 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas (the "Interpreter of the Qur'an") and 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As. Some 30 or 40 years later, thousands of Tabi'un researchers recorded these, and later on the four imams of Islamic jurisprudence and thousands of discerning Traditionists also would write them down and transmit them.

Two centuries after the Prophet's emigration, the compilers of the six esteemed and most authentic books of Traditions, at the head of whom are Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim, shouldered the task of preserving the Traditions. In the meantime, meticulous critics identified false reports produced by unbelievers or careless and ignorant people. In later centuries, Traditions continued to be distinguished from fabrications and distortions by people of profound learning and such meticulous researchers as Ibn al-Jawzi and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, who was honored many times while awake with the presence and conversation of God's Messenger, as confirmed by those of spiritual realization.

Thus the miracles cited below come down to us through numerous safe and trustworthy hands, for which we thank God, since this is by His grace. No one has the right to doubt their authenticity. Examples of authentically narrated miracles concerning the Prophet's increasing of food through his blessing are as follows:

FIRST EXAMPLE: *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*, and the others of the six most authentic books of Tradition, relate that during the feast celebrating the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab, Umm Sulaym (Anas' mother) fried a few handfuls of dates and asked Anas to take them to the Prophet. He did so, and was told: "Go and invite so-and-so (naming some people) and whoever else you meet." Anas did as he was told, and gradually about 300 Companions filled the Prophet's room and the large hall where the poor, learned Companions lived. The Prophet told them: "Make circles of ten." Putting his hand on the dates, he supplicated and told the people to help themselves. Each person ate until satisfied. Then he asked Anas to clear the table. Anas later related: "I could not tell if there was more food when I set out the dish or when I removed it."¹¹⁰

SECOND EXAMPLE: Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, who hosted the Prophet for some months after his emigration, relates: "I made a meal sufficient for two people: God's Messenger and Abu Bakr. The Prophet, however, told me to invite 30 distinguished Ansaris (Helpers). Thirty men came and ate. He then asked me to invite another 60, which I did. They also came and ate. God's Messenger then told me to invite 70 more, which I did. They came and ate. There was still food left in the bowl when they finished eating. After witnessing that miracle, all who had eaten took the oath of allegiance. One hundred and eighty men ate food prepared for two."¹¹¹

THIRD EXAMPLE: 'Umar, Abu Hurayra, Salama al-Aqwa, and Abu 'Amrat al-Ansari report that during a military campaign, the army had no food. The Messenger, upon being informed, told them to gather all of their food. Everyone brought a few dates—the largest amount was a few handfuls—and put them on a mat. Salama relates: "I estimated the amount to be the equivalent of a reclining goat." God's Messenger prayed for its increase and called everyone to bring his bowl. They rushed forward, and each soldier's bowl was filled. Even then, some was food left over. One Companion who

¹¹⁰ Bukhari, 4:234; Bayhaqi, *Dala'il*, 3:465; also related by Muslim.

¹¹¹ *Al-Shifa'*, 1:292; related by Tabarani, Ibn Kathir, and Bayhaqi.

was there later said: "I realized from the way the dates became abundant that even if all people on Earth came, there would be enough."¹¹²

FOURTH EXAMPLE: Authentic books of Tradition, including *Bukhari* and *Muslim*, report that 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr related: "We, 130 Companions, accompanied God's Messenger on an expedition. Dough from four handfuls of wheat was prepared to make bread, a goat was slaughtered and cooked, and its liver and kidneys were roasted. I swear by God that God's Messenger gave each of us a piece from the roasted parts and put the cooked meat in the bowls. We ate until we were full, and still there was some left over. I loaded it onto a camel."¹¹³

FIFTH EXAMPLE: As recorded in authentic books, Jabir al-Ansari relates under oath: "During the Battle of the Trench or Ahzab, our food seemed to be undiminished even after about 1,000 men had eaten bread made from four handfuls of barley and (meat from) a young cooked goat. The food was cooked in my house. And after everyone ate and left, the pot was still boiling with meat and bread was still being made from the dough. God's Messenger had put water from his mouth into the dough and into the pot, and then prayed for abundance."¹¹⁴ Since this event was witnessed by 1,000 people, was related by Jabir with an oath, and no one is reported to have contradicted it, it can be considered as definite as if it were related by 1,000 people.

SIXTH EXAMPLE: As related in an authentic way, Abu Talha (Anas' uncle) said: "God's Messenger fed 70 to 80 people with a small amount of rye bread that Anas brought under his arm. The Messenger ordered the bread broken into small pieces and then prayed for abundance. Since there was not enough space for everyone, the people ate in shifts of ten. Everyone left satisfied."¹¹⁵

SEVENTH EXAMPLE: Authentic books of Tradition, including *Shifa' al-Sharif* and *Sahih al-Muslim*, report that Jabir al-Ansari said: "A man asked God's Messenger for food to feed his family. The Messenger gave him half a load of barley. He and his household ate from it for a long time. When they noticed it was not decreasing, they measured it to see how much it had been reduced. This ended the blessing of abundance, and the barley began

¹¹² Muslim, no. 1729, also related by *Bukhari*.

¹¹³ Muslim, no. 2057; Hakim, 2:618; also related by *Bukhari* and *Ibn Hanbal*.

¹¹⁴ Muslim, no. 3029; *Bukhari*, 5:138; *Ibn Hanbal*, *Musnad*, 3:218.

¹¹⁵ *Bukhari*, 4:234; *Muslim*, no. 2040; *Bayhaqi*, 6:88; *Ibn Hanbal*, 3:218.

to dwindle. When the man told God's Messenger what had happened, he replied: 'If you had not measured it, it would have sufficed you for a lifetime.'¹¹⁶

EIGHTH EXAMPLE: Such authentic books as *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, *Dala'il al-Bayhaqi*, *Shifa' al-Sharif*, and others quote Samura ibn Jundub as relating that a bowl of meat brought to God's Messenger fed groups of people from morning until evening.¹¹⁷ As explained in this section's introduction on these Traditions' authenticity, it is as if everyone present related this event and that Samura related it on their behalf and with their approval.

NINTH EXAMPLE: As related by such reliable and trusted researchers as Qadi 'Iyad (author of *Shifa' al-Sharif*), Ibn Abi Shayba, and Tabarani, Abu Hurayra says: "God's Messenger told me to invite poor people of the Suffa¹¹⁸ who used the Mosque's hall as their home. There were more than 100 of them, and I searched for and summoned them all. One plate of food was put before us. We all ate from it as much as we wished. When we rose, the plate was as full as it had been when placed before us. However, our finger marks on the food showed that we had eaten from it."¹¹⁹ Although only Abu Hurayra narrates this event, it is as definite as if each member of the Suffa had narrated it, since Abu Hurayra narrates in their name and relies on their confirmation. Would such perfect, truthful people remain silent if the narration were not true?

TENTH EXAMPLE: Imam 'Ali narrates that God's Messenger gathered 'Abd al-Muttalib's descendants, about 40 people, some of whom could eat a young camel and drink more than a gallon of milk at one meal. But God's Messenger had prepared only a handful of food. They ate until satisfied, and the amount of food did not decrease. Then the Messenger brought them a wooden bowl of milk that might be enough for only three or four people. They drank until satisfied, and the amount of milk did not decrease.¹²⁰ This miracle is as definite as 'Ali's bravery and loyalty.

¹¹⁶ *Shifa'*, 1:91; Muslim, no. 2281; Bayhaqi, 6:114.

¹¹⁷ Tirmidhi, no. 2629; also related by Darimi, Hakim, and Ibn Hanbal.

¹¹⁸ The people of the Suffa were the poor Muhajirin (emigrants to Medina) who lived in the mosque's hall and devoted themselves to Islam, particularly to preserving Prophetic Traditions. The Messenger provided their livelihood. (Tr.)

¹¹⁹ *Shifa'*, 1:293; Bayhaqi, 6:101; also related by Tabarani and Ibn Hanbal.

¹²⁰ *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, 8:302, related by Ibn Hanbal, Bazzar, and Tabarani.

ELEVENTH EXAMPLE: At the wedding feast of ‘Ali and Fatima, God’s Messenger told Bilal: “Have some bread made from a few handfuls of flour, and have a young camel be slaughtered.” Bilal narrates: “I brought the food, and he put his hand over it for a blessing. Later, the Companions came in groups, ate, and left. The Messenger prayed for the abundance of the remaining food and sent a full bowl to each of his wives, saying that they should eat and feed whoever came to them.”¹²¹ Such blessed abundance was necessary for such a blessed marriage.

TWELFTH EXAMPLE: Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq related that Fatima cooked enough food only for herself and ‘Ali. She sent ‘Ali to invite God’s Messenger to eat with them. He came and told them to send a dish of food to each of his wives and then put the remaining food aside for him, ‘Ali, Fatima, and their children. Fatima says: “When we removed the pot, it was still full to the brim. By God’s Will, we ate from it for quite a long time.”¹²² I wonder why you do not believe this miracle as if you yourself had seen it, for it reaches us through such an illustrious and respected line of narrators. Even Satan could not dispute it!

THIRTEENTH EXAMPLE: Such truthful Tradition authorities as Abu Dawud, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and Bayhaqi narrate from Dukayn al-Ahmad ibn Sa‘d al-Muzayn, from Nu‘man ibn Muqarrin al-Ahmad al-Muzayn, who along with his six brothers was a Companion, and from Jarir the following incident originally reported by ‘Umar and transmitted through various channels: “God’s Messenger once commanded ‘Umar: ‘Provide food for 400 horsemen of the Ahmasi tribe for their journey.’ ‘Umar responded: ‘O Messenger of God, all the provisions put together are about the size of a young camel sitting down.’ The Prophet told him to give it to them. From half a load of dates, ‘Umar gave them an amount that satisfied 400 horsemen. He would later say when reporting this event: ‘The food did not decrease.’”¹²³ This miracle is confirmed by the witnesses’ silence. Do not ignore such narrations just because they are related by only two or three individuals, for confirmation by silence gives their meaning the authority and certainty of *tawatur* by meaning.

¹²¹ *Shifa*: 1:297; Bayhaqi, *Dala'il*, 3:160.

¹²² *Shifa*, 1:294; Ibn Hajar, *al-Matalib al-‘Aliya*, 4:73. The chain of transmission is as follows: from his father Muhammad al-Baqir, from his father Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin, from ‘Ali.

¹²³ *Majma‘ al-Zawa‘id*, 8:304; Bayhaqi, 5:365; Ibn Hanbal, 5:445.

FOURTEENTH EXAMPLE: As narrated by authentic books of Tradition, including *Bukhari* and *Muslim*, Jabir's father died while deep in debt to Jews. Jabir gave all of his father's possessions to the creditors, but they were not satisfied. The fruits in his orchard would not pay off the remaining debts for years. God's Messenger said: "Pick the fruits and heap them up." He did so. The Messenger then walked around them and prayed. After Jabir had paid his father's debt, fruit equal to the orchard's annual yield still remained. According to another narration, what remained was equal to what he had given the creditors. This greatly astounded the Jewish creditors.¹²⁴ Since this miracle is related on behalf of its witnesses, its meaning has the assurance of *tawatur*.

FIFTEENTH EXAMPLE: Such meticulous researchers as Tirmidhi and Bayhaqi quote Abu Hurayra as saying: "During a battle ("During the Battle of Tabuk" according to another narration) the army ran out of food. God's Messenger asked: 'Isn't there anything at all?' I answered: 'I have a few ("15" in another version) dates left in my saddle bag.' He told me to bring them, which I did. Putting his hand in the bag, he took out a handful of dates and prayed for abundance while putting them on a plate. Then he called the army in groups of ten. After everyone had eaten, God's Messenger, said to me: 'Take that (bag) which you brought, hold on to it, and do not turn it upside down.' I took the bag, put my hand into it, and found therein as many dates as I had brought. Later, during the time of the Prophet and then of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman, I ate from those dates." (In another version, Abu Hurayra said: "I gave many loads of them in the way of God. When 'Uthman was martyred, the dates and the bag were plundered.")¹²⁵

Abu Hurayra was a constant and important student and disciple at the Suffa, the sacred school of God's Messenger, the teacher of the universe and the pride of creation. Moreover, the Prophet had prayed for Abu Hurayra to have a strong memory. This miracle, which took place before many people, therefore must be regarded as definitive as if it had been related by the whole army.

SIXTEENTH EXAMPLE: Accurate books of Tradition, *Bukhari* included, relate that Abu Hurayra was once hungry and followed God's Messenger into his home. Seeing a bowl of milk that had been brought as a gift, God's

¹²⁴ *Bukhari*, 3: 210; *Abu Dawud*, 1:17; also related by Ibn Hanbal and Nasa'i.

¹²⁵ *Shifa'*, 1:295, related by Ibn Hanbal, Bayhaqi, and Tirmidhi.

Messenger told him to invite the people of the Suffa. Abu Hurayra relates: "I said to myself: 'I could drink all of this milk, as I am most in need of it.' But since it was the Prophet's order, I fetched them all—more than 100 people. The Messenger told me to offer the milk to them. I gave the bowl to each, one by one, and each of them drank until satisfied. Finally the Prophet told me: 'We two have been left. You drink first!' As I was drinking, he repeatedly said to me: 'Drink more,' until I said: 'I swear by the Majestic One Who sent you with the truth that I am too full to drink any more.' Then the Prophet drank the rest, saying: 'In the Name of God' and praising Him."¹²⁶

This miracle, as pure and sweet as milk itself, is related in all six authentic books of Tradition, above all by Imam Bukhari, who memorized 500,000 Traditions. In addition, it is narrated by Abu Hurayra, a loyal, celebrated student of the Prophet's sacred school of the Suffa and a Companion with a keen memory. He represented all other students of that school, and so his report has the certainty of *tawatur*. How could such a truthful person, who devoted his life to Islam and the Prophetic Traditions, who heard and related the Tradition that: "Whoever tells a lie concerning me on purpose should prepare for his seat in the Fire," relate an unfounded incident or saying? Doing so would harm the value and authenticity of all the Traditions he had memorized and make him a target of contradiction by the people of the Suffa!

O Lord, for the sake of the blessing You have bestowed on Your Messenger, bestow abundance on the favors You have provided for us!

AN IMPORTANT POINT: Weak things become strong when joined together. Fine twisted threads become a strong rope and, when wound, strong ropes cannot be broken. Now, from 15 kinds of miracles we have shown only one kind, which deals with the blessing of abundance. The 16 examples cited so far constitute only one part of this kind. Each example is strong enough to prove Prophethood. If, however—supposing the impossible—some were regarded as weak, still we could not properly call them such, for whatever is united with the strong also becomes strong.

When considered together, the 16 examples mentioned above indicate a great and strong miracle with the definitive strength of *tawatur* in meaning. And this miracle, when joined with the 14 other parts of the miracles of abundance not yet cited, manifests a supreme miracle as strong as the

¹²⁶ Tirmidhi, no. 2479; Bukhari, 8:120; Hakim, 3:15; Bayhaqi, 4:101.

most unbreakable cable. Finally, add this supreme miracle to the other 14 kinds of miracles and see what a definite, decisive, and irrefutable proof they provide for Muhammad's Prophethood.

Thus the pillar of his Prophethood, formed by such a collection of proofs, is as strong as a mountain. You may understand the doubts of those who do not believe in his Prophethood as the doubts of those who regard the sublime and established heavens as feeble or fragile because they do not have visible pillars. These miracles of abundance illustrate that Prophet Muhammad was such a beloved envoy and honored servant of the All-Compassionate and All-Munificent One that He, Who supplies the provisions of creation, changed His usual way of acting whenever necessary and sent him banquets from the Unseen—as He creates from nothingness.

Arabia suffers scarcities of water and agriculture. And so its people, especially the Companions in the earliest period of Islam, were exposed to frequent food and water shortages. As a result, some of his greatest miracles were connected with food and water. Rather than proving Prophethood, these wonders were responses to need, a Divine gift, a favor of the Lord, and a banquet provided by the Most Merciful One for those who confirmed his Prophethood before witnessing any miracles. When the miracles occurred, their belief and conviction became even stronger, brighter, and more vivid.

EIGHTH SIGN: This section concerns miracles connected with water.

INTRODUCTION: If the report of an incident involving many people is not contradicted, the incident definitely occurred, even if reported by only one or two individuals, for people, by their very nature, are inclined to call a lie a lie. If the people in question were Companions, who were more intolerant of lies than ordinary people, if the incidents narrated concerned God's Messenger, and if the individual narrator was a well-known Companion, then that narrator narrates on behalf of all witnesses.

In any case, each miracle cited below came down through various lines of transmission and was entrusted by many Companions to thousands of exacting Tabi‘un scholars. These scholars, in turn, transmitted them to the authorities of the next age. Each age's meticulous researchers passed them on to their successors with the utmost care and respect. Thus they reached us after passing through thousands of reliable hands.

Besides, the texts of the Traditions complied while the Prophet and his Rightly-Guided Caliphs were still alive safely reached the hands of the

most brilliant Tradition scholars, such as Bukhari and Muslim, who, through the most careful examination and classification, collected, presented, and taught them. May God reward them abundantly!

The flowing of water from the fingers of God's Messenger, as well as many people's drinking from it, has the certainty of *tawatur*, for it is related by those who are incapable of agreeing upon a lie. In addition, this occurred three times before large groups of people. Many discerning researchers (especially Bukhari, Muslim, Imam Malik, Imam Shu'ayb, and Imam Qatada) transmit this miracle from a group of renowned Companions (among them Anas, Jabir, and Ibn Mas'ud). Out of numerous examples of such miracles, we mention only nine here.

FIRST EXAMPLE: Bukhari, Muslim, and other authentic books of Tradition relate from Anas that: "There were 300 of us with God's Messenger at Zawra. He told us to perform *wudu'* (ablution) for the afternoon prayer, but we could not find enough water. He ordered us to bring a little water, which we did, and he dipped his hands into it. I saw water run from his fingers like a fountain. All 300 people performed *wudu'* with that water and drank from it."¹²⁷ Anas relates this incident on behalf of 300 persons. Would they have remained silent if he were lying?

SECOND EXAMPLE: Reliable books of Tradition, particularly *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*, report Jabir ibn 'Abdullah al-Ansari as saying: "We (1,500 people) got thirsty during the expedition of Hudaybiya. God's Messenger performed *wudu'* from a leather water-bag (*qirba*) and then dipped his hand into it. I saw water flow from his fingers like a fountain. All 1,500 people drank from it and filled their water-bags." Salim ibn Abi al-Ja'd later asked Jabir how many people had been there, and the latter replied: "The water would have been enough for even 100,000 people, but there were only 1,500 of us."¹²⁸

Since this miracle was witnessed by 1,500 people, the number of its reporters should be regarded as 1,500, because people tend to resist and refuse lies. As for the Companions, who sacrificed their souls and possessions, fathers and mothers, tribes and homeland for the sake of truth and veracity, could they have remained silent if confronted with a lie, especially after hearing the Prophet's warning: "Whoever tells a lie concerning me on pur-

¹²⁷ Nasa'i, 1:60; Bukhari, 4:233; Muslim, No. 2279; Tirmidhi, No. 3635.

¹²⁸ Muslim, no. 1856; Bukhari, 4:234; Bayhaqi, 4:110.

pose should prepare for his seat in the Fire.”? Their silence indicates acceptance.

THIRD EXAMPLE: According to the authentic books of Tradition, above all *al-Bukhari* and *al-Muslim*, Jabir relates: “During the campaign of Buwat, God’s Messenger ordered ablution. We replied that there was no water. The Messenger told us to try and find just a little. We fetched a small amount of water. He placed his hand over it and recited a prayer, which I could not hear, and then asked for the largest water trough in the caravan. They brought it to me, and I placed it before God’s Messenger. He placed his hands in it, with his fingers apart, while I poured that little water onto his hands. I saw water run abundantly from his fingers and fill the trough. I called those who needed water. After they drank and took water for *wudu’*, I told the Prophet that everybody had come. He lifted his hands, leaving the trough still full to the brim.”¹²⁹

This miracle has the certainty of *tawatur* in meaning, because Jabir, at that time the Prophet’s servant and thus having first place in the incident, relates it in the name of all witnesses. Ibn Mas‘ud, who also reported it, says: “I saw the water flow like a fountain from the Prophet’s fingers.”¹³⁰

Consider these three examples together and see what an irrefutable and definite miracle this is. Joined together, they prove that water flowing from the Prophet’s fingers is explicit *tawatur*. This miracle is so great that even Moses’ miracle of causing water to run from 12 different points of a rock cannot be considered its equivalent. Water gushing from a rock is possible, and examples can be found among ordinary events, but there is no parallel for water flowing abundantly from flesh and bone.

FOURTH EXAMPLE: Imam Malik narrates in his *Muwatta’* from Mu‘adh ibn Jabal that: “During the expedition of Tabuk, we came across a fountain that was hardly flowing—the jet was about as thick as a thin string. God’s Messenger told us to collect a small amount of its water. Some brought a little in their palms, with which God’s Messenger washed his face and hands. Then we put it back in the fountain. Suddenly the stream supplying the fountain’s water cleared, and water began to flow so profusely that there was enough for the whole army.”

¹²⁹ Muslim, no. 3006-14.

¹³⁰ Bukhari, 4:235, also related by Tirmidhi and Nasa’i.

Imam Ibn Ishaq, one of the narrators, reports: “The fountain’s well rushed underground with a noise like thunder. God’s Messenger told Mu‘adh that he might live long enough to see this place change into gardens.” And so it happened.¹³¹

FIFTH EXAMPLE: Bukhari (from Bara’) and (from Salama ibn al-Akwa’), as well as other accurate books (from other narrators), relate: “Four hundred of us came across a well during the expedition of Hudaybiya. There was hardly enough water for 50 people. We drew all the water out of the well. God’s Messenger came and sat beside the well and asked for a bucketful of water, which we fetched. He put some of his saliva into the bucket, prayed, and then poured this water back into the well. Suddenly the water began to gush and rose to the well’s brim. The whole army and their animals drank from it until they were satisfied, and then filled their water bags.”¹³²

SIXTH EXAMPLE: Authentic Tradition books, such those of Muslim and Ibn Jarir al-Tabari particularly, relate through Abu Qatada: “We were going for help, as the commanders had been martyred in the Battle of Mu‘ta. I had a water bag with me. God’s Messenger had told me: ‘Keep your water bag carefully, for it will be of great use to us.’ Soon after that, thirst seized us. We were 72 (300 according to al-Tabari). God’s Messenger told me: ‘Bring your water bag.’ I did so. He took it and brought its brim to his lips. I do not know whether he breathed into it or not. Then all 72 of us drank from it and filled our water bags. When I took it back, it was still as full as it had been before.”¹³³

Reflect on this miracle and say: “O God, bestow upon him and his household peace and blessings as many as there are drops of water.”

SEVENTH EXAMPLE: Authentic books of Tradition, in particular *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*, report that ‘Imran ibn Husayn said: “We ran out of water during a military campaign. The Messenger told me and ‘Ali: ‘There is a woman in such-and-such a place making her way with her beast, which is laden with water bags. Go and bring her.’ ‘Ali and I found the woman with her load exactly as and where described, and brought her (to the Prophet). The Prophet ordered: ‘Pour some water into a vessel.’ We did so. After he prayed for abundance, we put the water back into its bag.

¹³¹ *Muwatta*, Safar, 2; Ibn Hanbal, 5:228; also related by Bukhari and Muslim.

¹³² Bukhari, 4:234; Bayhaqi, 4:110; also related by Muslim.

¹³³ Muslim, no. 681; Abu Dawud, no. 437-41; Abu Nu‘aym, 4:282.

Then the Messenger announced: 'Let everyone come and fill his bag.' All the people came and drank and filled their bags. Afterwards, he said that something should be collected for the woman, and they filled her skirt with what they collected."

'Imran adds: "I imagined that the two water bags were filling unceasingly. God's Messenger told the woman: 'You can go now. We took none of your water; rather, God gave us water (from His treasure).'"¹³⁴

EIGHTH EXAMPLE: Some Traditionists, primarily Ibn Khuzayma in his *Sahih*, report that 'Umar said: "We ran out of water during the campaign of Tabuk. Some of us had to slaughter our camels and drink what was inside. Abu Bakr appealed to God's Messenger to pray for rain. He raised his hands to pray, and had hardly lowered them when clouds gathered and a heavy rain began to fall. After we filled our vessels, the clouds withdrew. This rain was restricted to our area, for it did not go beyond where we were located."¹³⁵ Thus chance had nothing to do with this incident; it was wholly a miracle of Prophet Muhammad.

NINTH EXAMPLE: 'Amr ibn Shu'ayb, the grandson of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As and whose narrations the four Imams trusted, relates that before his Prophethood, God's Messenger traveled on a camel to Dhu al-Hijaz (near 'Arafat) with his uncle Abu Talib. When Abu Talib said he was thirsty, God's Messenger dismounted and stamped the ground. Water welled out, and Abu Talib drank from it.¹³⁶ One discerning scholar states that although this is considered as *irhasat*, because it happened before his Prophethood was proclaimed,¹³⁷ it also can be regarded as a wonder of his Prophethood, because this water flowed in the same location for 1,000 years thereafter.

Similarly, 90 different narrations (but not 90 separate incidents) report miracles connected with water. The first seven examples are as definitely established in meaning as *tawatur*. Although the last two are not narrated through as many strong chains of transmission, authentic sources, primarily Imam Bayhaqi and Hakim, report another miracle to support and confirm the one mentioned in the eighth example: 'Umar narrated that he appealed to God's Messenger to pray for rain, as the army needed water. God's

¹³⁴ Muslim, 682; Bukhari, 4:233.

¹³⁵ *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, 6:194, related by Bazzar, Bayhaqi, and Tabarani.

¹³⁶ *Shifa'*, 1:290, Bayhaqi, 2:15; also related by Ibn Sa'd and Tabarani.

¹³⁷ *Irhasat*: The series of extraordinary incidents that happened before Prophet Muhammad's birth, at his birth, and before he declared his Prophethood. (Tr.)

Messenger raised his hands, clouds gathered at once, and enough rain fell to meet the army's need. After this, the clouds went away.¹³⁸ It was as if the clouds were sent to deliver water, for they came, dispensed enough water, and then disappeared.

Just as this narration supports the eighth example, Ibn al-Jawziya, too meticulous a researcher to reject many authentic Traditions as false, says: "This event took place during the Battle of Badr and is mentioned in: *And He sent down on you water from heaven to purify you thereby...* (8:11)." Since this verse refers to the event, its truth cannot be doubted. Besides, it is a frequently repeated and unanimously reported miracle that rain fell immediately after the Prophet raised his hands to pray. There were times, it is reported through *tawatur*, that when he raised his hands in the pulpit, rain would begin to fall before he lowered them.

NINTH SIGN: One kind of miracle of God's Messenger is that trees obeyed his orders and approached him. This miracle, like those connected with water flowing from his fingers, has the certainty of *tawatur* in meaning. Many examples have been reported through various channels.

Trees uprooting themselves upon the Messenger's command and drawing near him can be considered explicit *tawatur*, because the best-known, trustworthy Companions (e.g., 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Umar, Ya'la ibn Murra, Jabir, Anas ibn Malik, Burayda, Usama ibn Zayd, and Ghaylan ibn Salama) reported the same miracle with certainty. Hundreds of Tabi'un scholars received their reports directly, which have come down to us and thus have the authority of multiple *tawatur*. This miracle therefore has the certainty of *tawatur* in meaning. We mention only a few examples.

FIRST EXAMPLE: Ibn Maja, Darimi, and Bayhaqi (through 'Ali and Anas ibn Malik), and Bazzar and Imam Bayhaqi (from 'Umar) report: "Three Companions narrated that God's Messenger was disturbed by the unbelievers' denial. He prayed: 'O Lord, show me a sign so that I will no longer heed anyone who contradicts me.' Anas relates that Gabriel also was present, and that upon his instruction God's Messenger called to a tree located at one side of the valley in which they were located. It left its place and drew near to him. He told it to go back, and so it returned and settled down in its place."¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Abu Nu'aym, 2:523; also related by Hakim and Bayhaqi.

¹³⁹ *Shifa'*, 1:302; related by Bayhaqi, Ibn Maja, Darimi, Bazzar, and Ibn Hanbal.

SECOND EXAMPLE: Qadi ‘Iyad, scholar of the Muslim West (North Africa and al-Andalus), relates in his *al-Shifa’ al-Sharif* from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar through a sound chain of the most eminent narrators: “A Bedouin approached God’s Messenger during an expedition. The Messenger asked: ‘Where are you going?’ He replied: ‘To my Family.’ The Messenger asked: ‘Don’t you desire something better?’ When the Bedouin asked what that might be, God’s Messenger replied: ‘To bear witness that there is no god but God, alone with no partner, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.’ The Bedouin asked: ‘Can you prove this?’ God’s Messenger replied: ‘That tree at the side of the valley will bear witness.’”

Ibn ‘Umar relates the rest of the event: “That tree swayed, uprooted itself, left the soil, and drew near to God’s Messenger. He asked it three times to testify, and each time it testified to his truthfulness. Then he ordered the tree to go back and settle down in its place, and it did so.”¹⁴⁰

Ibn Sahib al-Aslami relates that Burayda said: “Once a Bedouin asked for a miracle while we were with God’s Messenger on an expedition. The Messenger pointed to a tree and told him: ‘Tell that tree that God’s Messenger summons it.’ The tree swayed, freed itself, and drew near to the Messenger, saying: ‘Peace be upon you, O Messenger of God!’ The Bedouin said: ‘Now tell it to return to its place.’ When God’s Messenger ordered it to do so, the tree went back. When the Bedouin said: ‘Let me prostrate myself before you,’ the Messenger answered: ‘No one is allowed to do that.’ The Bedouin said: ‘Then I will kiss your hand,’ and he allowed him to do so.”¹⁴¹

THIRD EXAMPLE: Authentic books of Tradition, including Muslim’s *Sahih*, quote Jabir as relating: “We accompanied God’s Messenger on an expedition. He searched for a place to relieve himself. When he saw that there was no screened place, he went to two trees and pulled one of them by a branch next to the other one. The tree was like an obedient camel being pulled by its reins. He addressed them: ‘Join together over me, by God’s leave.’ The trees did so and formed a screen. After relieving himself, he ordered them to go back to their places.”¹⁴² In another version, Jabir relates it with a very slight, insignificant difference.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ *Shifa’*, 1:298; related by Tirmidhi, Ibn Hibban, Bayhaqi, and Hakim.

¹⁴¹ *Shifa’*, 1:299; Bazzar, *Musnad*, 3:49.

¹⁴² Muslim, no. 3006-12; Bayhaqi, 6:8.

¹⁴³ *Shifa’*, 1:299.

FOURTH EXAMPLE: Usama ibn Zayd, a brave commander and servant of God's Messenger, reports: "We accompanied God's Messenger on an expedition. Unable to find a screened place to relieve himself, he asked me: 'Do you see any trees or rocks?' When I said that I did, he told me: 'Go and say to the trees that God's Messenger orders them to join together so that he may relieve himself, and then tell the rocks to do the same.' I went and told them to do this, and I swear by God the trees joined together and the rocks formed a wall. After relieving himself, God's Messenger told me: 'Tell them to separate.' I swear by the Majestic One, in Whose hand is my soul, that the trees and rocks separated and went back to their places."¹⁴⁴ These two incidents also were reported by Ya'la ibn Murra, Ghaylan ibn Salama al-Thaqafi, and Ibn Mas'ud in connection with the Battle of Hunayn.

FIFTH EXAMPLE: Imam Ibn Fawrak, known as the second Shafi'i on account of his excellence in jurisprudence and perfect character, reports: "God's Messenger sometimes felt sleepy while traveling on horseback. One night during the Battle of Ta'if, a lotus tree appeared in front of him. To make way for him and avoid harming his horse, the tree split in half and God's Messenger passed through it while riding his horse. That tree has remained so up to our time."¹⁴⁵

SIXTH EXAMPLE: Ya'la reports: "During an expedition a *talha* or *samura* tree came and walked around God's Messenger, as if circumambulating, and then went back to its place. God's Messenger said: 'It asked for God's permission to salute me.'"¹⁴⁶

SEVENTH EXAMPLE: Traditionists quote Ibn Mas'ud as saying: "When the jinn of Nusaybin came to Batn al-Nakhl to be converted to Islam by God's Messenger, a tree informed him of their coming." Imam Mujahid relates from Ibn Mas'ud that when the jinn asked for a proof of his Prophethood, a tree came to the Messenger and then returned to its place on his order. This miracle was enough for them to embrace Islam.¹⁴⁷

Those who have heard of 1,000 similar miracles and still do not believe are even further astray than devils. Jinn describe such people as *the foolish ones among us [who used to] utter extravagant lies against God* (72:4).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 1:300, related by Bayhaqi, Ibn Hanbal, and Abu Ya'la.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 1:301.

¹⁴⁶ *Shifa'*, 1:301; Hakim, 2:617; Ibn Hanbal, 4:170; Bayhaqi, 6:23.

¹⁴⁷ Bukhari, 5:58; also related by Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Hanbal.

EIGHTH EXAMPLE: Tirmidhi reports from Ibn ‘Abbas: “God’s Messenger asked a Bedouin: ‘If that tree branch comes to me when I call it, will you bear witness that I am the Messenger?’ He replied that he would, and so the Messenger called to it. The branch broke off and jumped over near to him. It then jumped back to its place when the Messenger commanded it to do so.”¹⁴⁸

Many similar examples are reported through various narrations. Seven or eight ropes form a strong cable when they come together. In the same way, when these tree-related miracles reported by the most renowned Companions are taken together, they must have the certainty of *tawatur* in meaning or even in actual wording. In fact, they gain the degree of explicit *tawatur* through the Companions passing them down to the following generation. In particular, such authentic books of Tradition as Bukhari’s *Sahih*, Muslim’s *Sahih*, Ibn Hibban’s *Sahih*, and Tirmidhi’s *Sunan* note and record the chain of transmitters (leading back to the Prophet’s time) so soundly and convincingly that reading an account in Bukhari’s *Sahih*, for instance, is equivalent to hearing it from the Companions.

When trees recognize God Almighty’s Messenger, confirm his Messengership, call upon and salute him, and obey his orders, how can those unbelievers who call themselves human beings be considered anything but worthless pieces of wood and worthy of Hellfire?

TENTH SIGN: This concerns the grieving pole, which is reported in the form of *tawatur* and reinforces the tree-related miracles. This event, which happened in the Prophet’s Mosque before a vast congregation, consolidates and confirms such miracles, for the pole came from a tree. But this miracle itself is *mutawatir* (has the certainty of explicit *tawatur*), while miracles concerning trees are *mutawatir* when considered as a whole.

The Prophet used to lean on a date-palm pole while delivering a sermon in his mosque. However, when he began to deliver his sermons on the newly constructed pulpit, the congregation heard the pole moan like a camel. Its moaning ended only after the Messenger consoled it by putting his hand on it.

This miracle is widely known and has the certainty of explicit *tawatur*. It was reported through 15 different channels by an illustrious group of Companions, among them are such eminent scholars and leading Tradition

¹⁴⁸ Tirmidhi, no. 3632; Hakim, 2:620; Bayhaqi, 6:15.

narrators as Anas ibn Malik and Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah al-Ansari (both of whom served the Prophet), ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas, Sahl ibn Sa‘d, Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri, Ubay ibn Ka‘b, Burayda, and Umm Salama (mother of the believers). Hundreds of Tabi‘un authorities received it from the Companions, and authentic books of Tradition, above all *Bukhari* and *Muslim*, transmitted it to the following centuries.

Jabir reports that God’s Messenger used to lean against the pole, called the “date-palm trunk,” when delivering a sermon in his mosque. After a pulpit was built, the Prophet would deliver his sermon from it. Due to this separation, the pole moaned like a pregnant camel. Anas relates that it moaned like a water buffalo and caused the mosque to tremble. Sahl ibn Sa‘d says: “When it moaned, many people burst into tears.”

According to Ubay ibn Ka‘b, the pole sobbed so much that it split. Another report relates that God’s Messenger said: “It moaned because it was separated from the recitation of God’s Names (during the sermon).” According to another version, he said: “If I had not embraced and consoled it, it would have wept until the Day of Judgment because of its separation from the Messenger.”

According to Burayda, the Messenger put his hand on the pole when it began to weep and said: “If you wish, I will restore you in the wood from whence you came so that you may be rooted again, perfectly flourishing, and yield fruit again. Or, if you wish, I will plant you in Paradise and God’s friends will eat from your fruits.” Then he listened to it, and the people in the mosque heard the pole say: “Plant me in Paradise, and God’s friends will eat from my fruits in the place where there is no decay.” God’s Messenger replied that he would and added: “It has preferred the World of Eternity to the transitory one.”

The well-known scholar Hasan al-Basri would weep whenever he recounted this miraculous event to his disciples, and would say: “A piece of wood demonstrates such love and ardor for God’s noble, most beloved Messenger. You need to feel this love much more than a piece of wood does.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Bukhari, *Sahih*, 4:237; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, nos. 2236, 2237, 2400, 2401, 2430-32; Muslim, *Sahih*, no. 2374; Qadi ‘Iyad, *al-Shifa’ al-Sharif*, 1:304-5; Nasa‘i, *Sunan*, 3:102; Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, No. 3631; Bayhaqi, *Dala’il al-Nubiwwa*, 6:66; Abu Nu‘aym, *Dala'il al-Nubiwwa*, 2:399; Darimi, *Sunan*, No. 39; Kanz al-‘Ummal, 12:411-18.

And we say: "That is true, and love and ardor for him are possible by adhering to his illustrious Sunna and Sharia."

QUESTION: Why were miracles of abundance concerning food and water not reported through as many channels as the grieving pole, even though more people saw them?

ANSWER: There are two kinds of miracles. Some affirmed his Prophethood. The grieving pole is of this kind, for it is a proof that strengthens the believers' belief, urges hypocrites to belief and sincerity, and causes unbelievers to believe. This is why everyone witnessed it and so much effort was exerted to spread it. The other kind of miracles involving food and water are wonders or Divine gifts, even banquets provided by the All-Merciful One because of need, rather than manifest miracles.

Although they are miraculous proofs of his Prophethood, their real significance is that God, Who creates hundreds of tons of dates from a single date-stone, provides a banquet for 1,000 people out of a little food and satiates a thirsty army of holy warriors with water flowing abundantly from the Prophet's fingers. This is why each miracle related to food and water does not reach the degree of the miracle of the grieving pole.

However, examples of these two kinds of miracles are considered, in their entirety, to have been as widely reported as the grieving pole. Besides, while each person present could see only the effects (and not the incidents) of the abundant food and water, with some only witnessing their happening, the pole's moaning was heard by everyone. This is another reason why the latter was spread so widely.

QUESTION: The Companions preserved the record of the Prophet's every act and condition with the utmost care. So why are such important miracles not related through more than 10 or 12 lines of transmission? And why are the main reporters only Companions like Jabir, Anas, and Abu Hurayra, and not, for example, Abu Bakr and 'Umar?

ANSWER: The answer to the first part is given at the beginning of this letter, in the Fourth Sign's Third Essential. Concerning the second part, just as a patient goes to a doctor, engineers are consulted about engineering matters, and muftis are asked about religious issues, some scholarly Companions were entrusted with and devoted themselves to instructing the following generations in the Prophetic Traditions. For example, Abu Hurayra devoted his life to preserving Traditions, while 'Umar shouldered

administrative matters and the caliphate's problems. Thus 'Umar narrated only a few Traditions, for he had confidence in such people as Abu Hurayra, Anas, and Jabir, to instruct the Muslims in the Traditions. In fact, a Tradition can be considered as established if it is reported by a well-known person belonging to the truthful, sincere, and trusted Companions. Given this, there is no need for it to be related by others. This is why some significant incidents have only one, two, or three channels.

ELEVENTH SIGN: Here, we will cite only eight of countless examples of miracles concerning such inanimate objects as rocks and mountains.

FIRST EXAMPLE: Qadi 'Iyad reports, in his *Shifa' al-Sharif* and through an exalted chain of narrators from such great Tradition authorities as Bukhari, that Ibn Mas'ud, the Prophet's servant, says: "We could hear food glorifying God while eating with God's Messenger."¹⁵⁰

SECOND EXAMPLE: Accurate books of Tradition report from Abu Dharr and Anas that Anas said: "We were with God's Messenger. He put some pebbles in his hand, and they began to glorify God. Then he placed them in Abu Bakr's hand, and they continued their glorification."¹⁵¹ Abu Dharr reports that God's Messenger then put the pebbles in the hands of 'Umar and 'Uthman, successively, and they continued their glorification. Both Anas and Abu Dharr add that God's Messenger finally put the pebbles in their hands, after which the pebbles stopped their glorification.¹⁵²

THIRD EXAMPLE: 'Ali, Jabir, and 'A'isha narrate that rocks and mountains would say: "Peace be upon you, O Messenger of God," to God's Messenger. 'Ali says: "Whenever we walked in Makka's suburbs during the early part of his Prophethood, the trees and rocks we passed would say: 'Peace be upon you, O Messenger of God.'"¹⁵³

Jabir relates: "When God's Messenger came across a rock or a tree, they would say in submission to him: "Peace be upon you, O Messenger of God."¹⁵⁴ According to Jabir ibn Samura, God's Messenger once said: "I recognize a rock that used to greet me."¹⁵⁵ According to some, he was referring to the Ka'ba's Black Stone. 'A'isha narrated: "God's Messenger said: 'After Gabriel brought me the

¹⁵⁰ Bukhari, 4:235; Tirmidhi, no. 3712.

¹⁵¹ *Shifa'*, 1:306; Bayhaqi, *Dala'il*, 6:66.

¹⁵² *Shifa'*, 1:306; *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, 5:179; related by Tabarani and Bazzar.

¹⁵³ Tirmidhi, no. 3630; Hakim, 2:607; Abu Nu'aym, 2:389.

¹⁵⁴ *Shifa'*, 1:307, related by Bayhaqi.

¹⁵⁵ Muslim, no. 2277; Tirmidhi, no. 3703; Ibn Hanbal, 5:89.

Message, every time I passed a rock or a tree it would say: “Peace be upon you, O Messenger of God.”¹⁵⁶

FOURTH EXAMPLE: ‘Abbas relates that God’s Messenger covered ‘Abbas and his four sons (‘Abdullah, ‘Ubaydullah, Fadl, and Qusam) with a piece of cloth and prayed: “O my Lord, this is my father’s brother and these are his sons. Veil them from the Fire as I have veiled them with my robe.” The house’s roof, door, and walls joined this prayer at once, saying: “Amen, Amen.”¹⁵⁷

FIFTH EXAMPLE: Imam Bukhari primarily, and such other Traditionists as Ibn Hibban, Abu Dawud, and Tirmidhi, report from Anas, Abu Hurayra, ‘Uthman, and Sa‘id ibn Zayd (two of those to whom Paradise was promised): “God’s Messenger, Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthman climbed Mount Uhud. The mountain, either in awe or because of joy, trembled. God’s Messenger ordered it: ‘Be still, O Uhud, for on you there is a Prophet, a truthful one, and two martyrs.’¹⁵⁸ In this way, God’s Messenger predicted the martyrdom of ‘Umar and ‘Uthman.

A supplement to this Tradition reports that God’s Messenger, pursued by unbelievers during his emigration to Madina, climbed Sabir mountain. The mountain said: “Please leave me, O Messenger of God, for I fear God will punish me if they strike you while you are on me.” Upon this, Mount Thawr called to him: “Come to me, O Messenger of God!” This is why people of intuition feel fear on Sabir and safety on Thawr.¹⁵⁹ This example indicates that these great mountains are God’s servants who glorify Him and perform their duties. In addition, they know and love the Prophet.

SIXTH EXAMPLE: ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar said: “While delivering a sermon on the pulpit, God’s Messenger recited: *They measure not God with His true measure. Earth altogether shall be His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens shall be rolled up in His Right Hand* (39:67), and added: ‘God, the All-Compelling, glorifies Himself and says: “I am the All-Compelling, I am the All-Compelling, I am the All-Great and Transcendent.”’ As he said this, the pulpit trembled so much that we feared God’s Messenger would fall down.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ *Shifa’,* 1:37; Bayhaqi, 2:135.

¹⁵⁷ *Majma‘ al-Zawa’id,* 9:269; Bayhaqi, 6:71; Ibn Maja, 2:209.

¹⁵⁸ Abu Dawud, no. 4651; Tirmidhi, no. 3781; also related by Bukhari, Muslim, Hakim, and Ibn Maja.

¹⁵⁹ *Shifa’,* 1:308; ‘Ali al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shifa’,* 1:630.

¹⁶⁰ Muslim, 4:2147; Hakim, 2:252; also related by Nasa‘i and Ibn Hanbal.

SEVENTH EXAMPLE: Ibn ‘Abbas (“the scholar of the Ummah” and “the interpreter of the Qur’an”) and Ibn Mas’ud (the Prophet’s servant and a great Companion scholar) report that the Ka‘ba contained 360 idols fixed to the stone with lead. On the day of Makka’s conquest, God’s Messenger pointed at them one by one with a curved stick, reciting: *Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Surely falsehood is ever bound to vanish* (17:81). Whichever idol he pointed at fell down. If he pointed to the idol’s face, it fell backwards; if he pointed to the idol’s back, it fell on its face. Thus they all fell down.¹⁶¹

EIGHTH EXAMPLE: This is the famous story of the monk Bahira. Before his Prophethood was proclaimed, God’s Messenger traveled to Damascus with trading caravans belonging to his uncle Abu Talib and some other Qurayshi traders. They halted near the monastery where Bahira, a well-known recluse, was staying. He came out unexpectedly. When he saw Muhammad the Trustworthy among the caravan, he said: “He is the lord of the worlds and will be a Prophet.” The Qurayshis asked: “How do you know this?” The holy monk answered: “I saw a piece of cloud over the caravan as you were coming. When you sat down, it moved toward his side and shadowed him. I also noticed that rocks and trees seemed to prostrate before him. They do this only for Prophets.”¹⁶²

There are about 80 similar instances. Joined together, these eight examples form so strong an unbreakable chain. Considered as a whole, such miracles concerning inanimate objects bearing witness to Muhammad’s Prophethood have the certainty of *tawatur* in meaning. Each instance derives additional strength from the others, just as a thin pillar is fortified by being joined to thick columns. Likewise, people on their own are weak. But when they join an army, each one has enough power to challenge 1,000 people.

TWELFTH SIGN: The following three examples, related to the eleventh sign, are very significant.

FIRST EXAMPLE: As established through all interpreters’ meticulous verification and all Traditionists’ reports, the verse: *When you threw, it was not you that threw, but God threw* (8:17), refers to the following incident: During the Battle of Badr, God’s Messenger took a handful of soil and pebbles and threw them at the unbelievers’ army, saying: “May your faces be deformed.” That handful of soil entered each unbeliever’s eyes, and “May your faces be

¹⁶¹ *Majma‘ al-Zawa‘id*, 6:176, related by Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi.

¹⁶² Tirmidhi, no. 3699; Hakim, 2:615; Ibn Hisham, 1:115; *Shifa'*, 1:83.

deformed!” was heard by each one. They consequently became preoccupied with their eyes and had to retreat, although they had launched the attack.¹⁶³ The Traditionists, most notably Imam Muslim, report that the same incident happened during the Battle of Hunayn. As a result, and by God’s Power and permission, each one was hit in the face by a handful of soil and had to flee the battlefield, being preoccupied with their eyes.¹⁶⁴

As these extraordinary events are beyond human capacity and material causes, the Qur’an declares: *When you threw, it was not you that threw, but God threw* (8:17).

SECOND EXAMPLE: Reliable Traditionists, above all Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim, report that after the Battle of Khaybar a Jewess roasted a goat, poisoned it, and sent it to the Messenger. His Companions had just begun to eat it when God’s Messenger suddenly said: “Withdraw your hands! It tells me that it is poisoned.” Everyone stopped eating except Bishr ibn al-Bara’, who had taken a morsel of it and later died because of the poison. God’s Messenger sent for the Jewess (Zaynab). When asked why she had done it, she said: “I thought that if you were a Prophet it would not harm you, and that if you were a king it would save the people from you.”¹⁶⁵

Consider the following point, which adds to the miraculousness of this extraordinary event: According to one report, some Companions also heard the goat speaking. The Jews had attempted to harm God’s Messenger and his close Companions at the same time. However, the Prophet’s warning proved true and their plot was unveiled and foiled. When the Prophet, whose Companions never heard an untrue statement from him, said: “This goat tells me that...,” everyone believed him with the same certainty as if they had heard the goat themselves.

THIRD EXAMPLE: The following relates three instances of another miracle resembling those of Moses’ shining, white hand and staff.

FIRST: Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal relates on Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri’s authority and verifies that God’s Messenger gave Qatada ibn Nu‘man a stick on a dark rainy night, saying: “This stick will light your surroundings as far as 7 meters. When you get home, you will see a black shadow that is Satan. Drive him away from your home.” Qatada left with the stick, which was emitting

¹⁶³ *Majma‘ al-Zawa‘id*, 6:84; related by Abu Dawud, Ibn Hanbal, and Bayhaqi.

¹⁶⁴ Muslim, no. 1775.

¹⁶⁵ Abu Dawud, *Muqaddima*, 11; Bukhari, 2:121; Hakim, 3:219; Darimi, 1:35; Ibn Hanbal, 1:305; Bayhaqi, 6:256.

light like the Moses' shining, white hand. When he arrived home, he found the person described and drove him away.¹⁶⁶

SECOND: During the Battle of Badr, which was a source of wonders, Ukkasha ibn Mihsan al-Asad broke his sword while fighting the polytheists. God's Messenger replaced his broken sword with a stick and told him to continue fighting. Suddenly, by God's power and permission, the stick changed into a long white sword. He fought with it and kept it with him until he was martyred during the Battle of Yamama.¹⁶⁷ This incident is indisputable, for Ukkasha was so proud of that sword that throughout his life it was widely known as "the aid."

THIRD: Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, one of the most brilliant scholars of his time, relates and verifies that 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh, a cousin of God's Messenger, broke his sword during the Battle of Uhud. The Messenger gave him a stick, which then became a sword in his hand. Ibn Jahsh fought with it, and that miracle remained a sword after the battle.¹⁶⁸ Years later, as reported by Ibn Sayyid al-Nas in his biography of the Prophet, it was sold to Bughai Turki for 200 dirhams.¹⁶⁹ These two swords are miracles like Moses' staff, except that they remained swords thereafter, while Moses' staff lost its miraculous aspect after his death.

THIRTEENTH SIGN: Another type of miracle, a *mutawatir* one with various examples, is the Prophet's healing of the sick and wounded with his breath. In their entirety, such miracles are *mutawatir* in meaning. Certain incidents also have the certainty of *tawatur* in meaning. The rest should be regarded as authentic according to the scientific principles of Tradition, although their narration depends on only one chain of transmission, because they are related and verified by discerning leaders of this science. Out of many relevant examples, we cite only a few:

FIRST EXAMPLE: Qadi 'Iyad reports in his *Shifa'*, through numerous channels and a chain of exalted narrators from Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, a servant and military commander of God's Messenger, commander-in-chief of the army that conquered Persia during 'Umar's caliphate, and one of the ten Companions promised Paradise during their life. He said: "I was beside God's Messenger during the Battle of Uhud. He shot arrows at the unbe-

¹⁶⁶ *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, 2:166, related by Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Khuzayma, and Hakim.

¹⁶⁷ *Sira ibn Hisham*, 1:637; Bayhaqi, 4:97; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Zad al-Ma'ad*, 3:186.

¹⁶⁸ *Isti'ab*, 3:879; Ibn Hajar, *al-Isaba*, no. 4583; also related by Bayhaqi.

¹⁶⁹ *'Uyun al-Athar*, 2:20; Ibn Hajar, *al-Isaba*, no. 4583.

lievers until his bow was broken, after which he began to give his arrows to me. Each time he gave me a featherless arrow, he ordered me to shoot it, which I did. And it flew like one with feathers, piercing an unbeliever's body. In the meantime, Qatada ibn Nu'man was hit and one of his eyeballs protruded. God's Messenger used his hand to replace the eyeball in its socket. The eye healed at once, as if nothing had happened, and became even better than the other one.”¹⁷⁰

This incident became so well-known that when one of Qatada's grandsons met Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, he presented himself with the following poetical statement:

I am the son of the person
whose eye protruded over his cheek,
But was wonderfully restored by the hand of Mustafa;
Then it became as it had been before; it was
The most beautiful of eyes,
and most wonderful was its restoration.

During the Battle of Yawm Dhiqarad, an arrow hit Abu Qatada's face. God's Messenger wiped the injured man's face, and Abu Qatada said: “I never felt the pain, nor did the wound fester.”¹⁷¹

SECOND EXAMPLE: Authentic books of Tradition, primarily *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*, report: ‘Ali, who was suffering greatly from sore eyes, was appointed standard-bearer during the Battle of Khaybar. The pain ceased when God's Messenger applied his healing saliva to ‘Ali's eyes, and his eyes became much better. The next morning, ‘Ali joined the battle and, pulling up the citadel's heavy iron gate and using it as a shield, conquered the stronghold of Khaybar.¹⁷² In the same battle, Salama ibn Akwa's leg wound was healed when God's Messenger breathed upon it.¹⁷³

THIRD EXAMPLE: The Prophet's biographers, including al-Nasa'i, relate that 'Uthman ibn Hunayf said: “Pray for my eyes to open.” God's Messenger told him to perform ablution, pray two *rak'ats*, and then say: “O God, my appeal is to You, and I turn toward You through Prophet Muhammad, the Prophet of mercy. O Muhammad, I turn toward God through you, that He

¹⁷⁰ *Shifa'*, 1:322, related by Ibn Ishaq, Tabarani, and Bayhaqi.

¹⁷¹ *Shifa'*, 1:322, related by Tirmidhi and Bayhaqi.

¹⁷² Bukhari, 4:58; Ibn Hanbal, 1:85; also related by Muslim and Tabarani.

¹⁷³ Bukhari, 5:170; *Shifa'*, 1:323.

uncover my sight. O God, make him my intercessor.” He went to do as he was told. When he returned, we saw that his eyes had been opened already.¹⁷⁴

FOURTH EXAMPLE: Ibn Wahb, a great Tradition authority, reports: When Mu‘awwidh ibn ‘Afra, one of the 14 martyrs of the Battle of Badr, fought with Abu Jahl, the accursed Abu Jahl cut off one of his hands. Mu‘awwidh took his severed hand to God’s Messenger. The Messenger stuck the amputated hand onto Mu‘awwidh’s wrist and applied his saliva to it. It healed at once, and Mu‘awwidh returned to the battle and fought until he was martyred.¹⁷⁵ Ibn Wahb reports that during the same battle, Hubayb ibn Yasaf received such a sword blow on the shoulder that it seemed that his shoulder had been split in two. God’s Messenger held the parts together, breathed on them, and the wounded shoulder healed.¹⁷⁶

Although these two Traditions are reported by only one Companion, their occurrence can be regarded as certain, since they happened during a battle that was itself a source of miracles, were verified by such a great authority as Ibn Wahb, and similar incidents also are reported. In fact, nearly 1,000 examples established through authentic narrations indicate that the Messenger healed wounds.

QUESTION: You qualify many of these Traditions as *mutawatir*, whereas we are hearing most of them for the first time. How could a *mutawatir* Tradition remain unknown for so long?

ANSWER: Many *mutawatir* facts are obvious to religious scholars and unknown to others. Many Traditions that are *mutawatir* to Traditionists may not be regarded by others as even individually reported ones. Axioms or theories in any branch of science are evident only to the authorities of that branch, and others must rely on the authorities or enter that branch to make their own observations. All incidents we have cited so far are regarded as *mutawatir* by Traditionists, scholars of the Sharia, methodologists, and scholars of many other branches of knowledge, as having the certainty of *tawatur* either in actual wording or in meaning. If the uneducated are unaware of them and if those who blind themselves to the truth do not know them, it is their own fault.

¹⁷⁴ *Al-Jami‘ al-Saghir*, no. 1290, related by Nasa‘i, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja, Ibn Khuzayma, and Hakim.

¹⁷⁵ *Shifa'*, 1:324; ‘Ali al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shifa'*, 1:656.

¹⁷⁶ *Shifa'*, 1:324, related by Bayhaqi, Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Kathir, and Ibn Hajar.

FIFTH EXAMPLE: Imam Baghawi reports and verifies that during the Battle of the Trench, an unbeliever broke ‘Ali ibn al-Hakam’s leg. When God’s Messenger stroked it, the leg was healed instantly. The soldier continued to fight without even dismounting from his horse.¹⁷⁷

SIXTH EXAMPLE: Traditionists, primarily Imam Bayhaqi, relate that once Imam ‘Ali was very sick. As he was alone and groaning out a prayer for his cure, God’s Messenger came in and asked God to heal him. He then told ‘Ali to get up, touching him with his foot. ‘Ali was healed at once and later said: “Since then I have never caught the same illness.”¹⁷⁸

SEVENTH EXAMPLE: This is the famous story of Shurahbil al-Jufi. A tumor in his palm made it impossible for him to hold his sword and his horse’s reins. God’s Messenger wiped the tumor and massaged it until no sign of it remained.¹⁷⁹

EIGHTH EXAMPLE: Six children were honored with the Prophet’s miracles. They are as follows:

- Ibn Abi Shayba, a man of perfect character and profound research and a well-known Traditionist, reports: “A woman came to God’s Messenger with a retarded boy who could not speak. God’s Messenger rinsed his mouth with water, washed his hands, gave the water to the woman, and told her to have the boy drink it. After the boy had done so, he was cured completely and became so wise and intelligent that he was superior to even the most prudent person.”¹⁸⁰
- Ibn ‘Abbas reports that an insane child was brought to God’s Messenger. The Messenger put his hand on the child’s chest, which caused the child suddenly to vomit a black object resembling a small cucumber. The child was cured instantly.¹⁸¹
- Imam Bayhaqi and Nasa’i relate that a boiling saucepan fell on Muhammad ibn Khatib’s arm and entirely scalded it. God’s Messenger healed the boy by stroking the injured hand and applying his saliva.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 1:323; *Majma‘ al-Zawa’id*, 6:143; Bayhaqi, 6:185.

¹⁷⁸ Ibn Hambal, 1:107; *Shifa’*, 1:323; Ibn Hibban, 9:47; Bayhaqi, 6:179.

¹⁷⁹ *Majma‘ al-Zawa’id*, 8:298, related by Tabarani and Bayhaqi.

¹⁸⁰ Ibn Maja, no. 3532; Hakim, 2:618; Bayhaqi, 6:82.

¹⁸¹ Ibn Hanbal, 4:172; Darimi, 1:11-12; also related by Bayhaqi and Tabarani.

¹⁸² Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, 4:62-63; also related by Tabarani and Bayhaqi.

- A mute boy came to God's Messenger. When God's Messenger asked him who he was, the boy said: "You are The Messenger," and began to speak.¹⁸³
- Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, the leading scholar of his age and who was honored with conversation with God's Messenger many times while awake, related and verified that a newly born baby from Yamama was brought to God's Messenger. When the Messenger turned his face to him, the baby began to speak and said: "I bear witness that you are the Messenger." God's Messenger replied: "May God bless you." After that, the baby never spoke during his infancy. He had been honored with this miracle and the prayer of "May God bless you,"¹⁸⁴ and became famous with the title Mubarak al-Yamama (The Blessed One from Yamama).
- An ill-natured boy interrupted God's Messenger by passing before him while he was praying. God's Messenger said: "O God, let him not leave any traces." After this, the boy was punished for his bad behavior by becoming unable to walk.¹⁸⁵
- A shameless woman with the mind of a child once asked for a morsel of food which God's Messenger was eating. He gave her one, but she responded: "I want the one in your mouth." God's Messenger gave it to her. After eating it, she became the shyest woman in Madina.¹⁸⁶

Like these eight, there are perhaps 800 more examples of similar miracles, most of which are recorded in the books of Tradition and his biography. Since his hand was like a drugstore of Luqman, his saliva the life-giving water (elixir) of Khadr, and his breath the health-giving breath of Jesus, and since humanity is subject to disease, many people resorted to him. Sick, young, and insane people flocked to him and were cured.

Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Yamani (also known as Tawus), one of the greatest Tabi'un scholars and one who made pilgrimage 40 times and performed the morning prayer with ablution of the night prayer for 40 years

¹⁸³ Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah wa al-Nihaya*, 6:158, also related by Bayhaqi.

¹⁸⁴ *Shifa'*, 1:319; *Kanz al-'Ummal*, 4:379; Bayhaqi, 6:59.

¹⁸⁵ *Shifa'*, 1:328; Bayhaqi, 5:243; also related by Ibn Hibban. [This incident should not be misunderstood. The Messenger must have discerned that the boy would cause great harm for both himself and the society and, in order to prevent this for the good of both the boy, especially with respect to his eternal life in the Hereafter, and the society, prayed against him. A similar significant incident is related in the Qur'an (18:74, 80-81) (Tr.)]

¹⁸⁶ *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, 8:312; *Shifa'*, 1:325; related by Tabarani.

continuously, stated with certainty: “Whenever an insane person came to God’s Messenger, he or she was cured as soon as the Messenger put his hand on his or her chest. There were no exceptions.” As such a great authority, one who lived during the last phase of the Age of Happiness (the time of the Prophet and his four Rightly-Guided Caliphs) had such a definite conviction, it is unquestionable that the Prophet cured everyone who came to him. As this fact became known, we can assume that thousands of people appealed to him.

FOURTEENTH SIGN: Miracles related to the Messenger’s prayers also are important. Such miracles are definite and genuinely *mutawatir*, having happened numerous times. Most of them reach the degree of *tawatur* or are as well-known as the *mutawatir* ones; the rest bear the same certitude as the well-known *mutawatir* Traditions, since they are narrated by the greatest authorities. Of many such instances, we relate only a few that are as famous as, or have the same certainty of, *mutawatir*.

FIRST EXAMPLE: Traditionists, including Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim, report that God accepted all of the Messenger’s prayers for rain immediately. Sometimes it would begin to fall before he lowered his hands while on the pulpit. As mentioned earlier, clouds would appear to meet his army’s need for water. Even in his childhood, his grandfather ‘Abd al-Muttalib would go with him to pray for rain, and it would come out of respect for him. One of ‘Abd al-Muttalib’s poems made this famous.

After the Prophet’s death, ‘Umar once took ‘Abbas with him to pray for rain, saying: “O God, this is Your beloved Prophet’s uncle. Give us rain for his sake.” Thereafter it rained.¹⁸⁷ As reported by Imam Bukhari and Muslim, God’s Messenger was asked to pray for rain and did so. It rained so heavily that they asked him to pray for it to cease. He did so, and the rain stopped instantly.¹⁸⁸

SECOND EXAMPLE: It is as well-known as *tawatur* that even when there were only 40 Companions and they were praying in secret, God’s Messenger prayed: “O God, strengthen Islam by ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab or ‘Amr ibn al-Hisham.” A few days later, ‘Umar embraced Islam and became a means of openly propagating and exalting Islam.¹⁸⁹ He acquired the sublime title of Faruq (discerning between truth and falsehood).

¹⁸⁷ Bukhari, 2:35; Bayhaqi, 6:147.

¹⁸⁸ *Shifa’*, 1:327, related by Bukhari and Muslim.

¹⁸⁹ Tirmidhi, no. 3684; Ibn Hanbal, 2:95; Hakim, 2:465; Bayhaqi, 2:215.

THIRD EXAMPLE: God's Messenger prayed for various distinguished Companions. His prayers were so readily accepted that they can be considered miracles. The following are some examples out of many:

As reported primarily by Bukhari and Muslim, God's Messenger prayed for Ibn 'Abbas: "O God, make him profoundly knowledgeable in religion and teach him the Qur'an's innermost meaning."¹⁹⁰ As a result, Ibn 'Abbas acquired the sublime title of "Interpreter of the Qur'an" and the exalted position of being the "Scholar of the Umma." When Ibn 'Abbas was still young, 'Umar included him in his consultative assembly, which consisted of the Companions' scholars and elders.

Compilers of authentic books of Traditions, including Imam Bukhari, report that Anas' mother asked God's Messenger to pray that Anas would have many descendants and much wealth. He prayed: "O God, give abundance to his wealth and offspring, and bless that which You have bestowed on him." In his old age, Anas swore by God: "I have buried 100 of my children. Concerning my wealth, nobody has lived as happily as I have. You see my abundant wealth, which is due to the Prophet's prayer."¹⁹¹

Traditionists, including Imam Bayhaqi, report that God's Messenger prayed for 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf, one of the ten Companions promised Paradise while still living, to have abundant wealth. As a result, he gained such wealth that once he gave 700 loaded camels as alms in God's cause.¹⁹² Now reflect on the blessings of the Prophet's prayer and say: "How great are God's blessings."

Tradition narrators, including Imam Bukhari, report that God's Messenger prayed for 'Urwa ibn Abi Ja'da to profit in business. 'Urwa says: "Sometimes I would go to Kufa's market and return home in the evening having earned 40,000 (dirhams)." Imam Bukhari remarks: 'If he had taken a little soil in his hand, he would have gained a profit from it.'¹⁹³ 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far, for whom God's Messenger prayed for abundance, became famous because of his great wealth. He was as well-known for his generosity as he was for his riches.¹⁹⁴

The above-mentioned miracles are enough to illustrate this point.

¹⁹⁰ Ibn Hambal, *Musnad*, 1:264; also related by Bukhari, Muslim, and Hakim.

¹⁹¹ Bukhari, 8:93, 100; Muslim, no. 2480; Ibn Hanbal, 6:430.

¹⁹² *Shifa'*, 1:326; Bayhaqi, 6:218; Abu Dawud, no. 2109.

¹⁹³ Bukhari, 4:252; Ibn Hajar, *al-Isaba*, 2:476; Bayhaqi, 6:220.

¹⁹⁴ Ibn Hajar, *Matalib al-'Aliya*, 4077; related by Abu Ya'la and Tabarani.

Imam Tirmidhi and other Traditionists report that God's Messenger prayed for Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas: "O God, answer his prayer."¹⁹⁵ After that, Sa'd became famous for having his prayers accepted. In addition, everyone feared his malediction. God's Messenger also prayed that Abu Qatada might remain young, saying: "May God prosper your face. O God, bless his hair and skin." When Abu Qatada died at the age of 70, he seemed to be as young as a 15-year-old boy.¹⁹⁶

Once the poet Nabigha recited a poem of his in the presence of God's Messenger. When he recited the couplet:

Our honor and praise have reached the skies;
We want to ascend even higher!

the Messenger asked him, jokingly: "To where, O Abu Layla?" He replied: "To Paradise, O Messenger of God." Afterwards, he recited another meaningful poem and the Messenger of God prayed: "May God not deform your mouth." As a result, Nabigha had all of his teeth when he reached the great age of 120 years. Whenever he lost a tooth, a new one would appear in its place.¹⁹⁷

God's Messenger prayed for Imam 'Ali: "O God, suffice him against heat and cold." As a result, Imam 'Ali felt neither cold nor heat even if he habitually wore winter clothing in summer or summer clothing in winter. He said: "I do not suffer from cold or heat, thanks to the Prophet's prayer."¹⁹⁸ God's Messenger also prayed for Fatima: "O God, do not let her suffer from hunger." Fatima said: "I never suffered from hunger after his prayer."¹⁹⁹

Tufayl ibn 'Amr once asked the Messenger to perform a miracle for his tribe. The Messenger prayed: "O God, provide light for him." A light appeared between Tufayl's eyes, which was later transferred to the end of a stick. This caused him to be known as Dhu al-Nur (possessor of light).²⁰⁰

These are some well-known events that have acquired certitude.

Abu Hurayra once complained to the Messenger about forgetfulness. The Messenger told him to spread a piece of cloth on the ground. He then

¹⁹⁵ Tirmidhi, 3752; Hakim, 3:499; also related by Ibn Hibban and Abu Nu'aym.

¹⁹⁶ *Shifa'*, 1:327, related by Bayhaqi.

¹⁹⁷ Ibn Hajar, *al-Isaba*, No. 8639; Bayhaqi, 6:232; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya*, 6:168.

¹⁹⁸ Ibn Hanbal, 1:99; Ibn Maja, 1:43; also related by Bayhaqi and Tabarani.

¹⁹⁹ *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, 9:203, related by Bayhaqi and Tabarani.

²⁰⁰ *Shifa'*, 1:328, related by Bayhaqi, Ibn Jarir, and Ibn Ishaq.

made some movements as if filling his hands with invisible things and emptying them on the cloth. After doing this three or four times, he told Abu Hurayra to pick it up. Thereafter Abu Hurayra, as he later swore by God, never forgot anything.²⁰¹

FOURTH EXAMPLE: Under severe persecutions, God's Messenger sometimes had to refer the state of the persecutors to God:

FIRST: The Persian Chosroes, Parwiz, tore up the letter sent to him by the Prophet. When he heard this, the Prophet prayed: "O God, rend him and his rule as he rent my letter." As a result, Parwiz was killed by his own son (Shirwiya) with a dagger, and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas tore his kingdom into pieces, causing the Sassanid Empire to collapse completely.²⁰² The Emperor of Byzantium and the rulers of other states did not perish, for they respected the Prophet's letters.

SECOND: A famous *mutawatir* Tradition states, and Qur'anic verses point out, that in the early days of Islam when God's Messenger prayed at the Ka'ba, the Qurayshi leaders would gather around him and treat him very badly. He had to refer their state to God. Ibn Mas'ud remarks: "I swear by God that I saw all of their corpses after the Battle of Badr."²⁰³

THIRD: God's Messenger prayed that the large Mudar tribe would endure famine, since they had contradicted him. Rain stopped, and drought and famine struck the Mudar. When the Quraysh, a sub-clan of the Mudar, asked God's Messenger to pray for rain, he did so and thereby ended the drought and famine.²⁰⁴ This event is considered *mutawatir*.

FIFTH EXAMPLE: The Prophet's resentment of particular people resulted in their terrible destruction. We cite three examples:

FIRST: He cursed 'Utba ibn Abi Lahab: "O God, send one of your dogs upon him."²⁰⁵ Some time later when 'Utba was traveling, a lion picked him out in the caravan and tore him up. This very famous event was related and verified by leading Tradition scholars.

SECOND: God's Messenger dispatched Amir ibn Azbat to command a squadron. Muhallam ibn Jassama killed him out of spite. When God's Messenger learned of this, he became angry and prayed: "O God, do not forgive

²⁰¹ Bukhari, 4:253; also related by Muslim, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Hanbal.

²⁰² Bukhari, 6:10; Abu Nu'aym, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, 2:348.

²⁰³ Muslim, 3, no. 1794; Bukhari, 5:94; Ibn Hanbal, 1:417.

²⁰⁴ Bukhari, 2:37; Bayhaqi, 2:324.

²⁰⁵ Bayhaqi, 2:335; *Kanz al-'Ummal*, 438-439; Abu Nu'aym, 2:454.

Muhallam.”²⁰⁶ Muhallam died after 7 days. They put his corpse in the grave, but the grave rejected it. They tried to bury him several times, but each time the grave threw the body out. In the end, a covering finally had to be built.

THIRD: The Messenger saw a man eating with his left hand. He warned him to eat with his right hand. The man, who felt his pride injured, retorted: “I cannot do so.” God’s Messenger said: “May you never use it again.” After that, the man could never raise his right hand again.²⁰⁷

SIXTH EXAMPLE: Out of the many wonders manifested through the Prophet’s prayer and touch, we mention a few that have acquired certainty. They are as follows:

FIRST: The Messenger gave Khalid ibn Walid (the Sword of God) a few of his hairs and prayed for his triumph. Khalid kept the hairs in his turban. Due to their worth and that of the prayer, Khalid became victorious in every battle.²⁰⁸

SECOND: Salman al-Farisi was formerly a slave of the Jews. His masters demanded a very high ransom [for his emancipation], saying: “We will emancipate you if you plant 300 date palms and, after they yield fruit, you give us an additional 50 kilos of gold.”

Salman explained his situation to the Messenger. God’s Messenger planted the date palms somewhere around Medina, and one more was planted by another person. Within the same year, all 300 trees yielded fruit, except for the one planted by the other person. The Messenger pulled it up and replanted it, and it too yielded fruit. He then put some water from his mouth on an egg-sized piece of gold and, after praying, gave it to Salman and told him to give out of it what his masters asked. After Salman did so, it was still the same size.²⁰⁹ This miraculous incident, the most significant event in Salman’s life, is reported by reliable Traditionists.

THIRD: A female Companion named Umm Malik used to offer butter to the Messenger out of a leather bag (an *ukka*). He once returned it after praying over it, and told her not to empty or squeeze it. After that, her children would find butter in the bag whenever they wanted some. This continued for a long time, until they squeezed it and ended the blessing.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ *Shifa'*, 1:329; Ibn Hisham, *Sira*, 4:247.

²⁰⁷ Muslim, no. 2021; also related by Ibn Hibban, Bayhaqi, and Tabarani.

²⁰⁸ Hakim, 3:289; *Shifa'*, 1:331; Bayhaqi, 6:249.

²⁰⁹ Ibn Hanbal, 5:441-42; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*, 4:53-57; Hakim, 2:16.

²¹⁰ Muslim, no. 2280; Ibn Hanbal, 3:242; Bayhaqi, *Dala'il*, 6:113.

SEVENTH EXAMPLE: There are many examples of water becoming sweet and emitting a pleasant fragrance. We cite a few of them, as follows:

FIRST: Traditionists, including Bayhaqi, narrate that Bi'r al-Quba (a well) dried up rather frequently. After God's Messenger poured some of his ablution water into it, it always held a great amount of water.²¹¹

SECOND: Traditionists, above all Abu Nu'aym in his *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, report that when God's Messenger put some of his saliva into the well in Anas' house and prayed, its water became the sweetest in Medina.²¹²

THIRD: Ibn Maja narrated that once someone brought a bucket of Zamzam well water to the Messenger. After he put some in his mouth and emptied it into the bucket, the bucket gave off a musk-like smell.²¹³

FOURTH: Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal narrates that a bucket of water was taken from a well. After God's Messenger put some of his saliva in the bucket and poured the water into the well, the well began to smell of musk.²¹⁴

FIFTH: Hammad ibn Salama, a pious narrator highly esteemed and relied upon by Imam Muslim and the scholars of Muslim West (North Africa and al-Andalus), reports that God's Messenger filled a leather bag with water, breathed a prayer into it, and then tied it up and gave it to some Companions, saying: "Don't open it except when you will get ablution." When they did so, they saw that there was milk inside, with cream on it.²¹⁵

These five incidents are narrated by famous, significant authorities. Together with those cited here, they show such types of miracles as definitely as *mutawatir* in meaning.

EIGHTH EXAMPLE: Sterile goats gave plenty of milk after the Messenger touched them and prayed. There are various examples of this type of miracle. We mention only a few that are the best known and most authentic, as follows:

FIRST: All reliable biographies of the Prophet relate that during his migration to Madina, he and Abu Bakr stopped at 'Atiqa bint al-Huda'iyya's house (also known as Umm Ma'bād). She had a very thin, barren goat. When the Messenger asked if the goat produced any milk, she replied: "It does not even have blood in its veins. How can it produce milk?" God's Messenger rubbed

²¹¹ *Shifa'*, 1:331, related by Bayhaqi.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 1:331.

²¹³ Ibn Maja, no. 659; *Shifa'*, 1:332.

²¹⁴ Ibn Hanbal, 22, 67; also related by Ibn Maja.

²¹⁵ *Shifa'*, 1:334, related by Ibn Sa'd.

its back and loins, stroked its udder, prayed, and then told her to get a vessel and milk her goat. She did so, and God's Messenger, Abu Bakr, and the whole household drank until fully satisfied. Following this incident, the goat grew fat and strong and produced lots of milk.²¹⁶

SECOND: This is the famous story of Ibn Mas'ud's goat. Prior to his conversion, Ibn Mas'ud was a shepherd who cared for the flocks of some Makkah chiefs. One day, God's Messenger and Abu Bakr stopped where he was pasturing the flock. When they asked him for some milk, Ibn Mas'ud replied: "The goats do not belong to me." God's Messenger said: "Bring me a barren goat." Ibn Mas'ud fetched one that had not mated for the past 2 years. The Messenger stroked the goat's udder and prayed. After they milked it and drank its pure, delicious milk,²¹⁷ Ibn Mas'ud became a Muslim.

THIRD: Halima of the Sa'd tribe was the Messenger's wet nurse. Once when her tribe was struck by famine and drought, the animals produced no milk. But when the future Messenger was sent as an infant to be nursed by Halima, her goats alone, and through his blessing, returned home in the evening fully satisfied and with their udders full of milk.²¹⁸

Although there are similar examples of such miracles in biographies of the Prophet, these few are sufficient for the purpose.

NINTH EXAMPLE: Out of many wonders that happened when the Messenger touched people's heads and faces and then prayed, we relate only a few well-known ones, as follows:

FIRST: He rubbed 'Umar ibn Sa'd's head and prayed. As a result, this man had no white hairs on his head when he died at the age of eighty.²¹⁹

SECOND: The Messenger stroked part of Qays ibn Zayd's head and prayed. As a result, all of Qays' hair turned gray, except for that area, when he became 100 years old.²²⁰

THIRD: 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn al-Khattab was a small, ugly man. The Messenger stroked his head and prayed, after which he became almost the tallest and most handsome man.²²¹

²¹⁶ *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, related by Hakim, Bazzar, and Ibn Sa'd.

²¹⁷ Ibn Hanbal, 5:210; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya*, 6:102; Ibn Hibban, 8:149.

²¹⁸ *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, 8:220-221, related by Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Hibban, and Ibn Sa'd.

²¹⁹ *Shifa'*, 1:334.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:334.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 1:335.

FOURTH: When ‘A’iz ibn ‘Amr’s face was wounded at the Battle of Hunayn, the Messenger wiped the blood away. The part of his face touched by the Messenger became so radiant that Traditionists describe it as “like the whiteness on bay horse’s forehead.”²²²

FIFTH: After he stroked Qatada ibn Salman’s face and prayed, it began to shine as brightly as a mirror.²²³

SIXTH: Zaynab, daughter of Umm Salama (the mother of believers) and step-daughter of God’s Messenger, was a child when he sprinkled some of his ablution water on her face. As a result, her face acquired an extraordinary beauty.²²⁴

There are many similar examples, most of which are narrated by Traditionists. Taken together, they represent a miracle having the certainty of *mutawatir* in meaning, even if we were to regard each one as individual in nature and, accordingly, questionably reported.

Any incident reported in various ways is concluded to have happened, even though the separate reports are individually questionable. Suppose a loud noise is heard. One person says: “Such-and-such a house has collapsed.” Another says: “No, a different house has collapsed.” A third reports the collapse of a third house, and so on. Each report may be questionable and even untrue, but one thing is certain—a house did collapse. All six examples mentioned above are authentic, and some are famous. Even if we regard each one as questionable, when taken together they prove the occurrence of a miracle, just as the collapse of a house is certain in the above analogy.

Thus each category of miracle cited so far is established firmly, and the individual incidents related illustrate or represent the whole. As the Messenger’s hands, fingers, saliva, breath, and prayer are the means of his miracles, other parts of his body (material or immaterial) are the means of numerous wonders. History books and those relating his biography recount these wonders and display diverse proofs of his Prophethood by expressing his spiritual, moral, and physical qualities.

FIFTEENTH SIGN: Rocks, trees, the moon, and the sun recognize him and testify to his Prophethood, each demonstrating one of his miracles. In the same way, animals, the dead, jinn, and angels recognize him and testi-

²²² Ibid., 1:334; *Majma‘ al-Zawa’id*, 9:412, related by Tabarani.

²²³ *Shifa'*, 1:334; Ibn Hajar, *al-Isaba*, 3:225.

²²⁴ *Shifa'*, 1:334; related by Tabarani and Ibn ‘Abd al-Birr.

fy to his Prophethood by becoming the object of his miracles. This sign is explained in three parts, as follows:

FIRST PART: The animal kingdom recognized God's Messenger and became the means for him to work miracles. Although there are many examples, we mention only a few of the well-known ones having the certainty of *mutawatir* in meaning, agreed on by exacting authorities, or accepted by the Umma.

FIRST INCIDENT: This has the reputation of *mutawatir* in meaning. During the Prophet's migration to Madina, he and Abu Bakr concealed themselves from their pursuers in Thawr cave. Two pigeons guarded its entrance like sentries; a spider, functioning as a doorkeeper, covered the entrance with a thick web.²²⁵ As Ubayy ibn al-Khalaf, a leading Qurayshi who would be killed by the Messenger during the Battle of Badr, was examining the cave, his friends wanted to enter. But he told them: "There's no point. This web seems to have been spun before Muhammad was born." The others added: "Would those pigeons, standing there, still be there if someone were inside?"²²⁶ Ibn Wahb also reports that a group of pigeons shaded the Messenger during Makka's conquest.²²⁷

'A'isha reports: "We had a pigeon named Dajin in our house. When God's Messenger was at home it would stay quiet, but as soon as he left it would begin to pace to and fro."²²⁸ This signifies that the bird obeyed God's Messenger by remaining quiet in his presence.

SECOND INCIDENT: This concerns a wolf. Such well-known Companions as Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, Salama ibn al-Aqwa', Ibn Abi Wahb, Abu Hurayra, and Uhban (the shepherd directly involved) report this event, which gives it the certainty of *tawatur* in meaning. A wolf once snatched a goat from a herd, but the shepherd rescued the goat. The wolf said: "You deprive me of my food without fearing God." The shepherd muttered: "How strange! Does a wolf speak?" The wolf responded: "What is [really] strange is that a Prophet behind that hill invites you to Paradise, but you do not recognize him!"

All reports agree on the talking wolf. According to Abu Hurayra's report, transmitted through a more reliable channel, the shepherd said to the wolf: "I will go, but who will watch over my goats?" "I will," replied the wolf. The

²²⁵ Ibn Hanbal, 1:248; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, 3:179-81.

²²⁶ *Shifa'*, 1: 313, related by Tabarani, Bazzar, and Bayhaqi.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:313.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:309, related by Ibn Hanbal, Bazzar, Abu Ya'la, and Bayhaqi.

shepherd went to see God's Messenger, leaving the goats under the wolf's care, and soon became a believer.²²⁹ When he returned, he found the wolf watching the goats; not one had been lost. He then slaughtered a goat for the wolf, since it had become his teacher.

Abu Sufyan and Safwan, two leading Qurayshis, once saw a wolf chasing a gazelle. When the gazelle went into the Ka'ba's enclosure, the wolf returned and testified verbally to Muhammad's Prophethood. Surprised, Abu Sufyan warned Safwan: "If we report this miracle to others, I fear all of Makka will join the Muslims."²³⁰ In short, this miracle is certain and *tawatur* in meaning.

THIRD INCIDENT: This is the story of the camel. It is reported through five or six channels by such Companions as Abu Hurayra, Tha'laba ibn Malik, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah, 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far, and 'Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa'. A camel prostrated before God's Messenger, as if greeting him, and spoke to him. Other reports say that this camel had gone wild in a vineyard, attacking anybody who came near it. When God's Messenger appeared, it came to him, prostrated as a sign of respect, and knelt before him so that the Messenger could put a bridle on it. Then the camel complained to God's Messenger: "They used me in the heaviest work, and now they want to slaughter me, so I went wild." God's Messenger asked its owner if this was true, and he replied that it was.²³¹

The Prophet owned a camel named Abda'. After the Prophet died, this camel did not eat or drink anything out of grief, and finally died.²³² Such significant authorities as Abu Ishaq al-Isfaranji relate that this camel talked with God's Messenger about an important event. Jabir ibn 'Abdullah reports that once his camel became exhausted during a military campaign. When the Messenger prodded it slightly, the resulting joy and agility made the camel move so fast that nobody could catch up with or stop it.²³³

FOURTH INCIDENT: Traditionists, including Imam Bukhari, relate that one night it was rumored that the enemy was about to attack Madina. Some valiant horsemen set out to investigate. On their way, they saw a man who turned out to be God's Messenger coming toward them. He told them:

²²⁹ *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, 8:291, related by Ibn Hanbal.

²³⁰ *Shifa'*, 1:311.

²³¹ Hakim, 2:99; Ibn Hanbal, 3:158; Muslim, 1:268; Ibn Maja, 1:121.

²³² *Shifa'*, 1:313.

²³³ Bukhari, 7:6; Muslim, 3:1222.

"There is nothing."²³⁴ He had mounted Abu Talha's horse and investigated the matter before anybody else. He said to Abu Talha: "Your horse is very fast and comfortable," although before then it had been very slow. After that night, no other horse could beat it in a race. On another occasion, the Messenger told his horse to stop so he could pray. The horse remained still until he finished praying.²³⁵

FIFTH INCIDENT: Safina, the Messenger's servant, set out to meet Mu'adh ibn Jabal, the governor of Yemen, upon the order of God's Messenger. Encountering a lion on the way, he said to it: "I am the Messenger's servant." The lion made a sound and left without harming him. According to another narration, Safina encountered the lion while returning to Madina. However, he got lost and the lion not only did not harm him but actually showed him the way.²³⁶

'Umar relates that a Bedouin carrying a lizard said to God's Messenger: "If this animal bears witness to your Prophethood, I will believe in you. Otherwise, I will not." When God's Messenger asked the lizard, it testified verbally to his Prophethood.²³⁷ Umm Salama (a mother of the believers) reports that an antelope once spoke to God's Messenger and bore witness to His Messengership.²³⁸

We have cited only a few well-known examples out of many similar ones. We therefore say to those who do not recognize and obey God's Messenger: "Do not try to fall behind the animals after you learn that even wolves and lions recognize and obey God's Messenger."

SECOND PART: Corpses, jinn, and angels recognize God's Messenger. The miracles concerning jinn and angels are *mutawatir* and number in the thousands. Out of many instances illustrating that corpses recognize God's Messenger, we cite only a few related by reliable authorities, as follows:

FIRST: Hasan al-Basri, a devoted student of Imam 'Ali and the greatest Tabi'un religious scholar in both the outer and inner dimension of Islam, reported that a bitterly weeping man came to God's Messenger and said: "My little daughter died in that stream nearby, and I left her corpse there." God's Messenger had pity on him, and said: "Come, we will go there." They

²³⁴ Muslim, no. 2307; Abu Dawud, 4988; Tirmidhi, 1685.

²³⁵ *Shifa'*, 1:315.

²³⁶ Hakim, 3:606; also related by Bazzar, Tabarani, and Abu Nu'aym.

²³⁷ *Kanz al-'Ummal*, 12:358, related by Bayhaqi, Hakim, and Abu Nu'aym.

²³⁸ *Shifa'*, 1:314, related by Tabarani, Bayhaqi, Abu Nu'aym, and Ibn Kathir.

reached the place where she was buried. When God's Messenger called to her, she replied at once: "Here I am, ready to carry out your orders." God's Messenger asked if she wanted to return to her parents. "No," she said, "for I have found a better place here."²³⁹

SECOND: Such significant Traditionists as Imam Bayhaqi and Ibn 'Adiyy report that Anas ibn Malik said: "A pious old woman's only son died unexpectedly. She grieved very much and prayed: "O God, I emigrated here only to obtain Your good pleasure and serve Your Messenger, to whom I took the oath of allegiance. For Your Messenger's sake, give me back my son, who was the only one to look after me." Anas says: "That dead son was raised and ate with us."²⁴⁰

In his *Qasida al-Bur'a*, written in praise of the Prophet, Imam Busiri refers to this miraculous event:

If the miracles he worked had been enough
to demonstrate his unequaled rank,
Mere mention of his name would suffice to quicken
decayed bones (let alone the newly dead).

THIRD: Bayhaqi and others quote 'Abdullah ibn 'Ubayullah al-Ansari: "I was present when Thabit ibn Qays ibn Shammus was buried after being martyred during the Battle of Yamama. As he was being buried, people heard him say: 'Muhammad is God's Messenger, Abu Bakr is truthful, 'Umar is a martyr, and 'Uthman is pious and merciful.' We opened the grave only to find him dead."²⁴¹ Thabit thus predicted 'Umar's martyrdom even before 'Umar became caliph.

FOURTH: Imam Tabarani and Abu Nu'aym in *Dala'il al-Nubuuwa* (Proofs of Prophethood) report from Nu'man ibn Bashir: "Zayd ibn Kharija died unexpectedly at the market. We took his body home. Women cried around him for some time between the evening and the late evening prayers, when he was heard to say: 'Silence, silence!' and continued fluently: 'Muhammad is God's Messenger. Peace be upon you, O Messenger.' We examined him, and found that he was dead."²⁴²

²³⁹ *Shifa'*, 1:320.

²⁴⁰ *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, 6:292; *Shifa'*, 1:320; Bayhaqi, 6:50.

²⁴¹ *Shifa'*, 1:320.

²⁴² *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, 6:293; related by Hakim and Bayhaqi.

If living people still do not confirm him even when the dead bear witness to his Messengership, they are more lifeless than corpses and more dead than the dead.

Accounts of angels appearing to and serving God's Messenger, and those of jinn believing in and obeying him, have the status of *mutawatir*, for many Qur'anic verses have affirmed this explicitly. For example, the Qur'an states that during the Battle of Badr, 5,000 angels served him as Companions—like soldiers on the front line. This was done to strengthen the believers' conviction that they would win, not to participate in the battle directly. These angels are distinguished among all others by that honor, just as the people of Badr were distinguished among all other Companions.

There are two aspects to be considered here: The existence of angels and jinn and their relationship with us (decisively proved in The Twenty-ninth Word), and the ability of certain Muslims to see and converse with them through the Messenger's blessing and miracles. Many Tradition authorities, above all Bukhari and Muslim, report that Archangel Gabriel came to God's Messenger, when he was sitting with some Companions, as a man dressed in white. He asked about belief, Islam, and excellence and virtue (*ihsan*). While God's Messenger was defining them, the Companions learned a lesson and saw the questioner plainly. When the questioner, who appeared to be a visitor although, to their astonishment, he bore no signs of travel, suddenly disappeared, God's Messenger said: "That was Gabriel, who came to teach you your religion."²⁴³

Traditionists also report, through authentic narrations having the certainty of *mutawatir* in meaning, that Companions often saw Gabriel with God's Messenger as Dihya, a very good-looking Companion. For instance, 'Umar, Ibn 'Abbas, Usama ibn Zayd, Harith, 'A'isha, and Umm Salama report: "We frequently saw Gabriel with God's Messenger in the form of Dihya."²⁴⁴ Would they have said this if they could not see Gabriel?

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, conqueror of Persia and one of the ten Companions promised Paradise while alive, reported: "During the Battle of Uhud we saw two men dressed in white at each side of God's Messenger, as if guarding him. We concluded that they were the Archangels Gabriel and

²⁴³ Bukhari, 1:19-20; *Shifa'*, 1:341, also related by Muslim and many others.

²⁴⁴ Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 1:212; Bukhari, 4:250; Bayhaqi, 7:52, 87.

Michael.”²⁴⁵ When such a hero of Islam says he saw them, could he not have seen them?

Abu Sufyan ibn Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet’s cousin, reports: “We saw horsemen dressed in white between the sky and Earth during the Battle of Badr.”²⁴⁶ One day, Hamza told God’s Messenger that he wanted to see Gabriel. The Messenger complied at the Ka‘ba, but Hamza could not bear the sight and fell unconscious.²⁴⁷

Several similar instances demonstrate this type of miracle, and indicate that even angels are like moths around his Prophethood’s light.

Both Companions and ordinary Muslims can meet and converse with jinn. The most definite example concerns Ibn Mas‘ud, whom the Traditionists report through one of the most authentic narrations, as saying: “I saw the jinn in Batn al-Nakhla on the night they were converted to Islam. They resembled the tall men of the Sudanese Zut tribe.”²⁴⁸

Another well-known incident accepted and narrated by Traditionists concerns Khalid ibn Walid. When ‘Uzza (a pre-Islamic idol) was demolished, a female jinn emerged in the form of a dark woman. Khalid cut her into two pieces with his sword. Then God’s Messenger said: “They have been worshipping her in the idol ‘Uzza. From now on, she will be worshipped no longer.”²⁴⁹

‘Umar said: “When we were with God’s Messenger, a jinn named Haama appeared as an old man with a stick. He converted to Islam. God’s Messenger instructed him in some short Qur’anic chapters and, after learning his lesson, the jinn departed.”²⁵⁰ Although some Traditionists question this event’s accuracy, the outstanding authorities agree that it happened.

There is no need for long explanations, since we have cited many examples in this respect. However, we add this: Through the light and teaching of God’s Messenger, and by following him, thousands of such eminent, godly people of purity as ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani have met and conversed with angels and jinn. Thus this event has reached the degree of *tawatur* a hundred times.

²⁴⁵ Muslim, no. 2036; Bukhari, 7:192; Hakim, 2:264.

²⁴⁶ *Shifa'*, 1:362; Ibn Hanbal, 1:347; also related by Bukhari and Bayhaqi.

²⁴⁷ *Shifa'*, 1:362; Suyuti, *al-Khasa'is al-Kubra'*, 1:311.

²⁴⁸ Ibn Hanbal, 6:165; Suyuti, *ibid.*, 1:343; *Shifa'*, 1:362.

²⁴⁹ Abu Nu‘aym, 2:535; *Shifa'*, 1:362; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya*, 4:316.

²⁵⁰ Bayhaqi, 5:416; Suyuti, 2:350.

THIRD PART: The protection of God's Messenger is an evident miracle, as expressed in: *God will defend you from people* (5:67) and illustrated by many incidents. When God's Messenger proclaimed the Divine Message, he did not challenge just one tribe or race, a few politicians, or a particular religion, but all rulers and all religions. Despite his uncle's and tribe's status as among his greatest enemies, as well as the numerous conspiracies directed against him, he drew his last breath in his own bed in perfect contentment and reached the highest incorporeal realm after 23 years without a guard or any form of protection. This clearly shows the truth of the above-quoted verse and provides a firm point of support for God's Messenger. In this regard, we mention only a few of the many indisputably certain exemplary events, as follows:

FIRST EVENT: All Traditionists and biographers of the Prophet report that the Quraysh tried to kill him. Advised by a diabolical man or by Satan himself in the form of a man from Najd, they chose at least one man from each clan to avoid any intratribal dispute. Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab led the approximately 200 men who besieged the Messenger's house. 'Ali, who was with God's Messenger that night, was told to sleep in the Messenger's bed. When the Quraysh surrounded the house, the Messenger left and, throwing some dust on them, passed by without being seen.²⁵¹

SECOND EVENT: God's Messenger and Abu Bakr left Thawr cave, where God had sent a spider and two pigeons to guard them, and set out for Madina. Meanwhile, the Qurayshi chiefs sent Suraqa, a very brave man, to assassinate them in return for a large reward. Abu Bakr became anxious when they saw Suraqa coming. God's Messenger repeated to him what he had said in the cave: "Don't worry, for God is with us." He then glanced at Suraqa, and the hooves of Suraqa's horse got stuck in the ground. Suraqa pulled the horse free and began to follow them, but his horse's hooves got stuck again and he saw smoke arising from that place. Only then did he realize that neither he nor anybody else could lay hands on God's Messenger, and he had to ask for quarter. God's Messenger freed him, saying: "Go back, and make sure nobody else comes."²⁵²

In addition, a shepherd saw God's Messenger and Abu Bakr and hurried to Makka to inform the Quraysh. However, when he arrived he could

²⁵¹ *Shifa'*, 1:349; Ibn Hanbal, 4:269; Bayhaqi, 2:465; Abu Nu'aym, 1:202-4.

²⁵² Bukhari, 4:245-46; Muslim, no. 2009; Bayhaqi, 2:483.

not remember what he wanted to tell them. Unable to recall anything, he left and only later realized later that he had been made to forget.²⁵³

THIRD EVENT: During the military campaign of Ghatfan and Anmar, a courageous chieftain named Ghawras unexpectedly appeared at the Messenger's side. Holding his sword over the Messenger's head, he demanded: "Who will save you from me?" God's Messenger replied: "God." He then prayed: "O God, protect me from him as You will." In the same breath, a blow between his shoulders felled Ghawras, and his sword slipped from his hand. God's Messenger took the sword and asked: "Now who will save you from me?" God's Messenger then forgave Ghawras and allowed him to return to his tribe. Surprised at such a brave man having failed to do anything, his fellows asked: "What happened? Why could you not do anything?" He explained what had happened, and added: "I have come from the presence of the best of humanity."²⁵⁴

In a similar event, a hypocrite secretly approached God's Messenger from behind during the Battle of Badr. Lifting his sword to strike God's Messenger, at that instant the Messenger turned and glanced at him. This caused him to tremble and drop his sword.²⁵⁵

FOURTH EVENT: Most interpreters consider this event, almost as well-known as it is *mutawatir*, to be the occasion for revealing: *We have put on their necks fetters up to the chin so their heads are raised. We have put before them a barrier and behind them a barrier, and We have covered them so they do not see* (36:9). Abu Jahl picked up a large rock and swore that if he would hit the Prophet with it if he saw him prostrating. Finding the Prophet prostrating, he raised the rock to smash it on the Prophet's head. But his hands froze in the air. God's Messenger finished his prayer and stood up. Only then did Abu Jahl's hands become unbound, either by permission of God's Messenger or because there was no reason for them to remain bound.²⁵⁶

In a similar incident, a man from Abu Jahl's clan (Walid ibn Mughira, according to one report) went to the Ka'ba with a large rock to injure God's Messenger while he was prostrating. However, his eyes became sealed and he could not see God's Messenger. Still unable to see (although he could

²⁵³ *Shifa'*, 1:351; 'Ali al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shifa'*, 1:715.

²⁵⁴ Hakim, 3:29-30; *Shifa'*, 1:348; Bayhaqi, 3:373-79; also related by Muslim.

²⁵⁵ *Shifa'*, 1:347.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:351; Muslim, no. 2797; Ibn Hanbal, 2:37.

hear), he returned to those who had sent him.²⁵⁷ When God's Messenger finished his prayer, the would-be assassin's eyes were opened, since there was no need for them to remain closed.

Abu Bakr relates that after *Surat al-Masad (Tabbat)*, which begins with *Perish the hands of Abu Lahab* (111:1), was revealed, Abu Lahab's wife, described therein as the *carrier of the firewood* (111:4), picked up a rock and went to the Ka'ba. God's Messenger and Abu Bakr were sitting near it. She could not see God's Messenger and asked Abu Bakr: "Where is your friend? I hear that he satirized me. If I see him, I will hit him on the mouth with this rock!"²⁵⁸ She could not see the one under God's protection, who was the object of the *hadith qudsi*: "But for you, I would not have created the worlds." And so she could not enter his presence. How could she carry out her plan?

FIFTH EVENT: Amir ibn Tufayl and Arbad ibn Qays conspired to assassinate the Messenger. Amir said to Arbad: "I will keep him busy; you hit him." They went to him, but Arbad did not do anything. When Amir later asked him why he had not hit God's Messenger, Arbad replied: "How could I? Every time I intended to hit him, I saw you between us. Did you expect me to hit you?"²⁵⁹

SIXTH EVENT: Either during the Battle of Uhud or Hunayn, Shayba ibn 'Uthman al-Hajabiya approached God's Messenger stealthily from behind. He intended to avenge his father and uncle, who had been killed by Hamza. He lifted his sword, but it suddenly slipped out of his hand. God's Messenger turned to him and put his hand on his chest. When relating this event, Shayba said: "At that moment, no one else was more beloved to me." He embraced Islam instantly, and God's Messenger told him to go and fight. Shayba said: "I fought in front of God's Messenger. If I had met my own father, I would have killed him."²⁶⁰

On the day of Makka's conquest, Fadhlala approached God's Messenger with the intent of killing him. God's Messenger smiled at him, asked what he had in mind, and prayed that Fadhlala might be forgiven. Entering Islam at that moment, Fadhlala acknowledged later: "No one in the world was more beloved to me than him at that moment."²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ *Shifa'*, 1:351; Bayhaqi, 3:197.

²⁵⁸ Hakim, 2:351; Bayhaqi, 2:195.

²⁵⁹ Bayhaqi, 5:318; *Shifa'*, 1:353; Abu Nu'aym, 1:207.

²⁶⁰ *Shifa'*, 1:353; Ibn Hajar, *al-Isaba*, 2:157; Abu Nu'aym, 1:195.

²⁶¹ *Shifa'*, 1:354; 'Ali al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shifa'*, 1:718.

SEVENTH EVENT: Some Jews conspired to drop a large rock on the Prophet's head while he was sitting under a particular roof. They were just about to do so when God's Messenger stood up to go. As a result of God's protection, their plot was foiled.²⁶²

There are many similar instances. Traditionists, above all Imam Bukhari and Muslim, relate from 'A'isha that when *God will protect you from people* was revealed, God's Messenger said to those who had guarded him from time to time: "Leave me, for my Lord, the Mighty and Glorious, protects me."²⁶³

As this treatise demonstrates, everything in the universe recognizes and is related to God's Messenger, and each displays a specific kind of his miracles. This shows that Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger and envoy of God, the Creator of the universe and the Lord of creation. An important inspector appointed by the ruler is recognized by every department of the administration and is related to each because he must perform a duty in each department on the ruler's behalf. For example, a judicial inspector is connected with the judicial department and is unknown in other departments. Similarly, a military inspector is not recognized by the civil administration, and so on. As proven above, every department of the Divine Kingdom, from angels to insects and spiders, knows, recognizes, or has heard of the Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds and the seal of the Prophets. And, moreover, the field of his Messengership is far more comprehensive than that of all previous Prophets.

SIXTEENTH SIGN: The wonders that took place before but in connection with his Prophethood are called *ihrasat*. They are of three kinds, as follows:

FIRST KIND: Tidings of Muhammad's Prophethood given by the Torah, Bible, Psalms, and Pages sent to other prophets, as mentioned in the Qur'an. Since they are originally Scriptures revealed by God to His Prophets, it is fitting that they mention the Prophet who would supersede their religions, change the shape of human civilization, and illumine half of the world with the light of Islam. How could these books, which predict even petty events, not mention Muhammad's Prophethood, the most significant phenomenon in human history?

²⁶² *Shifa'*, 1:352; also related by Ibn Ishaq and Nasa'i in *al-Khasa'is al-Kubra'*, 1:525.

²⁶³ Hakim, 2:213; Bayhaqi, 2:184; also related by Tirmidhi.

Given that they must do so, the people to whom these Scriptures were sent either would denounce it as falsehood to protect their religions from destruction and their books from annulment, or affirm it so that, by means of this truthful person, their religions would remain free of superstition and corruption. Both friend and foe agree that their books contain nothing that contradicts or rejects his Prophethood; on the contrary, they affirm it unanimously. Using this fact, as well as the existence of a definite reason and a fundamental cause for such an affirmation, we will prove this affirmation through three definite evidences.

FIRST EVIDENCE: God's Messenger declares to the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) by the tongue of the Qur'an: "Your Scriptures describe and confirm me in whatever I declare." Furthermore, he challenges them with verses such as:

Say: "Bring the Torah now and recite it, if you are truthful." (3:93)

Say: "Come now, let's call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our selves and your selves, and then humbly pray and so lay God's curse upon the ones who lie." (3:61)

Despite such strong challenges, no Jewish scholar or Christian priest ever found an error with which to challenge him. If they had, the numerous obstinate and jealous unbelievers of that time, as well as hypocritical Jews and all unbelievers, would have publicized it throughout the land.

Like the polytheists of that time, the Jews and Christians also had to wage war on him when they were not able to contradict him. They chose to fight only to be scattered and forced to emigrate, as they could find no error. If they had, they would have thought themselves saved.

SECOND EVIDENCE: The words of the Torah, Gospels, and Psalms do not have the Qur'an's miraculous perfection. Moreover, many alien terms and ideas have entered them because the translations became far removed from the original texts. Furthermore, the sayings and mistakes, whether intentional or not, of their many interpreters have been confused with the original verses, and the distortions of ignorant people and various enemies have been incorporated. And so these Scriptures suffer from great alteration and corruption.

The famous scholar Sheikh Rahmatullah al-Hindi once silenced priests and Christian and Jewish scholars by proving the thousands of alterations

made in those books. However even now, after so many alterations, the celebrated scholar Hussain al-Jisri still could extract from them 110 pieces of evidence concerning Muhammad's Prophethood, which he included in his *Risala al-Hamidiya*

Many Jewish and Christian scholars acknowledge that Muhammad's characteristics are recorded in their Scriptures. The famous Roman emperor Heraclius, a non-Muslim, said: "I agree that Jesus predicted Muhammad's advent."²⁶⁴ Another Roman ruler named Muqawqis, the governor of Egypt, and such well-known Jewish scholars as Ibn Suriya, Ibn Akhtab and his brother Ka'b ibn Asad, and Zubayr ibn Batiya, although remaining non-Muslims, admitted: "Our books mention him and his qualities."²⁶⁵

On the other hand, many famous Jewish scholars and Christian monks broke their obstinacy and converted after seeing that Muhammad had the attributes mentioned in their Scriptures concerning the Last Prophet. They silenced some of their former co-religionist scholars by showing them the references in the Torah and the Gospels. Among them were the famous 'Abdullah ibn Salam, Wahb ibn Munabbih, Abu Yasir, Shamul, and Asid and Tha'laba (the two sons of Sa'ya).²⁶⁶ Shamul lived during the reign of Tubba, ruler of Yemen, and both believed in Muhammad's Prophethood even though his birth was still some time in the future.

Ibn Hayaban once visited the Bani Nadir tribe in Madina before the proclamation of Muhammad's Prophethood. He told them: "The emergence of a Prophet is close, and he will emigrate here." Ibn Hayaban died there. Later, when that tribe fought God's Messenger, Asid and Tha'laba publicly called out to their tribe: "By God, he is the one whose coming was promised by Ibn Hayaban."²⁶⁷ But they ignored the call, and so earned what they earned.

After seeing the Prophet described in the Torah, many Jewish scholars such as Ibn Bunyamin, Mukhayriq, and Ka'b al-Akhbar converted and thereby silenced those who insisted on unbelief.²⁶⁸

And then there is the famous Christian monk Bahira, as mentioned earlier. When he was 12, the Messenger accompanied his uncle on a trading mission to Damascus. From his cell, Bahira noticed that a cloud was shad-

²⁶⁴ Tirmidhi, 2:167; *Shifa'*, 1:364.

²⁶⁵ *Shifa'*, 1:366, 384; Bayhaqi, 3:361-62; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya*, 4:80-81.

²⁶⁶ *Shifa'*, 1:364; Bayhaqi, 6:240-49; Tirmidhi, 2:206.

²⁶⁷ Abu Na'im, 1:82; Bayhaqi, 2:80-81.

²⁶⁸ *Shifa'*, 1:364; Bayhaqi, 3:161-63.

ing a certain person in the caravan. He invited all of them to a meal for Muhammad's sake. When he saw that the shade-providing cloud remained where the caravan camped, he thought: "The one I seek must still be there," and so sent a man to fetch whoever was left. When Muhammad was brought, Bahira told Abu Talib: "Return to Makka immediately. The Jews are very jealous and might plot against him, for his description is recorded in the Torah."²⁶⁹

Some Nestorians in Abyssinia as well as the Negus (the Abyssinian ruler) embraced Islam together after they found the Prophet described in their Scripture.²⁷⁰ The famous Christian scholar Daghpatr also found the Prophet described in the Christians' books and accepted Islam. When he openly declared his conversion to the Byzantines, he was martyred.²⁷¹

A few other examples of such conversions are Harith ibn Abi Shumar al-Ghassani (a Christian leader), Ibn Natur and al-Jarud (prominent religious leaders of Damascus), the ruler of Ilia (in present-day Greece) and Heraclius (Emperor of Byzantium). Heraclius concealed his conversion for the sake of worldly kingdom.²⁷² Salman al-Farisi, born a Christian, set out to search for the Prophet after hearing his description.²⁷³ Tamim (a celebrated scholar), as well as the Negus, the Christians of Abyssinia, and the priests of Najran all declared that they found the Prophet described in their books and so believed in him.²⁷⁴

THIRD EVIDENCE: We now point out a few verses from the Gospels, Torah, and Psalms that describe Prophet Muhammad.

First example: In the Psalms we read: *O God, send to us after the interregnum (the latest of the successive prophets) one who will establish (Your) way.*²⁷⁵ "One who will establish (Your) way" refers to Prophet Muhammad.

In the Gospels we read: The Messiah said: *I am going to my and your Father so that He may send you the Paraclete* (John 16:7), (that is, Ahmad or Muhammad) and *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete to*

²⁶⁹ Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*, 1:76; Ibn Hisham, *Sira*, 115; *Shifa'*, 1:308; Hakim, 2:615.

²⁷⁰ *Shifa'*, 1:364.

²⁷¹ *Shifa'*, 1:364; Bayhaqi, 6:240-49; Tirmidhi, 2:206.

²⁷² Bukhari, 1:7; Abu Na'im, 1:101-2.

²⁷³ Hakim, 3:604; Ibn Hanbal, 5:437; Ibn Hisham, 1:233.

²⁷⁴ *Shifa'*, 1:364.

²⁷⁵ Although it does not exist word for word in present editions of the Bible, it is recorded in *Hujjat Allah 'ala al-'Alamin fi Mu'jizat al-Sayyid al-Mursalin* by Yusuf Nahbani, p. 104. (Tr.)

be with you forever (John 14:16). *Paraclete*, meaning “the praised one who distinguishes truth from falsehood,” refers to Prophet Muhammad, as mentioned in those books.²⁷⁶

The Torah says:

God said to Abraham: “Hagar will bear children. There will appear from her sons one whose hand will be above all, and the hands of all others will be opened to him in reverence.”²⁷⁷

Another Torah verse reads:

And He said: “O Moses, I will raise up for them a Prophet like you, from among their brothers (the children of Ishmael). I will put my Word in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in My name, I Myself will call him (or her) to account.” (Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

A third Torah verse reads:

Moses said: “O my Lord, I have found in the Torah a community, as the best of the communities, that will be raised for (the benefit) of humanity. They enjoin good and forbid evil, and believe in God. Let it be my community!” (God) said: “That is the community of Muhammad.”²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ According to Webster's New World Dictionary, *Paraclete* derives from the Greek word *parakletos*, meaning “intercessor, advocate, pleader.” However Abidin Pasha, a nineteenth century scholar from Yanya, Greece, who knew Greek very well and whose works on Greek literature were praised highly by Greek authorities, writes that its real origin is *piriklitos*, meaning Ahmad, the one who is much praised. (Hussain Jisri, *Risala al-Hamidiya*, 59). The Qur'an also states that Jesus predicted Prophet Muhammad with the name Ahmad, a synonym of Muhammad (61:6). Christians assert that Jesus used *Paraclete* for the Holy Spirit. However, what is the Holy Spirit's exact connection with interceding, pleading or advocating, which happen to refer to Prophet Muhammad's main attributes, even though we accept that the word drives from *parakletos*. In addition, Gospel translators prefer to translate Paraclete instead of using that word, but all use different terms. In addition, Jesus gives good tidings of the one to come not only as *Paraclete* but also as “the Spirit of truth,” along with many other functions, which must belong to a Prophet and not to a “spirit” or an angel. (Tr.)

²⁷⁷ Although it does not exist word for word in present versions of the Bible, 'Ali al-Qari records it in his *Sharh al-Shifa'*, 1:743. The Torah says: *I will make the son of the maid-servant (Hagar) into a nation* (Genesis, 21:13); *Hagar ... lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation* (21:18). (Tr.)

²⁷⁸ 'Ali al-Qari, *ibid.*, 1:746.

A reminder: In those books, the name Muhammad is given in its Syriac counterparts, such as Mushaffah, Munhamanna, Himyata. The name of Muhammad is mentioned explicitly only in a few places, and envious Jews altered those references.

The Psalms relate:

O David, a Prophet will come after you, named Ahmad (Muhammad), the Truthful and the Lord, and his community will be forgiven.²⁷⁹

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, who made extensive studies of earlier Divine books; ‘Abdullah ibn Salam, the first famous Jewish scholar to embrace Islam; and Ka‘b ibn al-Akhbar, one of the foremost Jewish scholars, all pointed out the following verse in the Torah, which had not yet been corrupted to its present extent. After addressing Moses, the verse addresses the Prophet to come in the following strain:

O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, a warner and a protection for the unlettered. You are My slave; I have named you “the Reliant on God,” who is not harsh and stern, and not clamorous in the marketplaces; who does not repel evil with evil, but instead pardons and forgives. God will not take away his life until He straightens a crooked nation by means of him (by causing them) to proclaim: “There is no deity but God.”²⁸⁰

Another Torah verse states:

Muhammad is the Messenger of God. His birthplace is Makka. He will emigrate to Tayba. The center of his rule is Damascus, and his community is unceasingly occupied with praising God.²⁸¹

In this verse, a Syriac word meaning Muhammad is actually mentioned for the word Muhammad.

Another Torah verse, *You are My slave and Messenger; I have named you “the Reliant on God,”*²⁸² is addressed to a Prophet who will emerge, after Moses, from Ishmael’s progeny: the cousins of Isaac’s children. Also: *My slave is a*

²⁷⁹ Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, 2:326; *Sharh al-Shifa'*, 1:739.

²⁸⁰ Bukhari, *Buynu'*, 50; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 2:174; Darimi, 1:14-15.

²⁸¹ Darimi, 1:14-15; Abu Na‘im, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, 1:72.

²⁸² Kastalani, *al-Mawahib al-Ladunniya*, 6:192.

*“chosen one,” who is neither harsh nor stern.*²⁸³ “Mukhtar” (chosen one) is a synonym of “Mustafa,” one of his names.

The Gospels mention the Prophet coming after Jesus with several names. Another verse that describes him: *With him is an iron staff with which he will fight, as will his community,*²⁸⁴ indicates that a Prophet will come with a sword to wage jihad. Qur'an 48:29 agrees with this verse, refers to other Gospel verses, and states that his community, like him, will be obliged to wage jihad.

And their similitude in the Gospel is:

[L]ike a seed that sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick and stands in its own stem, filling the sowers with wonder and delight, so that it fills the unbelievers with rage at them. (48:29)

In the Torah, a verse says: *The Lord came from Sinai, dawned over them from Seir, and shone forth from Mount Paran* (Deuteronomy 33:2). The Lord came from Sinai refers to Moses' Prophethood, dawned over them from Seir (the Seir mountains are near Damascus) refers to Jesus' Prophethood, and He shone forth from Mount Paran (the Paran mountains of Hijaz) refers to Muhammad's Messengership.²⁸⁵ The verse continues, in conformity with the Qur'anic expression: *This is their similitude in the Torah*, says this about the Prophet's Companions who would emerge from Paran's mountains: *The flags of the holy ones are with him, on his right.*²⁸⁶ This verse describes the Companions as “the holy ones,” meaning that they are blessed, righteous, and saintly friends of God.

Isaiah 42 contains the following verses describing Prophet Muhammad, who would come during the last phase of human history:

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I will put My Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.

²⁸³ 'Ali al-Qari, *ibid.*, 1:739.

²⁸⁴ Yusuf Nahbani, *ibid.*, 105.

²⁸⁵ The Torah calls the place where Hagar stayed with her son (Ishmael) Paran (Genesis, 21:21). The Qur'an calls that place Makka, which was then uninhabited (14: 37). (Tr.)

²⁸⁶ This is almost the same in many versions of the Bible, such as that published by The Bible Company (Istanbul). However, we come across a different translation, if not an alteration, in the Gideon International version: *He came with myriads of holy ones from the south, from his mountain slopes* (Deuteronomy 33:2). (Tr.)

He will not break a bruised reed, and he will not snuff out a smoldering wick. In faithfulness will he bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on Earth. The islands will put their hope in his law. (Isaiah 42:1-4)

Micah 4 describes Mount ‘Arafat and the nation of Muhammad, together with the prayers and praises offered by the pilgrims flocking there from all climes:

In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and people will stream to it. Many nations will come and say: “Come, let’s go up the mountain of the Lord, to the house of God. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.” (Micah 4:1-2)

The following verses from Psalms 72 clearly describe Prophet Muhammad:

He will rule from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of Earth. The desert tribes will bow before him, and his enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the kings of Yemen and Seba will present him gifts. All kings will bow to him, and all nations will serve him, for he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy, and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight. Long may he live! May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long.... May his name endure for ever. May it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed. (Psalms 72:8-17)

Since Prophet David, has there been another Prophet other than Prophet Muhammad who spread his religion from east to west, to whose name many rulers pay tribute, whose way so many people obey out of deep adoration for him, and on whom one fifth of humanity daily calls God’s peace and blessings?

John 16:7 reads: *It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Comforter will not come to you.* Who other than Prophet Muhammad could be humanity’s true comforter? Certainly he is humanity’s pride and comforter by saving all people who follow him from eternal annihilation.

John 16:8 reads: *When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.* Who, other than Prophet Muhammad, came and transformed the disorder prevailing at his time into goodness and

harmony to save the world from sin and polytheism and to revolutionize its politics and rule?

Prophet Muhammad, who was mentioned several times with several names in the Bible, is the master of humanity. Indeed, he is such a master that many millions of people have followed him in each of the 14 centuries since he lived. They obey his commands with willingly and daily renew their allegiance to him by calling God's blessings upon him.

John 16:12-13 reads:

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is to come.

These verses are quite clear. Who, other than Prophet Muhammad, invited everyone to the truth, always spoke what he heard from God (through Gabriel) so that each of his words is based on Divine revelation, and informed people in detail about the Day of Judgment and the Hereafter?

In the books of other Prophets, God's Messenger is mentioned with various Syriac and Hebrew names corresponding to Ahmad, Muhammad, and Mukhtar. In the Pages of the Prophet Shu'ayb, his name is Mushaffah (Muhammad). In the Torah, he is mentioned as Munhamanna (Muhammad) and Homyata ("the Prophet of al-Haram"). In the Psalms, he is called al-Mukhtar ("the Chosen One"), and in the Torah as al-Hatam al-Khatam. The Torah and the Psalms refer to him as Muqim al-Sunna ("the one who establishes and enforces the Divine way for humanity"). In the Pages of Abraham, as well as in the Torah, he is mentioned as Mazmaz, and in the Torah as Ahyad.

God's Messenger said: "In the Qur'an my name is Muhammad, in the Bible Ahmad, and in the Torah Ahyad." In the Bible, he is referred to as "the Possessor of the Sword and the Staff." Of all those Prophets who carried the sword, Prophet Muhammad, whom God told to perform jihad with his community, is the greatest. The Gospel also refers to him as "the one who wears a crown." This refers to a turban,²⁸⁷ and the Arabs have worn headcovers with a wrapper around them since ancient times. Hence the reference is undoubtedly to Prophet Muhammad.

²⁸⁷ The turban worn by Muslim men signifies loftiness or exaltation. (Tr.)

Biblical interpreters define *Paraclete* (or *Faraclete*) as “the one who distinguishes truth from falsehood.” In other words, it is the name of the person who will guide future generations of humanity to the right path. Jesus is quoted as saying in the Gospel that he must leave so that the one who will guide humanity to truth will come. After Jesus, who other than Prophet Muhammad came as the leader of humanity, distinguished truth from falsehood, and guided humanity? Jesus always told his people that: “One will come, and [after that] there will be no need for me. I am his forerunner and bring good tidings of his coming.” This is confirmed by the following Qur’anic verse:

And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: “O Children of Israel, I am a Messenger of God unto you, confirming what was revealed before me in the Torah and bringing the glad news of a Messenger who will come after me, whose name is Ahmad.” (61:6)

In Shamun al-Safa’s tomb, the famous traveler Evliya Celebi saw the following Gospel verses written on a gazelle hide:

T’ün Azribun periftün. Law ghislın. Bent aṣzulat; ki kalushir; tunuminin mavamid. Isfedus takardis, bist bith. (A youth from Abraham’s progeny will be a Prophet. He will not be a liar. His birthplace is Makka; he will come with righteousness; his blessed name is Ahmad Muhammad. His followers will prosper in this world and also in the next.)²⁸⁸

The Gospels record Jesus’ frequent glad tidings of the coming of humanity’s most significant leader and mention him with some Syriac and Hebrew names meaning, as observed by meticulous experts, Ahmad, Muhammad, and Faruq (one who distinguishes truth from falsehood).

QUESTION: Why did Jesus give good tidings of the Last Prophet’s coming more emphatically than the other Prophets who predicted him?

ANSWER: Prophet Muhammad declared Jesus’ purity against the Jews’ slanders, defended him against their denial, and purified Jesus’ way of its great alteration and corruption. In addition, instead of the Jews’ burdensome religious law, he presented a feasible and all-encompassing religion with an exalt-

²⁸⁸ The language referred to must be Syriac, as many Syriac people still live in south-eastern Turkey, where many Christian saints—true, monotheist followers of Jesus—are buried. Interestingly enough, due to the studies and endeavors of such monotheist Christian scholars as Arian, Eastern Christians were usually monotheists and so easily accepted Islam. Western Christianity, on the other hand, insisted upon retaining the doctrine of the Trinity and other borrowed creeds. (Tr.)

ed law that completed the law of Jesus' religion. This is why Jesus often announced the glad tidings of his coming.

As explained earlier, the Torah, Gospels, Psalms, and Pages of other Prophets contain numerous emphatic mentions of a promised Prophet who is to come and mention him with various names. Since this Prophet is mentioned in all Prophetic books, who else could he be other than Muhammad, the Prophet who came in the last phase of human history?

SECOND KIND: The second kind of *irhasat* includes the predictions of Prophet Muhammad's coming by soothsayers and Gnostics living in the period between Jesus and Muhammad's Prophethood. To a certain degree, they were considered the saints of their times. They predicted his coming in verse and entrusted them to later generations. There are numerous instances of this kind, but we mention only a few well-known ones that have been accepted and transmitted by historians and the Prophet's biographers.

FIRST EXAMPLE: Tubba, a Yemeni ruler, saw the Messenger's qualities in the previous Scriptures, believed in him, wished to occupy the same place as 'Ali, and proclaimed his belief in the following couplet:

I bear witness to Ahmad that he is a Messenger
from God, the Creator of humanity;
Were I to live long enough to see him, I would be a
minister and like a cousin to him.²⁸⁹

SECOND EXAMPLE: Quss ibn Sa'ida was the most famous and significant Arab orator as well as an enlightened monotheist. Before Muhammad was raised as a Prophet, he announced Muhammad's Messengership with these verses:

Among us (God) sent forth Ahmad as the
best Prophet ever raised,
Upon him be God's blessings.²⁹⁰

He wished to be in the position of 'Ali to him.

THIRD EXAMPLE: Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy, one of the Messenger's ancestors, announced Muhammad's Prophethood through inspiration:

In the time of heedlessness
Muhammad will appear suddenly;
He will give tidings that are all true.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Hakim, 2:388; *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, 2:166.

²⁹⁰ *Shifa'*, 1:363; *al-Bidaya*, 2:230; Bayhaqi, 2:101.

²⁹¹ *Al-Bidaya*, 2:244; *Shifa'*, 1:364.

FOURTH EXAMPLE: The Yemeni ruler Sayf ibn Dhiyazan saw the Messenger's description in the previous Scriptures, believed in him, and loved him very much. When 'Abd al-Muttalib (the Messenger's grandfather) arrived in Yemen with a Qurayshi trade caravan, Sayf summoned them and said: "A child will be born in the Hijaz with a mark between his shoulders that looks like a seal. He will be the leader of humanity." In private, he told 'Abd al-Muttalib: "You are his grandfather,"²⁹² thus predicting Muhammad's Prophethood in a miraculous way.

FIFTH EXAMPLE: God's Messenger was anxious when the first Revelation came to him. His wife Khadija told Waraqqa ibn Nawfal (her paternal cousin) what had happened, and he told her to send Muhammad to him. God's Messenger went to Waraqqa. When he told him about the Revelation, Waraqqa commented: "Good tidings to you, O Muhammad. I bear witness that you are the expected Prophet, and that Jesus has given glad tidings about you."²⁹³

SIXTH EXAMPLE: The gnostic Askalan al-Himyeri always asked any Qurayshis he met: "Does someone among you claim Prophethood?" The people always replied in the negative. After the Messenger declared his Prophethood, he asked them the same question. When they said that someone was making such a claim, he responded: "This is the one for whom the world has been waiting for so long."²⁹⁴

SEVENTH EXAMPLE: The renowned Christian scholar Ibn al-A'la predicted the Prophet before his declaration of Prophethood and without seeing him. When he finally met the Prophet, he said: "By the One Who sent you with the truth, I found your description in the Gospel, and the Virgin Mary's son gave glad tidings about you."²⁹⁵

EIGHTH EXAMPLE: Abyssinia's Negus, cited earlier, said: "I wished I had been in his service rather than in possession of this kingdom."²⁹⁶

In addition to those gnostics who gave tidings of the future by basing their knowledge on Divine inspiration, those soothsayers who were allowed (until the Prophet's time) to obtain some tidings of the Unseen and the future through spirits and jinn also predicted his coming and Prophethood. Out of many such instances, we cite only a few. These enjoy the certainty of

²⁹² Hakim, 2:388; *al-Bidaya*, 2:328; *Shifa'*, 1:143.

²⁹³ Ibn Hanbal, 4:304; Bukhari, 1:3.

²⁹⁴ *Shifa'*, 1:363.

²⁹⁵ 'Ali al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shifa'*, 1:744.

²⁹⁶ *Shifa'*, 1:364; Bayhaqi, 2:285.

tawatur in meaning and are recorded in many history books and biographies of the Prophet.

FIRST EXAMPLE: Shiqq, a famous soothsayer who looked like half a man with one eye, one hand, and one leg, repeatedly predicted Muhammad's Messengership. His reports are recorded in history books with the certainty of *tawatur* in meaning.²⁹⁷

SECOND EXAMPLE: Satih, the famous soothsayer of Damascus, was a monstrosity who almost lacked bones, even limbs, and with a face that looked like a part of his breast. He lived a long life and was highly reputed for his true predictions. Chosroes of Persia sent the learned envoy Mubazan to him to interpret a strange dream that showed 14 pinnacles of his palace collapsing (on the night of Muhammad's birth). Satih said: "From now on, your country will have 14 rulers and then be destroyed utterly. A man will appear to preach a religion. He will abolish both your rule and religion."²⁹⁸ Satih thus clearly foretold the Last Prophet's coming.

Such famous soothsayers as Sawad ibn Qarib al-Dawsi, Khunafar, Af'a Najran, Jizl ibn Jizl al-Kindi, Ibn Khalasat al-Dawsi, and Fatima bint Nu'man al-Najjariya also had their predictions recorded in history books and biographies of the Prophet. They predicted his coming and that he would be Muhammad.²⁹⁹ Sa'd ibn bint al-Kurayz, 'Uthman's relative, learned of Muhammad's Prophethood through divination and, in the early days of Islam, told 'Uthman to go and believe. 'Uthman did so, and Sa'd expressed this in the following couplet:

Through my words, God guided 'Uthman to that thing,
By means of which is his perfection.
Truly God guides to the truth!³⁰⁰

The jinn call their soothsayers *hatif*. They cannot be seen, but they can be heard. These beings also repeatedly foretold the coming of God's Messenger. A few of the *hatifs'* well-known and numerous tidings and messages are as follows:

²⁹⁷ Abu Na'im, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, 1:123; *Shifa'*, 1:365.

²⁹⁸ Bayhaqi, 2:126-129; *Shifa'*, 1:365.

²⁹⁹ Bayhaqi, 2:248; *al-Bidaya*, 2:335; *Shifa'*, 1:365.

³⁰⁰ Suyuti, *al-Khasa'is al-Kubra'*, 1:258.

- A *hatif* brought Dhayab ibn al-Harith and others to Islam by calling to him loudly:

O Dhayab, O Dhayab, listen to the oddest thing:
Muhammad was sent with the Book. He is calling in Makka, yet
they do not accept him.³⁰¹

- Another *hatif* called out to Sami'a ibn Qarrat al-Qatafani:

The truth has come and become bright;
Falsehood has been destroyed and become uprooted,³⁰²
and caused the conversion of some people.

In addition, idols and even animals offered to idols proclaimed Muhammad's Messengership by God's power and permission. For example, the Mazan tribe's idol informed them of Muhammad's declaration of Messengership by crying out: "He is the Prophet who has been sent. He has come with the revealed truth."³⁰³ Abbas ibn Mirdas was converted by an idol named Dimar. One day, that idol was heard to say: "Dimar was worshipped before the true message of Prophet Muhammad. Now Dimar's time is over."³⁰⁴ Before his conversion, 'Umar heard a sacrifice offered to idols say: "O sacrificer, the means of prosperity are at hand. An eloquent man is declaring: 'There is no deity but God.'"³⁰⁵

There are many more such instances, all of which are narrated in authentic reports in reliable books.

In addition, various rocks, grave sites, and gravestones were found to bear, inscribed in earlier scripts, such passages as "Muhammadun Muslihun Amin" (Muhammad, a reformer, a trustworthy one). Some people were converted through such events.³⁰⁶ Such passages can refer only to God's Messenger, for during the time just before his birth there were only seven Muhammads, none of whom deserved to be or was ever designated "the reformer" or "the trustworthy one."

THIRD KIND: This includes the wonderful events at the time of and in connection with the Messenger's birth. Many other incidents occurred before

³⁰¹ Ibid., 1:358.

³⁰² *Sharh al-Shifa'*, 1:748.

³⁰³ Ibn 'Abd al-Birr, *al-Isti'ab*, 3:446; *al-Bidaya*, 2:337.

³⁰⁴ *Al-Bidaya*, 2:341-42; Bayhaqi, 1:118.

³⁰⁵ Bukhari, 5:61; *al-Bidaya*, 2:332.

³⁰⁶ Ibn Hanbal, 4:215; *Shifa'*, 1:467; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*, 4:215.

he was commissioned with Messengership, and each is one of his miracles. Out of many examples, we mention a few that became very well-known and accepted by Tradition authorities as having verified authenticity.

FIRST EXAMPLE: On the night of his birth, the Prophet's mother and the mothers of 'Uthman ibn al-'As and 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-'Awf saw a magnificent light. Each woman said: "During his birth, we saw a light that illuminated the east and the west."³⁰⁷

SECOND EXAMPLE: On that night, idols within the Ka'ba toppled over.³⁰⁸

THIRD EXAMPLE: During that night, Chosroes' palace shook and cracked, and its 14 pinnacles collapsed.³⁰⁹

FOURTH EXAMPLE: On that night, the small lake of Sawa in Persia (sanctified by the Persians) sank into Earth. The fire worshipped by the Magians at Istakhhrabad, which had burned continually for 1,000 years, went out.³¹⁰

These incidents indicated that person born on that night would abolish fire-worship, destroy the palace of the Persian rulers, and prohibit the sanctification of things that God does not allow to be sanctified.

FIFTH EXAMPLE: Incidents taking place before the night of his birth also are considered *ihrasat*. Of these, the Event of the Elephant (105:1-5) is the best known. Abraha, governor of Yemen for the Abyssinian kingdom, marched upon Makka to destroy the Ka'ba. He placed his huge elephant Mahmud at the front of his army. When they approached Makka, the elephant stopped. Since they could not make it move forward, they retreated. On their way, a host of ababil birds attacked and routed them. This curious event is recorded in history books. It is also a sign of Muhammad's Prophethood, for this miraculous event saved the Ka'ba and Makka, his birthplace and beloved home and toward which he would pray. This happened at a time close to his birth.

SIXTH EXAMPLE: When God's Messenger was residing with Halima's Family during his childhood, both Halima and her husband often observed a small cloud shading his head.³¹¹ They narrated this event, and it became well-known. Similarly, when the Prophet traveled to Damascus at the age of

³⁰⁷ *Shifa'*, 1:366; Ibn Sa'd, *ibid.*, 1:63; Bayhaqi, 1:80-92; Hakim, 2:600.

³⁰⁸ Bayhaqi, 1:19.

³⁰⁹ Abu Nu'aym, 1:139; Bayhaqi, 1:126.

³¹⁰ Suyuti, *al-Khasa'is*, 1:128; *Shifa'*, 1:366.

³¹¹ Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*, 1:97; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidayah*, 2:273; *Shifa'*, 1:368.

12 with his uncle, the Christian monk Bahira saw and pointed out to others a small shade-providing cloud located above Muhammad.³¹² Before his Prophethood, Khadija noticed that two angels, in the form of a cloud, shaded God's Messenger when he returned from a trading journey with her servant Maysara. When she mentioned this to Maysara, the latter responded: "I saw the same throughout the journey."³¹³

SEVENTH EXAMPLE: An authentic narration reports that before his Prophethood, God's Messenger once sat under a tree. That previously arid spot suddenly became green, and the tree's branches bent down and twisted above his head to shade him.³¹⁴

EIGHTH EXAMPLE: God's Messenger stayed with Abu Talib during his boyhood. Whenever Abu Talib and his household ate with him they were satisfied; when he did not eat with them they were not satisfied.³¹⁵ This is a well-known and authenticated incident. Umm Ayman, who served God's Messenger when he was a child, reports: "He never complained about hunger and thirst, neither when he was little nor when he grew up."³¹⁶

NINTH EXAMPLE: The milk of his wet nurse's (Halima) goats and goods were seen (unlike others in the tribe) to increase through his blessing.³¹⁷ Also, flies did not bother him.³¹⁸ One of his descendants, Sayyid 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, inherited this quality.

TENTH EXAMPLE: After the Messenger's birth, and especially during the night of his birth, shooting stars became more frequent. This was a sign that satans and jinn could no longer obtain knowledge of the Unseen.³¹⁹

Since God's Messenger would be endowed with Revelation, any information about the Unseen given by soothsayers and jinn, which is usually inaccurate and mixed with falsehood, would have to cease. This was necessary so that people would not mistake such words for Revelation or doubt the Revelation itself. The Qur'an ended soothsaying, which was widespread before Muhammad was raised as the Prophet. Many soothsayers embraced

³¹² Abu Nu'aym, *Dala'il*, 1:168-172; Tirmidhi (version verified by *Tuhfat al-Ahwazi*, No. 3699); Ibn Hisham, 1:180-81.

³¹³ *Shifa'*, 1:368; Bayhaqi, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, 2:65.

³¹⁴ *Shifa'*, 368; *Sharh al-Shifa'*, 1:753.

³¹⁵ Abu Nu'aym, 1:166; *Shifa'*, 1: 367.

³¹⁶ *Shifa'*, 1:368; Bayhaqi, 6:125; Suyuti, *al-Khasa'is*, 1:111.

³¹⁷ *Al-Bidayah*, 2:273; Ibn Hisham, 1:173; *Shifa'*, 1:366.

³¹⁸ *Shifa'*, 1:368.

³¹⁹ *Shifa'*, 1:347-48.

Islam, for they could find no jinn informers to provide them with information of the Unseen.³²⁰

To conclude, many incidents and people confirmed, or caused others to confirm, Muhammad's Prophethood. All creation, both as an individual and as a species, longingly waited for and announced, with God's permission, the advent of the world's spiritual leader.³²¹ This leader would change the world's spiritual and moral structure, make it the sowing ground for the Hereafter, proclaim the real value of the world's beings, save transient humanity and jinn from eternal annihilation, disclose the Divine purpose for the universe's creation, and make the Creator known to everybody. As proved in the previous signs and examples, each species of creation welcomed him by becoming the means for him to work one variety of his miracles, thereby affirming his Prophethood.

SEVENTEENTH SIGN: After the Qur'an, the Messenger's greatest miracle is his character and person, his moral example. Friend and foe alike agree that he possessed the highest level of all moral virtues. 'Ali, a man of the greatest bravery, repeatedly said: "In the fiercest phases of fighting we would withdraw into the stronghold of God's Messenger and take refuge behind him." Likewise, he possessed all laudable characteristics to the highest degree. For this greatest miracle, we refer readers to Qadi 'Iyad's *Shifa' al-Sharif*, which beautifully explains and proves the Prophet's miraculous moral character.

Another great miracle, also affirmed by friend and foe, is his supreme Sacred Law (the Sharia), the like of which never came before and will never come again. For a partial explanation of this supreme miracle, consult our writings, especially the 33 Words, 33 Letters, 31 Gleams, and 13 Rays.

One of the Messenger's certain and *mutawatir* miracles is splitting the moon by a gesture of his index finger. This miracle, reported by some of the foremost Companions (e.g., Ibn al-Mas'ud, Ibn 'Abbas, Ibn 'Umar, Imam 'Ali, Anas, and Khudayfa), was proclaimed to the world by: *The Hour is near, and the moon split* (54:1). The stubborn Qurayshi polytheists did not contradict

³²⁰ Today, soothsaying has reappeared in the form of mediumship. However, that topic is beyond the scope of this book.

³²¹ This being, who was addressed by God with the words "But for you, I would not have created the worlds," is so great a leader that his rule continues even after 14 centuries. In each century since he lived, millions of people and half the globe have placed themselves under his banner. His subjects, who today number more than 1.5 billion, try to follow him in deep respect and daily ask God to bestow peace and blessings upon him. Thus they daily renew their oath of allegiance to him.

the news, but claimed that it was magic. Thus even unbelievers testify to its occurrence. His Mi'raj (Ascension) is a still greater miracle shown to the heavens' inhabitants. Readers can refer to the Treatise of the Mi'raj, a short part of which appears at the end of this treatise as an appendix. We will mention another miracle that the Prophet worked in connection with the Mi'raj.

When God's Messenger informed the Quraysh of this event, they refused to believe him, saying: "If you actually traveled to the Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, as you claim, describe its doors and walls." God's Messenger would later say: "I was annoyed by their question and denial in a way that had never happened to me before. Suddenly, God lifted the veil between me and Bayt al-Maqdis (Masjid al-Aqsa) and showed it to me. I looked at it and described it as it stood before my eyes."³²² Thus the Quraysh realized that God's Messenger was giving the correct and complete description.

In addition, God's Messenger told them: "During my journey I saw one of your caravans. It will arrive here tomorrow at such and such a time." The Quraysh waited for its arrival at the promised time. It seems the caravan was about to be delayed by about an hour. In order for the Prophet's word to be proved true, Earth did not rotate for one hour.³²³ This is confirmed by meticulous researchers.

Considering that Earth stopped rotating to confirm Prophet Muhammad's words, and that the sun witnessed this by its apparent rest in the sky, just imagine how vast is the misfortune of those who do not confirm and follow such a person, and how vast is the good fortune of those who respond: "We have heard and obeyed" and proclaim: "Thanks be to God for belief and Islam."

EIGHTEENTH SIGN: The Messenger's greatest and eternal miracle is the Qur'an, which encompasses hundreds of proofs of his Prophethood and whose 40 miraculousness aspects have been proved.³²⁴ Here we mention only a few significant points in this respect, as follows:

FIRST POINT: QUESTION: The Qur'an's miraculousness mainly lies in its eloquence, which can be comprehended only by one out of a thousand discerning scholars. Should not everyone be able to glimpse this miraculousness according to their own understanding?

³²² Muslim, 1:156-57; Tirmidhi, No. 3133; Bukhari, 5:66; Ibn Hanbal, 3:378.

³²³ 'Ali al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shifa'*, 1:704; Bayhaqi, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, 2:404.

³²⁴ See Said Nursi, *The Words*.

ANSWER: The Qur'an has a different kind of miraculousness for everyone and indicates this in the most perfect way. To people of eloquence and rhetoric, it shows its miraculous eloquence; to poets and orators, it displays its miraculous and uniquely exalted style, one that cannot be imitated although it is liked by everyone. The passage of time does not effect its freshness, so it is always new. Its metrical and rhythmical prose and its verse have the greatest nobility and charm.

To soothsayers and foretellers, the Qur'an's miraculousness consists of the reports it gives about the Unseen. To historians and chroniclers, its miraculousness is the information it relates about past nations, future conditions and events, and the Intermediate World and the Hereafter. To social and political scientists, it presents the miraculousness of its sacred principles, which comprise the Sharia. To those engaged in the knowledge of God and the Divine laws of nature, the Qur'an shows its miraculousness in its sacred Divine truths. To those following a spiritual way to sainthood, it manifests the profound, manifold meanings in its verses that rise in successive motions like waves of the sea.

In short, the Qur'an shows its 40 aspects of miraculousness to everyone by opening a different window. Even those who just listen to it and can derive a very limited meaning from it agree that the Qur'an sounds like no other book. Any ordinary person who listens to it says: "This Qur'an is either below other books in degree—which is utterly impossible, and which even its enemies [and Satan] do not claim—or above them all and therefore a miracle." Now, we explain the aspect of miraculousness perceived by an ordinary person who simply listens to it.

The miraculous Qur'an challenges the world and stirs up two kinds of feelings: First, its friends desire to imitate its style and to speak and write like their beloved Qur'an. Second, its enemies acquire a passion to criticize and dispute, as well as to nullify its claim of miraculousness by competing with its style. Under these two influences, millions of books have been written in Arabic—and we still have them. Whoever listens to even the most eloquent and rhetorical of them will say that the Qur'an sounds like none of them.

Another miraculous aspect that it shows to illiterate people is that its recitation does not bore anyone. An illiterate person, even one who does not comprehend the Qur'an's meaning, undoubtedly would say upon hear-

ing it recited: "If I hear a most beautiful and famous couplet two or three times, it starts to bore me. But this is not true with the Qur'an, for the more I listen, the more pleasant it becomes. It cannot be a human composition."

The Qur'an shows its miraculousness even to children learning it by heart. Although the Qur'an has many similar verses and passages that might cause confusion, children memorize it easily even though they cannot retain a single passage about something else for long. For those who are sick and close to death, who are disturbed by the slightest noise, the Qur'an's recitation and sound becomes as sweet and comforting as the water of Zamzam, thereby displaying another aspect of its miraculousness. For those who can see but cannot hear or learn, one of the almost 40 classes of people to whom the Qur'an shows its miraculous qualities without depriving any of them, there are other signs.³²⁵

³²⁵ For example, Hafiz 'Uthman's copy features many related words that correspond to each other on different pages. If the sheets beneath *their dog being the eighth* (*Surat al-Kahf*) are pierced, with a slight deviation it will go through *Qitmir* (*Surat al-Fatir*), thus giving the dog's name. *Mukhdariun* and *mukhdarin* (they will be brought before us) in *Surat al-Saffat* correspond to each other and to the one found in *Sura Ya Sin* twice, one below the other. *Mathna* (in pairs) occurs three times in the Qur'an; that the two of them correspond to each other, one at the beginning of *Surat al-Fatir* and the other toward the end of *Sura Saba'*, cannot be by chance.

Many similar examples exist. Sometimes the same word occurs almost in the same place on five or six pages. I once saw a Qur'an in which similar passages, written in red ink, faced each other on facing pages. This pointed to a different kind of miracle. Later, I noticed many more passages on various pages significantly facing each other. Since the Qur'an's verses and chapters were arranged at the Prophet's direction and later on copied through Divine inspiration, its design and calligraphy are miraculous. Any slight deviation is the result of human acts.

Furthermore, each long or medium Medinan *sura* repeats *Allah* in a very significant manner: five, six, seven, eight, nine, or eleven times on both sides of a sheet or on two facing pages—a beautiful and significant numerical proportionate.

Although the Qur'an has all the features of persuasive eloquence (e.g., rhythm, rhyme, and artistic style) that capture our attention, it always provides sublime seriousness, serenity of mind, and the peace of being in His presence to those who remember and supplicate God. Other kinds of persuasive eloquence often disturb, for their elegance intrudes upon one's peace of mind and undermines seriousness and inward concentration.

For the last 8 or 9 years I have read Imam Shafi'i's famous supplication daily. Although it is the most graceful, meaningful, and eloquent one of its kind, and even ended a season of drought and famine in Egypt, I came to see that its rhymed and metrical wording interrupts the supplication's solemnity. I therefore deduced that the Qur'an's miraculously genuine, natural, matchless, and unique rhythm and rhyme preserves peace and solemnity. Those who remember and supplicate God feel this miraculousness in their hearts, even if their minds do not realize it.

SECOND POINT: As magic was widespread during Moses' time, his miracles were of that nature. As medicine was in demand during Jesus' time, his miracles were of that kind. When Muhammad was raised as a Prophet, four arts were popular in Arabia: eloquence and fluency in writing and speaking, poetry and oratory, soothsaying and divination, and knowledge about the past and cosmology.

When the miraculous Qur'an came, it challenged all experts in these four fields. First, it brought people of eloquence to their knees as they listened to it in total admiration. Second, it shocked poets and orators so much that they bit their fingers in amazement and removed their most celebrated Seven Poems, which until then were written in gold and hung on the Ka'ba's walls. Third, it forever silenced soothsayers and magicians by making them forget their knowledge of the Unseen and causing their jinn to be expelled from the heavens. Fourth, it saved those who knew some history and cosmology from myths and fabrications, and instructed them in the reality of past events and the illuminating facts of creation. Thus these four groups, kneeling before the Qur'an in absolute astonishment and awe, became its students and never tried to challenge it.

A POSSIBLE QUESTION: How do we know that nobody has disputed with the Qur'an or that such a challenge is impossible?

ANSWER: If this were possible, someone would have tried it. Actually, the Qur'an's opponents needed such a challenge, for they felt that it endangered their religion, life, and property. Thus they would have challenged the Qur'an if they could have done so. Many unbelievers and hypocrites were ready to advertise such a contest, just as they spread malicious propaganda

Another miraculous aspect is that the Qur'an shows the belief of the highest and brightest degree possessed by God's Messenger, the object of the Greatest Divine Name's manifestation. Like a sacred map, it details the sublime truths of the Hereafter and the Lord's kingdom and shows us, in a natural way, how exalted is the true and comprehensive religion of Islam.

It also conveys the address of the universe's Creator as the Lord of creation, with all His glory and majesty. Therefore, as the Qur'an states: *Say: If all humanity and jinn were to come together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like of it* (17:88). All such attempts are worth almost nothing in comparison, as the Qur'an cannot be imitated, due mainly to the three essential aspects mentioned above.

At the end of each page, its verses become complete with a beautiful rhyme. Another sign of its miraculousness, this fine aspect is due to the fact that its longest verse (*Mudayana* [loan business]) provides the norm or standard length for pages, while *Surat al-Ikhlas* (Sincerity) and *Surat al-Kawthar* (Abundance) do the same for its lines.

against Islam. If any challenge had been successful, it would have been recorded (with exaggeration). But all history books have come down to us, and none of them contains anything other than a few nonsensical lines of Musaylima al-Kazzab (the Liar), a self-proclaimed (and false) Prophet. They never dared to challenge it, although the Qur'an challenged them for 23 years in a way that provoked and annoyed them, as follows:

Come on and produce a like of this Qur'an. Let an unlettered man, like Muhammad the Trustworthy, do so. If he cannot, let the most knowledgeable and well-versed in writing try. If he cannot, gather all of your learned and eloquent people and let them work together. Call upon your gods and goddesses. If you still cannot produce anything, use of all books of the highest eloquence, and let all unbelievers to come until Doomsday use your experiences in their attempt. If even then you cannot do so, try to produce the like of only 10 suras. If you cannot do this, make a composition from baseless stories and imaginative tales to match only the Qur'an's metrical verse and eloquence. If you cannot, produce only one chapter. If you cannot do even this, produce a short chapter, or else your religion, lives, properties, and families will be at stake in this world and the Hereafter!

With these eight alternatives, the Qur'an has challenged and silenced all people and jinn for the last 14 centuries. Instead of preferring the easiest way (open challenge), the unbelievers living during the early days of Islam chose the hardest way (warfare) and so jeopardized their lives, properties, and families. If someone could have met even the easiest condition of this challenge, no people of wisdom, especially those living at the Prophet's time and the Qurayshi intellectual elite, would have been forced to choose warfare. In summary, as Jahiz put it, they had to resort to struggle by the sword since challenge by words was impossible.

QUESTION: Some discerning scholars maintain that no Qur'anic *sura*, verse, sentence, or word can be disputed and that no one has ever done so successfully. This sounds exaggerated and hard to accept, as many human-produced words bear some resemblance to the Qur'an.

ANSWER: There are two opinions on the Qur'an's miraculousness. The prevailing opinion is that its eloquence and meaning's virtues are beyond human capacity. The other one says that one can challenge and compete with a *sura*, but that God Almighty prevents it as a miracle of Muhammad. For example, if a Prophet told someone who could stand: "You will be unable

to stand" and this came true, it would be considered a miracle of the Prophet. This school is known as *Sarfa*, which teaches that the All-Mighty prevents people and jinn from producing even a *sura*. If this were not true, they might challenge one *sura*. Thus scholars who maintain that not even a word of the Qur'an can be challenged are correct, for the All-Mighty prevents this on account of the Qur'an's miraculousness.

As for the prevailing, more preferable view, it has a subtle point: All Qur'anic words and verses are interrelated. Sometimes a word is related to 10 other occurrences, thus bearing 10 relationships and providing 10 instances of eloquence. In my *Isharat al-I'jaz* (Signs of Miraculousness), a key to the Qur'an's interpretation, I show some examples drawn from the initial verses of *Surat al-Fatiha* and *Surat al-Baqara*.

For example, one can place a most important gem in the most proper place in the decorative pattern of a well-ornamented palace's wall only after knowing the whole design. Likewise, placing the eye's pupil in its correct location entails knowing all of the body's functions and complex organization as well as its relationship with the eye's function. In just the same way, the foremost people of science and profound truth demonstrate numerous relationships between the Qur'an's words and each word's manifold relationships with other verses and expressions. Scholars of the mysteries of letters go even further, proving that each letter of the Qur'an has many inner meanings that, if explained fully, might cover pages.

Since the Qur'an is the Word of the Creator of everything, each word may function as the core or heart of an ideal body made of hidden meanings placed around it or as the seed of an ideal tree. Therefore, although some human-made words may be similar to those of the Qur'an, placing them properly by means of considering all relationships between [and among] the Qur'anic words calls for an all-comprehending knowledge.

THIRD POINT: God Almighty once inspired in my heart a brief reflection on the Qur'an's miraculous nature. I give its translation (from the original Arabic) below:

Glory be to God, Who Himself witnesses to His Oneness; Who has disclosed the qualities of His Grace, Majesty, and Perfection through the Qur'an; and Whose six sides are luminous and contain neither misgiving nor doubt. Supported by God's Throne of Sovereignty, from which it holds the light of Revelation, it leads to the happiness of the two worlds and aims at the

light of Paradise and eternal bliss. Above it shines the seal of miraculousness, beneath it lie the pillars of proof and evidence, and inside it is pure guidance. It urges minds to seek its confirmation through such warnings as: *Will they not comprehend and reflect?* The spiritual pleasures it bestows upon the heart makes the conscience testify to its miraculousness. From which side or corner, then, could the arrows of doubt invade such a miraculous Qur'an?

The miraculous Qur'an includes the content of all books given to all Prophets as well as of all saints and monotheists regardless of path, temperament, and time. In other words, all people of heart and intellect mention the Qur'an's laws and fundamentals in their books in a way that shows their affirmation, and so are like roots of the "celestial tree of the Qur'an."

The Qur'an is truly a Revelation. The Majestic One Who revealed it proves this via the miracles He created at Muhammad's hands. Even the Qur'an's own miraculousness shows that it comes from God's Exalted Throne. Lastly, Prophet Muhammad's alarm when the Revelation began, his state of absorption and concentration when receiving it, and his unmatched sincere respect and devotion to the Qur'an all prove that it is Revelation, derived from past eternity,³²⁶ and entrusted to the Prophet.

The Qur'an is pure guidance, since its opposite (unbelief) is obviously misguidance. Of necessity, the Qur'an is the source of the light of belief, for the opposite of this light is darkness. The Qur'an is the spring of truths into which neither imagination nor superstition can find a way. The truthful world of Islam shaped by its Revelation, the well-founded law it presents, and the highest virtues that it manifests all testify to its complete truthfulness vis-à-vis the Unseen and the visible worlds.

The Qur'an shows the way and guides people to happiness in both worlds. Whoever doubts this should read it once and heed its words. Its per-

³²⁶ Past eternity (*azal*) is not, as people imagine, just the starting-point of time and therefore essential for a thing's existence. In fact, past eternity is like a mirror that reflects the past, present, and future. Excluding themselves from time's passage, people tend to imagine a limit for past time that extends through a certain chain of things. They call this *past eternity*. Such a method of reasoning is neither right nor acceptable. The following subtle point may clarify matters. Imagine that you are holding a mirror. Everything reflected on the right represents the past, while everything reflected on the left represents the future. The mirror can reflect only one direction, since it cannot show both sides simultaneously while you are holding it. To do that, you have to rise so high above your original position that left and right become one, and there is no longer any difference between first and last, beginning or end. (Tr.)

fect and life-giving fruits demonstrate that it is deeply rooted in truth and true vigor, for a fruit's vigor indicates a tree's life. Just look at how many perfect, vigorous, and luminous fruits—people of sainthood, purity, and profound learning—it yields in each century. Through the conviction and intuition coming from countless indications, the Qur'an is so esteemed and sought after by people, jinn, and angels that its recitation causes them to gather around it like moths.

In addition, all people of the profoundest knowledge agree that the Qur'an is confirmed and fortified by rational proofs. Such geniuses of philosophy as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and especially the most learned theologians, prove the truth of the Qur'an's fundamentals with their own methods of reasoning. Humanity's very nature, so long as it remains unspoiled, affirms the Qur'an's truth, for only its light can satisfy a person's conscience and place his or her heart placed at rest.

The Qur'an is an everlasting miracle that continually unfolds its miraculousness. It never fades or perishes like other miracles, nor does it age over time. The Qur'an's guidance is so inclusive and comprehensive that Archangel Gabriel and young children listen to it side by side, both deriving their lessons. Such a brilliant philosopher as Ibn Sina sits before it knee to knee with ordinary reciters to receive its teaching. Sometimes ordinary reciters, by virtue of their purity and strength of belief, derive more benefit than Ibn Sina.

The Qur'an's guidance provides such penetrating insight that the universe can be seen and comprehended like a book's pages. Like a watch-maker who opens and describes a watch down to its smallest part, the Qur'an expounds the universe with all of its spheres and particles. Above all, it states that "There is no deity but God" and declares His Oneness.

O God, make the Qur'an our companion in the world and our confidant in the grave, our intercessor in the Hereafter and our light on the Sirat Bridge, a veil and protection against Hellfire, a friend in Paradise, and a guide and a leader to all goodness. O God, illumine our hearts and graves with the light of belief and the Qur'an, and brighten the evidence of the Qur'an for the sake of him to whom You sent it. Upon him and his Family be peace and blessings from the Compassionate and Solicitous One. Amen.

NINETEENTH SIGN: The previous signs proved that Muhammad is the Messenger of God Almighty. With his Messengership evident from thousands

of decisive proofs, Prophet Muhammad is the brightest sign and the most definite evidence of God's Oneness and [the existence of] eternal happiness. Here we give a very brief description of this radiant sign, this truth-speaking evidence. Since he is the evidence through which the knowledge of God is acquired, we must recognize both the evidence and the way it acts as evidence.

God's Messenger, like every other being, is personally a proof of God's Existence and Unity. Moreover, he is the one who announced this truth in his own words and those of all other creatures. We now point out in 15 essentials how evident, upright, and truthful this proof is.

FIRST ESSENTIAL: The one who gives evidence of the universe's Maker in word, act, and conduct is truthful and confirmed by creation's truths, for all creatures, by being proofs of God's Unity, affirm the one who declares this Unity. Therefore all creation supports his cause. His cause also is truthful because his declaration, mainly comprising Divine Unity, signifies the pure blessing of absolute perfection and eternal happiness, and is in complete harmony with all universal truths' beauty and perfection. Given this, God's Messenger is an articulate and truthful proof of Divine Unity and eternal happiness, and all creation confirms his truthfulness.

SECOND ESSENTIAL: Since this truthful and certified proof has thousands of miracles excelling those of all other Prophets, as well as an eternal Sacred Law and a message embracing humanity and jinn, he is the head of all Prophets. Given this, he has the core of all their miracles as well as their unanimous confirmation. In other words, all other Prophets agree on the same belief, and their miracles support his honesty and truthfulness.

Simultaneously, he is the master and leader of all saints as well as of all people of purity and profound knowledge who have attained perfection through his teaching, guidance, and Sacred Law (the Sharia). Thus he has the core of their wonders and unanimous affirmation, as well as the strength of their verified conclusions. Since he opened—and keeps open—the way they followed to reach the truth, all of their wonders, conclusions, and consensus on the same belief support his truthfulness. This proof of God's Unity, as shown in all previous signs, contains such certain, evident, and definite miracles and wonderful *irhasat* that, together with other evidences of his Prophethood, their affirmation cannot be disputed.

THIRD ESSENTIAL: This herald of God's Unity, who has so many evident miracles, and this bearer of the good tidings of eternal happiness has such sublime virtues in his blessed being, such exalted qualities in his Messengership, and such precious merits in the religion and Sacred Law that he preached that even his bitterest enemies admitted them. Since he combines the most praiseworthy virtues in his personality, function, and religion, he is the embodiment, master, and representative of all perfections and high, laudable virtues found in creation. This perfect state that he reached in his being, task, and religion is such a strong proof and support for his honesty and truthfulness that it cannot be shaken.

FOURTH ESSENTIAL: This herald of God's Oneness and eternal happiness, the source of all perfections and teacher of the highest morality, speaks only what is revealed and what he is taught to speak by his Eternal Master. This is because, as partly explained in previous signs, the universe's Creator provided him with thousands of proofs for his Prophethood and to show that he speaks on His behalf and communicates His Message. Second, the Qur'an's 40 miraculous aspects show that the Prophet is the All-Mighty's interpreter.

Third, his perfect sincerity, righteousness, earnestness, trustworthiness, and all other acts and states demonstrate that he speaks only on his Creator's behalf. Fourth, all people of truth who have listened to him affirm, through profound study and inspired discovery, and believe with the certainty of true knowledge that he does not speak on his own authority; rather, the universe's Creator teaches him and makes him speak what He has taught him. The evidence explained so far in these essentials, when joined together, is a very strong support for his honesty and truthfulness.

FIFTH ESSENTIAL: This interpreter of God's eternal Word sees spirits, converses with angels, and guides humanity and jinn alike. He teaches humanity and jinn, inhabitants of the incorporeal abode, and angels, showing that he has access to and relationships with realms beyond these abodes. The above-mentioned miracles and his very life prove this. His reports of the Unseen, therefore, do not resemble those of soothsayers. No person, jinn, spirit, or angel (except for Gabriel) has any say in his reports. And there are many occasions when even Gabriel falls behind him.

SIXTH ESSENTIAL: This master of angels, humanity, and jinn is the Tree of Creation's most perfect and most radiant fruit, the embodiment of God's

compassion, the reflection of the Lord's love, the most brilliant proof of the All-Mighty, the brightest light of truth, the key to the universe's hidden truths, the discloser of creation's mystery, the expounder of creation's Divine purpose, the announcer of God's sovereignty, the describer of His beautiful art, and, by virtue of his comprehensive faculties, the most excellent pattern of all of creation's perfections.

Such character qualities, together with his spiritual personality, clearly demonstrate that he is the ultimate cause for the universe's creation or, in other words, that the Creator created the universe on his pattern. It even can be argued that if God had not created him, He would not have created the universe. Certainly, the Qur'anic truths and the light of belief that he brought to humanity and jinn, along with the most exalted virtues and illustrious perfections observed in his being, are the evident proofs of this argument.

SEVENTH ESSENTIAL: This "proof of the Truth" (*al-Haqq*) and "light of the truth" offers such a religion and Sacred Law that it contains all principles for securing happiness in both worlds. They perfectly expound the universe's truths and functions, as well the Creator of the universe's Names and Attributes. Islam and its Sacred Law are so perfect and comprehensive, and describe the universe and its Creator in such a way, that whoever reflects on Islam realizes that it is the declaration of the One Who made this beautiful universe and that it describes the universe and its Maker.

Like a spectacular palace revealing its architect's skill, and the booklet written by the architect so that others may know it better, the religion and Sacred Law preached by Prophet Muhammad demonstrate, through their comprehensiveness, sublimity, and truth, that they are designed by the same Being Who created and continues to manage the universe. Indeed, the universe's perfect order calls for that most beautiful system of Islam as its expression in the realm of conscious beings.

EIGHTH ESSENTIAL: Distinguished with these qualities and supported by the most unshakable proofs, Prophet Muhammad proclaims his message to humanity and jinn, in the name of the Unseen, to all people regardless of time and place. And, his voice is so strong that all of them will and do hear him, just as we do.

NINTH ESSENTIAL: His speech is so effective and penetrating that people in all times listen to him, and his voice is echoed in every century.

TENTH ESSENTIAL: His manner reveals that he sees and communicates what he sees, for even at the most perilous times he speaks with utmost conviction and assurance and challenges the world.

ELEVENTH ESSENTIAL: He calls with such vigor and from the depths of his heart that half of the old world and one-fifth of all people have given ear to the Qur'an's call and submitted to it obediently.

TWELFTH ESSENTIAL: He invites so earnestly, and guides and trains so radically, that he leaves his principles as permanent, unerasable marks throughout all times and places.

THIRTEENTH ESSENTIAL: His trust and confidence in the soundness of the commands that he preaches are so great that he would never retract or regret one of them, even if the whole world united against him. Every instance of his life is a witness to this.

FOURTEENTH ESSENTIAL: He calls with such conviction and certainty that he is indebted to no one and shows no anxiety, regardless of circumstances. With utmost sincerity and honesty, and without hesitation, he is the first to accept and practice what he communicates to others. His piety and contentment, as well as his disdain for the world's transient allurements, prove this fact that is known to friend and foe alike.

FIFTEENTH ESSENTIAL: He is the first and foremost in obeying Islam, worshipping his Creator, and observing the religious prohibitions. This proves that he is the Sovereign of eternity's envoy, announcer, and most sincere servant, as well as the interpreter of His eternal Word.

From these 15 essentials, we conclude that this person, distinguished with the qualities mentioned, devoted his life to one principle and declared it continuously: "There is no deity but God," and thus proclaimed God's absolute Oneness.

O God, bestow on him and his Family peace and blessings to the number of his community's good deeds. Glory be to You, we have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Appendix 1

Further remarks about the Prophet's greatness

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

IRST DROPLET: THREE GREAT AND UNIVERSAL THINGS MAKE OUR Lord known to us: the Book of the Universe (explained elsewhere), the Seal of the Prophets (the Book of the Universe's supreme sign), and the Qur'an. Now we must recognize and listen to the Seal of the Prophets, that articulate proof and announcer of God with all His Names and Attributes, His Existence and Unity.

Look at that illustrious proof's universal personality: Earth's surface is his mosque, Makka is his *mihrab* (prayer niche), and Madina is his pulpit. Our Prophet is the leader of all believers, preacher to all humanity, chief of all Prophets, lord of all saints, and leader in the remembrance of God of a circle comprising all Prophets and saints. With all Prophets as its roots and all saints as its ever-fresh fruits, he is a radiant tree. All Prophets, with the support of their miracles, and all saints, relying on their wonders, confirm and corroborate his claim that "There is no deity but God." All illustrious reciters of God's Names lined up in the past and future repeat these words in unison, as if to say: "You speak the truth, and what you say is right!" What illusion can dispute an argument confirmed by such countless endorsements?

SECOND DROPLET: Just as the consensus and unanimity of all Prophets and saints affirm this radiant proof of Divine Unity, hundreds of signs in the

revealed Scriptures (e.g., the Torah and the Gospels), thousands of indications of his Prophethood that appeared prior to his mission, famous reports of voices from the Unseen, soothsayers' unanimous testimony, thousands of miracles, and the justice and truth of his Sharia—all confirm and corroborate him. Similarly, his laudable virtues' perfection, his complete confidence in his mission, his most excellent qualities in relation to its fulfillment, and his extraordinary awe of God, worship, serenity, and firmness—all demonstrate the strength of his belief. In addition, his total certainty and complete steadfastness clearly show his claim's undeniable truth.

THIRD DROPLET: In our imaginations, let's go to Arabia during the Age of Happiness and visit him while he is carrying out his mission. Look! We see a person distinguished by his character's excellence and his form's beauty. He holds a miraculous book and speaks a truthful discourse. He delivers an eternal sermon to humanity, jinn, angels—indeed to all beings. He solves and expounds the mystery of the world's creation, discovers and solves the universe's intricate mystery, and provides convincing and satisfying answers to questions asked constantly of all beings and bewildering minds: Who am I? What is the purpose of my life? Where did I come from? Were am I going? What is my final destination?

FOURTH DROPLET: Behold! He spreads such a light of truth that, if you look at the universe without the light of his guidance, you see it as a place of mourning, of beings that are alien or even hostile to one another, of inanimate beings that are ghastly corpses, and of living creatures that are orphans weeping under the blows of death and separation. But the light he spreads transforms that place of universal mourning into a place of invocation where God's Names and praises are recited in joy and ecstasy. Those alien, hostile beings are friends and brothers and sisters. Dumb, inanimate creatures assume the form of familiar, obedient officials and docile servants. Weeping, complaining orphans recite God's Names and praises through their lives and offer thanks for being discharged from their duties through their death.

FIFTH DROPLET: Again, through this light, the universe's motions, variations, changes, and transformations are no longer considered meaningless and futile playthings of chance, but appear in their true form and function: missives of the universe's Master, a page inscribed with the signs of creation, a mirror reflecting God's Names. The world itself is shown to be a book of the Eternally-Besought-of-All's Wisdom. Without this light, our boundless

weakness, helplessness, poverty, and neediness cause us to fall lower than animals. And then our intellect makes us even more wretched by conveying grief, sorrow, and anxiety to us.

But when this light illumines us, we rise above all animals and creatures, and our poverty and helplessness become means of infinite wealth and power by our dependence on God. We ascend to the level of being a beloved monarch through entreaty, and through lamenting we become a vicegerent of Earth. In other words, only this light prevents the universe, humanity, and all things from being reduced to nothingness. Such a person is necessary in such a wondrous universe, for without him there would be no need for the universe and all the worlds to exist.

SIXTH DROPLET: This being announces and brings good tidings of eternal happiness. He unveils and proclaims God's infinite Mercy, observes and heralds the beauties of the realm of the Lord's Sovereignty, and discloses and displays the Divine Names' treasures. If you observe him as a devoted worshipper of God, you will see him to be a model of love and an embodiment of mercy, as well as the pride of humanity and the Tree of Creations' most illustrious fruit. If you observe him as a Messenger, you will see him to be a proof of God, a lamp of truth, a sun of guidance, and the means of happiness. Look! His light has lit up from East to West like dazzling lightning, and half of the globe and one-fifth of humanity have accepted his guidance and preserved it like their lives. So why should our evil-commanding selves and satans not accept "There is no deity but God," the essence of his mission?

SEVENTH DROPLET: Consider how he eradicated his people's deep attachment to evil and savage customs and immoral qualities; equipped and adorned his desperate, wild, and unyielding people with all praiseworthy virtues; and made them teachers and masters of the world, especially to the "civilized" nations. His domination was not outward; rather, he conquered and subjugated their minds, spirits, hearts, and souls. He became the beloved of hearts, the teacher of minds, the trainer of souls, and the ruler of spirits.

EIGHTH DROPLET: A small habit like smoking can be removed permanently from a small community only by a powerful ruler and with great effort. But see how this man quickly removed numerous ingrained habits from large obsessed communities with little outward power and little effort, and then replaced them with exalted qualities that became inherent in their being. He accomplished many more such miraculous things. To those who refuse to see

the testimony of that blessed time, we challenge them with Arabia's present-day reality. Let them go there with hundreds of philosophers, pedagogues, sociologists, and psychologists for a century and see if they can achieve even one-hundredth of what the Prophet achieved in a year.

NINTH DROPLET: An unimportant person cannot lie to a group of people about something insignificant without giving himself or herself away through anxiety or unease. And yet this person, while undertaking a tremendous task in the name of Messengership and needing protection against his enemies, easily speaks about great causes before large congregations (and the whole history) without any anxiety or hesitation. Furthermore, no contradictions can be found in what he proclaims with such pure sincerity and great seriousness. In addition, he does so in such an intense, elevated manner that he irritates his enemies. How could there have been any deception? What he speaks is nothing but Revelation revealed. The truth cannot be deceptive, and one who sees it cannot be deceived. His path, which is pure truth, contains no deception.

TENTH DROPLET: Consider the curiosity-arousing, attractive, necessary, and awesome truths that he shows and the matters that he proves. All people are curious. Suppose someone said: "If you give half of your property, someone will come from Mars or Jupiter to tell you about them, as well as your future and what will happen to you." If you have any curiosity at all, you will do as requested. But this person talks of other things: of a Sovereign in Whose realm the moon flies round a moth (Earth) like a fly, and the moth flutters round a lamp (the sun), which is just one of thousands of lamps in one of the Sovereign's countless guest-houses. Also, he speaks truly of so wondrous a world and predicts such a revolution that it would not be strange if Earth was a bomb and exploded. Listen to the *suras* he recites, which begin with:

When the sun is folded up. (81:1)

When the sky is cleft asunder. (82:1)

(The day) of Noise and Clamor. (101:1)

He speaks so truly of such a future that, in relation to it, the future in this world is like a trifling mirage. He informs us so solemnly of such happiness that all worldly happiness is like a flash of lightning in comparison to an eternal sun.

ELEVENTH DROPLET: Such wonders await us under the universe's apparent veil. We need a wonderful and miracle-working person to communicate and explain these wonders to us. His conduct proves that he has seen—and sees—them, and he tells us what he sees. He teaches us what the One God of those heavens and Earth, Who nourishes us with His bounties, wants of us and how we can please Him. While we should drop everything in order to run to and then heed this person who instructs us in these and many other necessary and curiosity-arousing things, most people are so deaf and blind—even mad—that they do not see, hear, or understand this truth.

TWELFTH DROPLET: As well as being an articulate proof and truthful evidence of the Oneness of the Creator of all beings, this person is a decisive proof and clear evidence of the Resurrection and eternal happiness. Given that he is the cause for gaining eternal happiness through his guidance, he is the cause of its existence and the means of its creation through his prayers and supplications.

See! While supplicating during this supreme prayer, it is as if Arabia—even Earth—prays through his sublime presence and makes its petition. He entreats amid so vast a congregation that it is as if all illustrious people of perfection from the time of Adam until the end of time are following him and saying “Amen” to his supplications. He implores on behalf of so universal a need that the inhabitants of Earth and the heavens, indeed all beings, join in his prayer, declaring: “Yes, O Master, grant that to us, for we also desire it.” He supplicates so needily and sorrowfully, and in such a loving, longing, and entreating fashion, that he brings the universe to tears and causes it to join in his prayer.

And see! The goal and purpose for which he prays elevates humanity and the world, even all of creation, from the lowest ranks of humiliation, worthlessness, and uselessness to the highest ranks of having value, permanence, and sublime duties. He supplicates and petitions in a manner so elevated and help-seeking, so sweet and mercy-imploring, that it is as if he causes all beings and the heavens and the Divine Throne of Grace to hear. And then, bringing them to ecstasy, he causes them to exclaim: “Amen, O God, Amen!”

He begs his needs from so Powerful a Being, All-Hearing and All-Munificent, from so All-Knowing a Being, All-Seeing and All-Merciful, that that Being sees the most hidden being's secret need, hears and accepts its

entreaties, and has mercy on it. He meets its need, even though this being asks for it through the tongue of its disposition, and gives it in such a wise, seeing, and compassionate form that it leaves no doubt that only an All-Hearing and All-Seeing One, One All-Munificent and All-Compassionate can do so.

THIRTEENTH DROPLET: What does he want, this pride of humanity, this unique being and glory of all beings, who stands for prayer with all eminent people behind him and with hands upraised? He is seeking eternal happiness, eternal life, a meeting with God, and Paradise. He wants all of these through the Divine Names, which display their beauty and operations in the mirrors of beings. Even one of his prayers, were it not for such innumerable causes as Mercy, Grace, Wisdom, and Justice fulfilling that request, would be enough to build Paradise, which is as easy for Divine Power as creating spring. Just as his Messengership opened this place of trial, his worship and servitude to God opened a way to the next world.

I wonder how the universe's perfect order, which causes wise and reflective people to say that no "new" universe could be more original and wonderful, as well as the flawless beauty of His Mercy's art and His Mastership's matchless beauty, could be at all consonant with ugliness, mercilessness, and disorder by not accepting the Prophet's prayer and not building Paradise. I wonder how He could refuse the most important and necessary desires while satisfying the most insignificant wishes. Such a thing is impossible!

So, my imaginary friend, let's return. Even if we stayed for 100 years we could not comprehend fully even one-hundredth of his marvelous and remarkable acts. We would never tire of observing him. During our return, we will look at each century to see how each has bloomed fully through the flow of light received from that sun of guidance, and how it yielded thousands of such illustrious fruits as Abu Hanifa, Shafi'i, Bayazid al-Bistami, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Shah Naqshband, Imam Ghazzali, and Imam Rabbani.

Postponing the details of our observations, we should invoke blessings on that worker of miracles and bringer of guidance that refer to some of his certain miracles:

Upon him—our master Muhammad—to whom the All-Compassionate and All-Merciful One sent the Wise Criterion of Truth (the Qur'an) from the Mighty Throne, be peace and blessings equaling the number of his community's good deeds. Upon him whose Messengership was foretold by the Torah, Gospels, and Psalms; whose Prophet-

hood was predicted by wondrous events prior to his Prophethood, and by the voices of jinn, saints of humanity, and soothsayers; and at whose gesture the moon split, may there be peace and blessings equaling the number of his community's breaths.

Upon him at whose beckoning trees came; by whose prayer rain fell; whom the cloud shaded from the heat; who made one dish of food satisfy hundreds of people; from whose fingers water flowed like the Spring of Kawthar; to whom God caused the lizard, the gazelle, the wolf, the camel, the mountain, the rock, the pole, and the clod of earth to speak; the one who made the Ascension (*Mi'raj*) and *whose eye did not waver*, may there be peace and blessings equaling the number of letters (of the Qur'an) formed in the words represented, with the All-Compassionate's permission, in the mirrors of the air-waves when all reciters of the Qur'an, from the beginning of Revelation until the end of time, recite its words. Forgive us and have mercy upon us, O God, for the sake of each of those blessings. Amen.

FOURTEENTH DROPLET: The Qur'an, the treasury of miracles and itself a supreme miracle, proves Muhammad's Prophethood and God's Oneness so decisively that no further proof is needed. We now define this miracle and refer to one or two flashes of its miraculousness that some have not been able to understand.

The Qur'an, which makes our Master known to us, is an eternal translator of the great Book of the Universe; the discloser of the Divine Names' treasures hidden in the pages of Earth and the heavens; the key to the truths lying beneath the lines of events; the treasury of the All-Compassionate's favors; the eternal addresses coming from the Unseen world beyond this visible world's veil; the sun of Islam's spiritual and intellectual world; the foundation, plan, and map of the Hereafter's worlds; the expounder, lucid interpreter, articulate proof, and clear translator of the Divine Essence, Attributes, and acts; humanity's educator, trainer, guide, and leader; and true wisdom. It is a book of wisdom and law, prayer and worship, command and summons, invocation and knowledge of God; a book that contains books for all of humanity's spiritual needs, like a sacred library offering books from which all saints, eminently truthful people, and all purified and discerning scholars derive their particular ways.

Consider the flash of miraculousness in its reiterations, which some make a point of argumentation. Yet such reiteration is desirable, for the Qur'an is a book of invocation, prayer, and summons. In this context, reiter-

ation is a most necessary and beautiful eloquence, for invoking God requires that the Qur'an be able to impress and enlighten hearts. Through repetition, prayer acquires and gives strength and becomes ingrained in hearts. Commands and summons need restatement to be confirmed and enforced.

Moreover, not everyone can read the whole Qur'an any time he or she wants, but usually he or she can read one *sura*. This is why the Qur'an's most important purposes are reiterated in most of the longer *suras*, each of which thereby becomes like a small Qur'an. Such purposes and themes as Divine Unity, Resurrection, and the story of Moses are repeated so that no one is deprived of their benefits. Furthermore, spiritual tastes and needs vary, just like bodily tastes and needs. Humanity is in need of some at every breath. Just like the body needs air at every moment, the spirit needs the particle *Hu-Huwa* (He-God). It needs others every hour, like *Bismillah* (In the Name of God). Reiteration therefore arises from recurring need, and so the Qur'an reiterates in order to point out those needs, make them deeply felt, and awaken people to the need to satisfy them.

Also the Qur'an is the founder and basis of the perfect religion (Islam) and the foundation of its world. It came to change humanity's social life and answer people's recurring questions. Repetition is necessary for a founder to affirm, and reiteration is necessary to emphasize. Establishing something new requires confirmation and strengthening, and therefore repetition.

The Qur'an speaks of such important matters and subtle truths that reiteration is necessary in different contexts in order to impress them on people's minds and hearts. Actually, such repetition is merely apparent, for in reality each word has manifold meanings, numerous benefits, and many aspects and levels. The words or verses always occur in a different place, way, context, and for a different meaning, purpose, and benefit. Certain cosmological matters are mentioned in a concise, allusive way. Doing so is not a fault, as some unbelievers and atheists assert, but rather a flash of miraculousness, for the Qur'an came to guide humanity.

QUESTION: Why does the Qur'an not speak of beings in the same way as science and materialistic or naturalistic philosophy? It mentions some matters very briefly and others in an apparently simple and superficial way that is easy for ordinary people to understand.

ANSWER: Science and materialistic philosophy have strayed from the path of truth. The Qur'an is not a science book, and so does not need to dwell on cosmological matters. It mentions certain facts of creation to make known

the Divine Essence, Attributes, and Names by explaining the meaning of the Book of the Universe so that its Creator may be known. Therefore it considers creation for the sake of gaining knowledge of its Creator. Science, on the other hand, considers creation for its own sake and addresses scientists in particular.

As the Qur'an addresses all people, most of whom are ordinary, and uses creation as evidence and proof to guide humanity, the presented evidence should be clear and obvious to ensure easy understanding. In addition, guidance requires that unimportant things only be touched on and that subtle points be explained through parables. To avoid leading people into error, it should not change things considered obvious in a way that confuses or even harms its audience.

For example, the Qur'an calls the sun a *moving lamp* because it is the "mainstay" of the universe's order and its system's center, and order and system are two means of acquiring knowledge of the Creator. When it says: *And the sun runs its course* (36:38), it suggests Divine Power's well-ordered disposition in the revolutions of winter and summer, and day and night, and so implies the Maker's majesty. Thus the reality of this "running" does not harm the intended meaning—the observed order woven into the universe's structure.

The Qur'an also says: *And He made the sun as a lamp* (71:16). By depicting the sun as a lamp, it reminds us that the world resembles a palace containing the decorations, provisions, and other necessities prepared for humanity and other living creatures. The sun functions as a lamp to illuminate it, and therefore implies the Creator's mercy and bounty.

Now consider how science and materialistic philosophy describe the sun: "The sun is an enormous mass of burning gases. It causes the planets, which have been flung off from it, to revolve around it. It is of such-and-such size, and has such-and-such qualities." It gives no perfection of knowledge to the spirit, but only a terrible dread and bewilderment. It does not approach the matter as the Qur'an does. From this comparison, judge the value of the scientific and philosophical way of thinking, the former of which is outwardly splendid but inwardly hollow. So do not be fooled by the outward worth of scientific descriptions and become disrespectful toward the Qur'an's most miraculous style.

O God, make the Qur'an a cure for all sickness for us, a companion to us in life and after death, a friend in the world, a confidant in the grave, an intercessor on the Day of Judgment, a light on the (Bridge of) Sirat, a veil and a screen from Hellfire, a friend in Paradise, and a guide and a leader to all good deeds. By Your grace, munificence, beneficence, and mercy, O Most Munificent of the munificent and Most Merciful of the merciful. Amen.

O God, bestow blessings and peace on him to whom You sent the Qur'an, the Criterion of truth and falsehood, and on all members of his Family and his Companions. Amen.

Appendix 2

The miracle of splitting the moon

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

The Hour has approached, and the moon split. But whenever they see a sign, they turn away, saying: “This is evidently part of (his) magic.” (54:1-2)

 **QUESTION:** MATERIALIST PHILOSOPHERS AND THEIR IMITATORS, WHO want to deny this bright miracle of Prophet Muhammad, say: “If the event had really happened, it would have been known all over the world and related in all historical documents.”

ANSWER: This miracle occurred before a group of people to convince them of his Prophethood. It happened momentarily at a time of night when people were sleeping; such obstacles as mist, clouds, and time differences prevented others from seeing it; and, moreover, at that time science and civilization were not yet advanced or widespread. Thus the practice of observing the sky was quite limited. Last but not least, there is no reason why it should have been seen worldwide. To remove such clouds of delusion, consider the following five points:

FIRST POINT: The stubbornness of Muhammad’s unbelieving contemporaries is well-known and recorded. When the Qur'an announced this incident in *the moon split*, not one unbeliever dared contradict it. If they had not seen this event, they would have used this verse as a pretext to attack the

Prophet more formidably. However, neither biographies of the Prophet nor history books report anything that even suggests their denial of this event. Their reaction was recorded as: *This is evidently part of his magic.* They declared the event to be magic, and added further that if caravans in other places had seen it, it had truly happened; otherwise, the Prophet had bewitched them. When the Makkah caravans arriving the following morning from Yemen and other places announced that they had seen this miracle, the unbelievers replied: “The magic of Abu Talib’s orphan has affected even the heavens!”

SECOND POINT: The majority of the foremost scholars of meticulous research, such as Sa‘d al-Din al-Taftazani, concluded that, like the earlier-mentioned miracles of water flowing from the Prophet’s fingers and the audible grieving of the wooden pole against which the Prophet used to lean while delivering sermons, when it was separated from him following the construction of a pulpit, the splitting of the moon is *mutawatir*. This means that it has been transmitted down the generations by one truthful group after another, and that the transmitters form such a vast community that they are unable to agree on a lie. It is as certain as Haley’s comet, which appeared 1,000 years ago, or the existence of the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) we have not seen. Therefore it is unreasonable to foster baseless doubts about such certain, witnessed matters. In fact, it is enough for their acceptability that they are not impossible. Splitting the moon is just as possible as splitting a mountain by a volcanic eruption.

THIRD POINT: Prophets work miracles to prove their claim of Prophethood and to convince deniers, not to compel belief. Thus every miracle is shown to convince those who heard the claim of Prophethood. If they somehow forced everyone to see or believe in them, the All-Wise’s wisdom, the Divine purpose for creating us with free will and sending religion, which entails that the ground be prepared for the conviction of mind and the free acceptance of human soul, would be violated.

Thus if the All-Wise Creator had left the moon split for several hours so that everyone could see it and record it in their historical records, it would have been only another astronomical event instead of an event unique to Muhammad’s Messengership or an evidence of his Prophethood. If everyone had been compelled to believe, free will would be annulled and Abu Jahl’s coal-like spirit would be equal to Abu Bakr’s diamond-like spirit. Thus the purpose of creating humanity with a special function and responsibili-

ty, as well as the purpose for sending Revelation, would be negated. That is why this miracle was not shown worldwide so that it could be recorded.

FOURTH POINT: Some argue that if this event really occurred, it would have been mentioned in Chinese, Japanese, and Native American historical accounts.³²⁷ But how could they have seen it for, in addition to other obstacles, it was barely sunset in such European countries as Spain, France, and England (all enveloped in mists of ignorance), daytime in America, and morning in China and Japan.

FIFTH POINT: This miracle is not an ordinary incident that happened due to particular causes or randomly so that it should be criticized based on the law of cause and effect. Rather, the All-Wise Creator of the sun and the moon made it an extraordinary event to confirm His Messenger's Prophethood and support his claim. Therefore it was shown as a convincing proof to certain people and specified by Divine Wisdom, for the nature of Divine guidance and human responsibility as well as the reason for raising a Messenger required this. If it had been seen by those who were not intended to see it and who had not yet heard of Muhammad's Prophethood, and if it had occurred according to the law of cause and effect, it would have been an ordinary astronomical event instead of a miracle specific to and connected with his Messengership.

In conclusion, these arguments are enough for any mind to be convinced of the possibility that this miracle occurred. Out of many evidences of its occurrence, we shall mention only six, as these six have the strength of a six-fold consensus:

- The Companions, all people of justice and truthfulness, agree that it took place.
- All exacting Qur'anic interpreters agree that *the moon split* indicates that a gesture of Muhammad's fingers caused this event.
- All truthful Traditionists narrated this incident through various authentic channels of transmission.
- All people of truth and sainthood, as well as of inspiration and spiritual discovery, testify that this event took place.

³²⁷ Some books also state that the moon fell to Earth after it split into two parts. Truthful scholars have rejected this, for it was added by a hypocrite who intended to reduce this evident miracle's value to nothing.

- All foremost theologians and learned scholars confirm this event, despite their other differences of opinions.
- Muhammad's community, which an authentic Prophetic Tradition states can never agree on an error, accepts its occurrence.

These six evidences clearly prove the splitting of the moon.

Thus we have established this miracle's reality by refuting objections to its possibility. In a few concluding sentences, we will speak in the name of the truth and for the sake of belief.

The Seal of the Prophets, the luminous moon of the heaven of Messengership, proved his sainthood to the inhabitants of the heavens through his Ascension. His sainthood's greatest miracle, achieved through the quality of his worship, elevated him to the status of God's beloved. In other words, by making Muhammad travel through the heavens, God showed its dwellers and those of the highest realms that he is their superior and His beloved.

By allowing a man's gesture to split the moon, which is set in the sky and bound to Earth, people saw another great evidence of his Messengership. Thus Prophet Muhammad flew to the summit of perfections on the two brilliant wings of Messengership and sainthood (like the moon's two bright halves), ascended to *two bows' length* (the highest rank and nearest station to God), and became the cause of pride for all inhabitants of the heavens and Earth.

Upon him and his Family be blessings and peace such as to fill Earth and the heavens. Glory be unto You. We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, All-Wise.

O God, for the sake of him by a gesture of whom the moon split, make my heart and the hearts of the *Risale-i Nur*'s students as devoted and loyal to the "sun" of the Qur'an as the moon is to the sun.
Amen.

Appendix 3

Why only Prophet Muhammad was honored with the Ascension

HE REASON FOR THIS LIES IN HIS ESSENTIAL PERFECTION AND THE nature of his Prophethood. First of all, Prophet Muhammad was expected for a long time, and his coming was promised through many signs. Given this, there are numerous proofs of his Prophethood. Although elaborated in previous chapters, we briefly list the signs showing his perfection and the proofs of his Prophethood to show that he was the most worthy to make the Ascension.

FIRST: Despite the great corruption in the Torah, Gospels, and Psalms, Husain al-Jisri's *Risala al-Hamidiya* presents 110 signs found in them that indicate Muhammad's Prophethood.

SECOND: History also records the words of many pre-Islamic soothsayers, such Shiq and Satih, who foretold his Prophethood and that he was the Last Prophet.

THIRD: Many extraordinary events (*irhasat*) before his Prophethood foretold the coming of a Prophet. For example, on the night he was born, the Ka'ba's idols toppled over and the pinnacles of the famous palace of the Persian ruler Chosroes broke.

FOURTH: Muhammad was distinguished with almost 1,000 miracles, all of which have been related by historians and biographers. To cite only a few examples, he satisfied an army's thirst with water flowing from his fin-

gers and split the moon (54:1), and the dry wooden pole against which he leaned while preaching in the mosque moaned like a camel in front of many people when it was separated from him.

FIFTH: Friend and foe agree that all good qualities were found in him to the highest degree, and that, as shown by his conduct, all attributes and character of the highest excellence were apparent in the way he performed his mission. In accordance with Islam's moral principles, praiseworthy virtues of the highest order are found in the law that he brought.

SIXTH: Wisdom requires that Divinity be shown because of Its perfections. Prophet Muhammad manifested God's Divinity at the highest level and in the most brilliant fashion through the most perfect and comprehensive way of worship contained in the religion that he brought. Due to the wisdom in the universe's creation, the Creator of the world wills to display His most perfect Beauty and Grace through the most appropriate means. Clearly, Prophet Muhammad showed and described His Beauty and Grace in the most perfect fashion.

The Maker of the world wills to exhibit and draw attentive gazes toward His perfect art of infinite Beauty; Muhammad proclaimed that art with the clearest voice. In response to the Lord of the worlds' will to proclaim His Oneness in the realms of multiplicity, Muhammad announced His Unity with all of Its aspects most perfectly.

Due to His Wisdom, the Owner of the world wills to see and show His infinite essential Beauty and Grace, with all of their manifestations, in the mirrors of all beings; Muhammad reflected them in the most brilliant fashion and made others love them. In response to the will of the Builder of the palace of the world to describe His perfections by showing His unseen treasures of priceless gems, Muhammad displayed and described them most perfectly.

The Maker of the universe has decorated the universe with the most beautiful and exquisite embellishments, and has included therein His conscious creatures so that they may travel to receive enjoyment and reflect. Due to His Wisdom, He wills to communicate the meaning and value expressed by the works of His art to people who observe and reflect. Muhammad guided humanity, jinn, and angels in the most comprehensive way, in this respect, through the Qur'an.

The All-Wise Ruler of the universe wills to use an envoy to reveal the purpose of the changes and transformations in existence, as well as to answer three perplexing questions asked by all conscious beings: Where do we come from? Where are we going? What are we? By means of the Qur'an's truths, Muhammad revealed this purpose and the answers in the clearest and most perfect way.

The Maker of this world wills to make Himself known to conscious beings through His exquisite works and to be loved by them through the precious bounties He bestows on them. Thus He wills to communicate to them, by means of an envoy, what He wants them to do and how they may obtain His approval in return for those bounties. By means of the Qur'an, Muhammad communicated the things that please God in the most exalted and perfect way.

The Lord of the worlds has endowed humanity, the fruit of the Tree of Creation, with a comprehensive disposition that can encompass the universe, and with a corresponding ability—and even need—to perform a universal worship. But humanity, due to its feelings, inclines to the world and its attractions. So God wills, by means of a guide, to turn humanity's attention from worldly multiplicity to Divine Unity, from transience to eternity. In response to this will and by means of the Qur'an, Muhammad guided humanity to this goal in the most desirable fashion and performed the duty of Messengership in the most perfect way.

Thus the most superior members of creation are living beings, the most superior living beings are conscious beings, the most superior conscious beings are true human beings, and the true human being who carried out all of the duties mentioned in the most perfect and comprehensive way naturally would rise through an all-embracing Ascension to the nearness of *two bows' length*, the station nearest to God, to knock at the door of eternal happiness, open Mercy's treasury, and witness belief's unseen truths directly.

SEVENTH: Moreover, everything displays the most pleasing instances of beauty and utmost degree of adornment, thereby demonstrating that their Maker wills to make things beautiful and adorn them. In turn, this shows that the Maker has a strong inclination and sacred love toward His art. Therefore the person with the most comprehensive disposition to display this art's wonders in himself; one who knows them, makes them known, and thus makes himself lovable; and who deeply appreciates the beauties manifested

in other beings in full appreciation of their coming from the Maker will be the most beloved in the Maker's sight, as He greatly loves His art.

This same being, in full awareness of the exquisite qualities adorning all beings and of the perfections illuminating them, makes the heavens echo: "Glory be to God! What wonders God has willed" and "All these are from God! God is the All-Great!" This same being causes the universe to reverberate with the sounds of the Qur'an, and enraptures the land and the sea with his appreciative reflections and glorification as well as with his proclamation and demonstration of Divine Unity.

Such a being, according to the principle of "The cause is like the doer," receives a reward equivalent to his community's good deeds. His spiritual perfections draw strength from the blessings invoked upon him by his community, and the duties he performed during his Messengership cause him to receive an immaterial recompense and infinite emanations of Divine Mercy and Love. Given this, the result of pure truth and absolute wisdom is that this being should advance by means of Ascension as far as Paradise, *Sidrat al-Muntaha*—the lote tree, contingency's farthest limit—the Divine Throne, and to the *nearness of two bows' length*.

Appendix 4

About knowing the Prophet

 TRAVELER SETS OUT ON AN INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY TO FIND AND know the universe's Creator. After traveling in the realms of creatures, he says to himself: "As I am seeking this universe's Creator and Owner amidst these creatures, first I should visit Muhammad and seek from him the answer to my quest." Using his imagination, he enters the Prophet's blessed age and sees that it really was an era of happiness, for even his enemies confirmed him as the most blessed of creation, the greatest and most accomplished commander, the most celebrated ruler, the most exalted in speech, and the most brilliant in intellect. He has enlightened 14 centuries with his virtues and the Qur'an.

After investigating, the traveler realizes how the Prophet quickly transformed his primitive and illiterate people into the world's masters and teachers via the light that he brought. He finds numerous decisive proofs, in his character and mission, of the Creator's Existence and Oneness. Here we briefly point out nine of the most general ones, as follows:

FIRST: The Prophet possessed all laudable virtues and excellent characteristics, as affirmed even by his enemies. In addition, hundreds of miracles were done through his hands, such as quenching an army's thirst with water flowing from his fingers, splitting the moon with a gesture (*and the moon split* [54:1]), and causing many soldiers to flee by tossing a handful of soil at them (*It was not you who threw when you threw, but God threw* [8:17]). Learning

of, or even witnessing them, the traveler says to himself: "One who performs such clear miracles and possesses such moral qualities and perfections must be the most truthful in speech. How could he ever lower himself to lies and trickery, which are vices of the vile?"

SECOND: He holds the decree of the universe's Owner (the Qur'an), which has been accepted and affirmed in every century by hundreds of millions of people and is miraculous in seven ways and 40 aspects. The traveler thinks: "The translator, expounder, and proclaimer of such a Decree of pure truth could not lie, for that would violate the Decree and betray the Owner."

THIRD: The like of the Sacred Law, religion, code of worship, way of prayer, message, and belief that he brought has never existed before. Nor could it exist (without him). The unequaled law brought by the unlettered Prophet has administered one-fifth of humanity for 14 centuries in a just and precise manner. Islam, which originated in and is represented by the Prophet's sayings, precepts, and example, is also peerless. It has served hundreds of millions of people, regardless of time and place, as a guide and competent authority or source to decide every issue perfectly. It has trained their minds, illumined and purified their hearts, trained and refined their souls, and perfected their spirits.

Prophet Muhammad is the foremost practitioner of the worship prescribed by Islam and the most God-conscious person. He worshipped with the utmost care and attention to even the minutest details, even during times of great peril and throughout a life of constant struggle and activity. He imitated no one in his worship, and perfectly combined the beginning and end of spiritual evolution.

His prayers and knowledge of God are unparalleled, for with just the *Jawshan al-Kabir*, one of his thousands of supplicatory prayers, he describes his Lord with such a degree of knowledge that all saints and others foremost in knowledge of God since his time have never achieved a similar degree, despite their building upon their predecessors' accomplishments. Those who glance at just one of this supplication's 99 sections concludes that there can never be another one even remotely like it.

While preaching and calling his people to the truth, the Prophet displayed such steadfastness, firmness, and courage that he never faltered or hesitated. And this was despite the surrounding powers' and religions' hostili-

ty, as well as that of his own people, tribe, and even his uncle. He successfully challenged the world, thereby making Islam superior to all other religions and systems. This proves that no other person can equal him in his preaching of and calling humanity to the message of Truth.

His belief was so extraordinarily strong and certain, so miraculously evolved (developed, expanded, and ingrained in his heart),³²⁸ and so elevated and world-enlightening that no prevailing ideas and beliefs, philosophies or spiritual teachings engendered any doubt within him. Despite their opposition and hostility, they could not make him hesitate or become anxious about his cause. Moreover all saints (primarily his Companions) have benefited—and continue to do so—from his faith, which they admit to be of the highest degree. This proves that his belief is matchless. The traveler seeking God thus concludes that lying and deception have no place in the person who brought such a unique law and matchless religion; who displayed such wonderful worship, extraordinary excellence in prayer, and world-admired preaching; and who possessed a belief of such miraculous perfection.

FOURTH: The Prophets' consensus is a very strong proof of God's Existence and Oneness and a firm testimony to that exalted person's truthfulness and Messengership. Even history confirms that he possessed to the utmost degree all of the sacred attributes, miracles, and functions that indicate a Prophet's truthfulness and Messengership. The Prophets verbally predicted his coming by giving good tidings of him in the Torah, Gospels, Psalms, and Pages or Scrolls. Their missions and miracles affirmed and "put their signature" on the mission of this foremost and most perfect person's Prophethood. The traveler perceives that all of the previous Prophets bear witness to this person's truthfulness through the unanimity of their actions, just as they testify to God's Oneness through verbal consensus.

FIFTH: Having attained truth, perfection, the rank of working wonders, insight into the reality of things, and spiritual discovery by following that person's deeds and principles, thousands of saints bear witness to God's Oneness and that person's truthfulness and Messengership. The traveler

³²⁸ We first believe in something's truth via simple acceptance or study and confirmation. As we learn the content of that in which we profess belief and experience belief's taste, our belief becomes stronger and more ingrained in our hearts. We can consider this an expansion, development, or deepening in confirmation. The Prophet went through this same procedure for, like every other believer, he evolved spiritually in his own realm: Prophethood. (Tr.)

realizes that they testify to that person's truthfulness, which is as bright as the sun; that they witness, through the light of sainthood, some of the truths he proclaimed about the Unseen world; and that they believe in and affirm all of those truths through the light of belief to the degree of certainty by knowledge, certainty by sight, or certainty by experience.

SIXTH: Thousands of exacting pure scholars, meticulous truthful scholars, and believing sages, all of whom reached the highest station of learning through the teaching contained in the sacred truths brought by that unlettered person; the sublime sciences to which he gave birth; and the knowledge of God he discovered—all prove and affirm God's Oneness, his mission's foundation, and bear witness to that greatest teacher's and supreme master's truthfulness and to the truth of his words.

SEVENTH: After the Prophets, his Family and Companions are the most renowned, respected, celebrated, pious, and keen-sighted members of humanity. Such a distinction is due to their insight, wisdom, and spiritual accomplishments. Having thoroughly examined and scrutinized all of the Prophet's thoughts, they concluded unanimously that he was the most truthful, elevated, and honest person in the world. The traveler understands that such an unshakable affirmation of and firm belief in him from such extraordinary people proves the truth of his cause, just as daylight proves the sun's existence.

EIGHTH: This universe indicates the Maker, Inscriber, and Designer Who has made it a palace, an exhibition, and a spectacle. Thus there should be a truthful unveiler who discovers the Divine purpose for the universe's creation, an exalted herald who announces this great book's meaning, and a discerning master and truthful teacher who teaches Divine Wisdom. He also should teach the meaning and outcome of the universe's transformations and purposeful motions. The traveler gradually realizes that the one carrying out such duties most perfectly is the most truthful in his cause: serving as the Creator of the universe's most exalted and trusted officer.

NINTH: Behind the veil of creation is One Who wills, through these purposeful and skilled works, to display His perfect skills and art; to make Himself known and loved through those countless adorned creatures; to evoke praise and thanksgiving in return for His boundless invaluable bounties; and to encourage worship with gratitude and appreciation for His Lordship by means of His affectionate and protective sustenance of life, as well as His satisfying all things' varied tastes and appetites. He wills to demonstrate His

Divinity through the creativity and purposeful activity displayed during the changing of seasons and the alternation of day and night, for example, so that humanity might believe in, submit to, and obey His Divinity. He also wills to manifest His justice and truthfulness by protecting virtue and the virtuous and destroying evil and the evil, and by annihilating oppressors and liars with heavenly blows.

Certainly the most beloved who, serving the Divine purpose to the highest degree, discloses creation's mystery, always acts in the name of that Being (his Creator), and asks Him alone for help and success (and receives both), will be with Him. This is Prophet Muhammad.

The traveler tells his reason: "Since these nine truths testify to that person's truthfulness, he must be the source of humanity's honor and the world's pride. Therefore he is worthy of being called 'the pride of the world' and 'the glory of humanity.'" Moreover the Qur'an, the All-Compassionate's miraculous exposition and Decree that he holds in his hand, has gathered half of the old world into its magnificent spiritual domain. Together with the Messenger's personal perfections and elevated virtues, it shows that he is the most important being in the world, and accordingly, that his words about our Creator are the most important.

Come now and see! His sole cause was to prove and bear witness to the Necessarily Existent Being's Existence and Oneness, to proclaim Him with all His Attributes and Names. Based on the strength of his hundreds of miracles and the thousands of sublime, established truths contained in his religion, He is the "spiritual sun" enlightening the world, our Creator's most brilliant proof, the "Beloved of God." Each of the following three forms of great, truthful, and unshakable consensus affirms and corroborates the witness that he bears:

FIRST: The unanimous confirmation of that illustrious community known and celebrated as Muhammad's Family and descendants, among whom are thousands of spiritual poles and supreme saints of such keen sight as to penetrate into the Unseen, like Imam 'Ali, who said: "Were the veil lifted from the Unseen, my certainty would not increase," and 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, who "saw" God's Mighty Throne and Archangel Israfil's awesome form while still alive.

SECOND: The unanimous confirmation of the Companions, made with so strong a belief that they sacrificed their lives and properties, their par-

ents and tribes for its sake. Although brought up among a primitive people and in a climate of ignorance devoid of any positive notions of social life and administration, without any Scripture and immersed in the darkness of the uncivilized era after the Prophets, these people began to follow the Prophet's footsteps and soon became the masters, guides, and just rulers of the most civilized and socially and politically advanced peoples and states.

THIRD: The unanimous confirmation, made with the certainty of knowledge, by innumerable exacting and profound scholars. Each century has seen thousands of such people who became extraordinarily advanced in each branch of science and art.

Thus that person's testimony to God's Existence and Unity is so universal and unshakable that even if all beings hostile to it united, they still could not challenge it. Such is the conclusion reached by the traveler. In reference to the lesson learned in the School of Light while mentally visiting the Age of Happiness, we conclude:

There is no deity but God, the Necessarily Existent Being, the One and Unique, the necessity of Whose Existence in Unity is clearly demonstrated by the pride of the world and the glory of humanity, through the majesty of the Qur'an's sovereignty, the splendor of Islam's inclusiveness, his perfections' multiplicity, and his moral qualities' sublimity as confirmed even by his enemies.

Again, he bears witness and brings proof through the strength of his hundreds of miracles that prove his truthfulness and are established firmly; and through the strength of thousands of evident and decisive truths contained in Islam, as affirmed by the consensus of his illustrious, enlightened Family and descendants disseminating lights, and the agreement of his Companions with penetrating sight and prudence, and the concord all of his community's scholars with enlightening proofs and insight.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Twentieth Letter*

The Twentieth Letter

Aspects of Divine Unity

In His Name, Glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

There is no god but God, One having no partner; His is the Sovereignty and to Him belongs all praise; He alone gives life and causes to die; He is ever-living and dies not; in His hand is all good. He is powerful over everything, and unto Him is the homecoming.



IT IS VERY MERITORIOUS TO RECITE THESE AFFIRMATIONS OF DIVINE Unity after the early morning and evening prayers. Each phrase is equal in worth to God's Greatest Name, and conveys good tidings to humanity by displaying and manifesting a different aspect of the Lordship's Unity. This is equal to manifesting one of the Greatest Names, a ray of Divine Singularity's magnificence, and a perfection of Divine Oneness. Referring the reader to *The Words* for a full explanation of such a sublime truth, I summarize it below in an introduction and two stations.³²⁹

Introduction

Belief in God is creation's highest aim and most sublime result, and humanity's most exalted rank is knowledge of Him. The most radiant happiness

³²⁹ Said Nursi, *The Words*.

and sweetest bounty for jinn and humanity is love of God contained within knowledge of God. The human spirit's purest joy and the human heart's sheerest delight is spiritual ecstasy contained within love of God. All true happiness, pure joy, sweet bounties, and unclouded pleasures are contained within knowledge and love of God. Those who truly know and love God can receive endless happiness, bounties, enlightenment, and mysteries. Those who do not are afflicted with endless spiritual and material misery, pain, and fear. If any person were allowed to rule this world, despite his or her being powerless, miserable, and unprotected amid other purposeless people in this world, what would its true worth be?

People who do not recognize their Owner and discover their Master are miserable and bewildered. But those who do, and then take refuge in His Mercy and rely on His Power, see this desolate world transformed into a place of rest and felicity, a place of exchange for the Hereafter.

First station

Each phrase affirming Divine Unity bears good tidings to believers. Each message offers a cure, and each cure contains a spiritual pleasure.

FIRST PHRASE: *There is no god but God* provides an inexhaustible source of help for the human spirit, which is subject to innumerable needs and prey to countless attacks, by opening the door to a treasury of mercy that can meet its needs. The spirit finds therein a point of support that shows and makes known its Master and Owner, its Creator and True Object of Worship, Who secures it against its enemies' evil.

This phrase saves the heart from desolation and the spirit from suffering through constant uplift and continual felicity.

SECOND PHRASE: *(He is)* One implies that the human spirit, which is connected to most species in the universe and thereby overwhelmed with misery and confusion, finds therein a refuge and savior to deliver it from such misery and confusion.

For humanity, the phrase means: God is One, so do not tire yourself with other things. Do not demean yourself and feel obliged to them, or humiliate yourself before them for security. Do not trouble yourself by following them, and do not tremble before them, for the Sovereign of the universe is one and holds the key to and the reins of all things. His command resolves

everything. Finding Him means that you obtain whatever you wish and are liberated from interminable indebtedness and innumerable fears.

THIRD PHRASE: *He has no partner* means that He is One and has no partner in His Divinity and Sovereignty, as well as in His Lordship, acts, and creating. In principle, a worldly king may have no partner in his sovereignty, but nevertheless his officials may be regarded as his partners in the execution of his sovereignty, as they act as intermediaries between him and his subjects. God, the eternal Sovereign, has no such need and therefore no partner in His Sovereignty. One thing can interfere with another only if He permits it. In addition, His Oneness rejects any intermediaries between Him and His creatures, and so everyone has direct access to Him regardless of time and place.

This phrase informs the human spirit that nothing can prevent any believer from entering the Presence of the Majestic, All-Gracious, All-Powerful One of Perfection, Who is the Eternal Owner of the treasures of mercy and bliss, and presenting his or her petition. Finding His Mercy and relying upon His Power enables believers to attain perfect ease and happiness.

FOURTH PHRASE: *His is the Sovereignty* means that He owns the heavens and Earth—including you—and that you work in His Kingdom. It also implies: Do not imagine that you own yourself, for you cannot administer your own affairs. You cannot maintain your spirit and body by meeting their needs and securing them against calamity. You cannot avoid exhaustion and aging, because you are subject to time and other erosive factors. Therefore, do not suffer pain and torment without reason. Somebody All-Powerful and All-Compassionate owns everything. Rely on His Power and do not accuse His Compassion. Renounce grief and anxiety and accept relief. Be rid of your troubles and find serenity.

This phrase also means: This world that you love, to which you are connected and which you see in disorder and cannot put right, belongs to an All-Powerful and Compassionate One. So return it to its Owner and leave it to Him. Mind your own duty and do not interfere with His acts. Do not be troubled by what you cannot overcome. Be at ease, for its Owner controls it completely and administers it as He wills. He is All-Wise and All-Compassionate, and acts for a wise purpose. So whenever you are afraid, say like Ibrahim Haqqi: “Let’s see what the Master does—whatever He does is always best—and observe His acts with complete trust.”

FIFTH PHRASE: *To Him belongs all the praise* means that only God deserves praise and acclaim, that everything is indebted only to Him. All bounties are His, for they come from His infinite and inexhaustible treasury.

This phrase implies: The bounties (you now enjoy) will never cease, for His Mercy's treasury is inexhaustible. Your (current) enjoyment will never cease, for every enjoyment you are granted is the fruit of infinite Mercy. And the tree of that Mercy cannot die, for each exhausted fruit is replaced with a new one. Furthermore, offering thanks and praise for what you currently enjoy increases it a hundredfold, since every enjoyment is, in essence, a favor from the Divine Mercy and therefore 100 times more enjoyable than the enjoyment by itself. If a glorious king gives you an apple, your pleasure at such a royal favor will be superior to the material pleasure of 100 or even 1,000 apples.

Similarly, this phrase opens the door of a spiritual enjoyment 1,000 times sweeter, since it makes you consider the bestowal of bounty, which leads you to recognize the Bestower and reflect on His merciful favors that pour out continually.

SIXTH PHRASE: *He alone gives life* states that only He gives and sustains life and provides all its necessities, and that life's sublime aims and important results are related to Him.

This phrase calls out: Do not bother to shoulder life's heavy responsibilities, or feel unease because the world is transient, or let life's insignificant worldly fruits make you regret that you came to this world. Rather, the "life mechanism" of your being is like a vessel which belongs to the Ever-Living and Ever-Self-Subsistent One, Who fulfills all life's needs and expenditures. Further, life's innumerable aims direct it to many important results, nearly all of which are related to Him. You are just a helmsman on that ship, so perform your duty properly. Receive your wages and be content with the resulting enjoyment. Ponder that ship's preciousness and its valuable benefits, and consider the magnitude of its Owner's generosity and compassion. Rejoice and give thanks, for performing your duty righteously will cause your life's results to be recorded, in one respect, as good deeds securing your immortal life in eternity.

SEVENTH PHRASE: ...*and causes to die* means that He discharges you from life's duty, changes your abode from this transient world to an eternal one, and releases you from the burden of service.

This phrase announces: Good news! Death is not annihilation or going to non-existence, not an eternal separation or a chance event without an author. Rather the All-Wise and All-Compassionate Author is discharging you from service, changing your abode, and sending you to the everlasting happiness that is your true home. Death is the door to union with the Intermediate World, where you will meet with 99 percent of your friends.

EIGHTH PHRASE: *He is ever-living and dies not* means that the Undying Object of Worship and the Everlasting Beloved, One Whose Beauty, Perfection, and Benevolence are wholly superior to their counterparts in this world and that arouse the love of all creatures, has an eternal life. One manifestation of His Beauty replaces all other beloveds. His eternal life is free of any trace of cessation or ephemerality, and has no flaw or defect.

This phrase proclaims to all conscious beings, whether human or jinn, and to all lovers: The Eternal Beloved will heal the wounds caused by separation from your loved ones. Since He exists and is undying, do not worry about those others. You loved them because of their beauty and goodness, grace and perfection. But these are only dim, shadow-like manifestations of the Everlasting Beloved's Eternal Beauty, which has passed through many veils. So do not grieve when they disappear, for they are only mirrors. When the mirrors are changed, that Beauty's reflection is renewed and becomes more radiant. When you find Him, you find everything.

NINTH PHRASE: *In His hand is all good* means that only He possesses all good and guides you to do good. Also, He records on your behalf any good and righteous deed that you do.

This phrase announces: O helpless people and jinn, do not cry out when you die: "Alas, everything we owned is destroyed and our efforts have come to naught. We have left that wide, beautiful world and entered this narrow grave!" Everything is preserved, for all your deeds and services were recorded. The One of Majesty, in Whose Hand is all good and Who is able to do whatever is good, summons you to reward your service. He will keep you underground temporarily and then bring you to His Presence. How fortunate you are that you completed your duty and service, for your labor is over and you are on the way to ease and mercy. Having toiled, you now receive your wages.

The All-Powerful One of Majesty, Who preserves seeds and grains as records of last spring's activities and services and then unfolds and publish-

es them the following spring in the most dazzling, abundant, and benevolent manner, also preserves the results of your deeds. Thus He will reward your service most abundantly.

TENTH PHRASE: *He is powerful over everything* means that He is One and Unique and has power over everything. As everything is therefore easy for Him, creating spring is as easy as creating a flower, and creating Paradise is as easy as creating spring. The countless creatures He continually brings into existence every instant bear witness with innumerable tongues to His limitless Power.

This phrase implies: O people, your service and worship are not lost. A world of reward, an abode of bliss, has been prepared for you. An everlasting Paradise awaits your arrival from the transitory world. Have belief and confidence in the Majestic Creator's promise, the One you know and worship, for He never breaks His promise. His Power contains no defect, and impotence does not interfere in His works. As He creates your small garden, He also can create Paradise for you. In fact, as He created it and promised it to you, He shall admit you to it.

Every year we watch Him speedily revive Earth with perfect order and ease despite countless animal and plant species and groups. Such an All-Powerful One of Majesty fulfills His promise. Furthermore, since He annually creates samples of Paradise, which He has promised through all His revealed Books; since all His acts and executions are performed with truth and seriousness; since the perfection of all His works point to and testify to His infinite Perfection, which contains no flaw or defect; and since breaking a promise, lying, falsehood, and deception are the ugliest of qualities, we can rest assured that the All-Powerful One of Majesty, the All-Wise One of Perfection, the All-Compassionate One of Grace will fulfill His promise. He will open the gate to eternal happiness and admit you, O people of belief, into Paradise, the original home of your forefather Adam (and foremother Eve).

ELEVENTH PHRASE: *And unto Him is the homecoming* means that all people are sent to this world of trial and examination for specific purposes. After fulfilling these, they return to the Presence of the All-Munificent Master, Majestic Creator, Who sent them in the first place. Leaving this transient realm, they are delivered from the turbulence of cause-and-effect cycles and from the obscure veils of means and devices. After that, they will be honored in the eternal abode in their Compassionate Lord's Presence and meet

with Him, without any veil, in His Everlasting Kingdom. Everyone will discover that their creator is the Worshipped One, Lord, Master, and Owner. Thus this phrase implies the following news, much happier than all the rest:

O people, do you know where you are going, where you are being driven? You are going to the sphere of Mercy, to the peaceful Presence of the All-Beautiful One of Majesty. A happy life of 1,000 years in this world cannot be compared to an hour of life in Paradise, and 1,000 years of life in Paradise cannot be compared to an hour's vision of His Countenance of utmost beauty. All the loveliness and beauty seen in this world's creatures, including the loved ones that so fascinate and obsess you, are only shadows of one manifestation of His Beauty and the loveliness of His Names. Paradise and its charms are merely manifestations of His Mercy; all longing, love, and attraction are merely flashes from His Love's light. You are going into the Presence of the One Eternally Worshipped and Everlastingly Beloved, and are invited to Paradise, His eternal feasting place. So enter the grave with a smile.

This phrase also announces: O people, do not worry or think that you are going to extinction, non-existence, nothingness, darkness, oblivion, decay, and dissolution. In fact, you are going to permanence, eternal existence, and the world of His Light. You are returning to your true Owner, to the Eternal Sovereign's Seat. You will rest in the sphere of unity and not drown in multiplicity. You are bound for union and not separation.

Second station

(This station is a brief proof of Divine Unity at the level of God's Greatest Name.)

FIRST PHRASE: *There is no god but God.* This affirms God's Oneness in His Divinity and His being the Sole Object of Worship. The following is a very strong proof of the Divine Unity at this level.

The universe, and especially Earth's surface, display a most orderly activity. We observe a most wise creativity and a most systematic unfolding, for everything is given the most proper shape and form. We also witness a most affectionate, generous, and merciful provision and bountifulness. Such factors display the necessary Existence and Oneness of an Active, Creative, Opening, Shaping, and Bestowing One of Majesty.

The continual decay and renewal of all things that exist show that they manifest an All-Powerful Maker's sacred Names and reflect Its lights;

are works of that Maker's creative activity, and inscriptions of the Pen of His Destiny and Power; and are mirrors reflecting His Perfection's grace.

Just as the universe's Owner proves this greatest truth and most exalted degree of His Oneness' manifestation through all the Scriptures and holy Pages He revealed, all people of truth and perfection prove this same degree through their investigations and spiritual discoveries. Creation also points to this by displaying miracles of artistry, wonders of power, and treasures of wealth despite its helplessness and poverty. Those who deny that Single One of Unity must accept innumerable deities or, like the Sophists, deny both their own existence and that of the universe.³³⁰

SECOND PHRASE: (*He is*) One states God's Oneness at the level of His Unity's explicit manifestation. The following proves this level decisively. When we gaze upon the universe, the first thing we notice is the perfect order and sensitive balance prevalent throughout it. Everything exists within a precise order and a delicate balance and measure. Looking closer, we notice a continuous ordering and balancing. Someone continually revitalizes this order with perfect regularity and precise measurements. Everything is, as it were, a model to be dressed in countless well-ordered and balanced forms.

Studying it even closer, we notice a wisdom and justice behind that ordering and balancing. Every event has a purpose, and each one provides a benefit. A still-closer look indicates the existence of a Power behind the wholly wise activity in all that we see, as well as a comprehensive Knowledge encompassing everything with all its aspects and functions. Taken togeth-

³³⁰ Particularly in the eyes of Plato, anyone who looks for the truth in phenomena alone, whether he interprets it subjectively or relativistically, cannot hope to find it there; and his persistence in turning away from the right direction virtually amounts to a rejection of philosophy and of the search for truth. Many a subsequent thinker for whom metaphysics, or the investigation of the deepest nature of reality, was the crowning achievement of philosophy has felt with Plato that the Sophists were so antimetaphysical that they have no claim to rank as philosophers. But in a period when, for many philosophers, metaphysics is no longer the most important part of philosophy and is even for some no part at all, there is growing appreciation of a number of problems and doctrines recurring in the discussions of the Sophists in the 5th and 4th centuries BC. In the 18th and early 19th centuries the Sophists were considered charlatans. Their intellectual honesty was impugned, and their doctrines were blamed for weakening the moral fibre of Greece. The charge was based on two contentions, both correct: first, that many of the Sophists attacked the traditionally accepted moral code; and second, that they explored and even commended alternative approaches to morality that would condone or allow behavior of a kind inadmissible under the stricter traditional code. (Ed.)

er, these reveal that an All-Powerful and All-Knowing One operates behind veils of order and balance, One Who orders everything according to a most sensitive balance and for a universal purpose and justice.

When we analyze the beginning and end of all things, especially of living creatures, we observe that their seeds appear to contain all of those creatures' parts and structures. Their fruits hold the creatures' meanings, as well as their recorded life-histories, in a filtered and concentrated form. The seeds might even be said to be coded collections of the principles according to which they are created; their fruits an index of the commands of their creation and growth.

When we look into the outer and inner faces of living creatures, we easily see an extremely wise Power's free control and an effective Will's fashioning and ordering. The Power creates, and the Will designs and fashions. All of them display, on account of their beginning, a Knowledge's instructions; on account of their end, a Maker's plan and declaration; on account of their outer forms, an artistic, well-made garment that the One Who does whatever He wills tells them to wear; and, on account of their inner forms, an All-Powerful One's well-ordered machinery.

Given this, no time, place, or thing is beyond the grasp of the One Majestic Maker's Power. The Power of an All-Powerful Possessor of Will organizes and directs all things and their functions. The ordering and grace of One All-Merciful and All-Compassionate makes them beautiful, and the One All-Affectionate and All-Bounteous embellishes them with ornaments. Those who are alert can see the order and balance, and the clearly visible acts of ordering and balancing, all of which demonstrate, together with His absolute Unity, One Who is Single, Unique, Sole, All-Powerful, Possessing of Will, All-Knowing, and All-Wise.

Everything contains an aspect of unity, and unity points to One. For example, the world is illuminated by one lamp (the sun), and so the world's Owner is One. All of Earth's living creatures are served with air, fire, and water, each of which is one and simple (not compound). That being so, the One Who employs and subjugates them to us is also One.

THIRD PHRASE: *He has no partner.* Since this is proven in the Twenty-second Word's First Station, we refer readers to it.³³¹

³³¹ Said Nursi, *The Words*.

FOURTH PHRASE: *His is the Sovereignty* means that He owns everything—from Earth to God's Throne, the ground to the sky, the minutest particles to all heavenly bodies, as well as everything within both past and future eternity and within this world and the Hereafter.³³² He has the highest and most comprehensive degree of ownership, and the greatest manifestation of Divine Unity. A very strong proof for these truths once occurred to me in Arabic. For the sake of that pleasant memory, I expound upon those phrases below:

His is the Sovereignty because the macrocosm is like the microcosm both are works of His Power and missives of His Destiny. • He invented the macrocosm, making it a place of prostration and worship, and created the microcosm, causing it to prostrate. • He built the former and made it His property, and invented the latter, making it a servant. • His art in the former was manifested as a book, and His fashioning and “coloring” in the latter exhibited itself through speech. • His Power in the former reveals His Majesty, and His Mercy in the latter organizes His bounties. • His Majesty in the former bears witness to His Unity, and His bounty in the latter proclaims that He is One and Unique. • His stamp on the former is on all things having totality, and His seal on the latter is on each particular body and limb.

FIRST SECTION: As both the macrocosm (the universe) and the microcosm (humanity) are His Power's works and His Destiny's missives, they both display the proofs of His Oneness written with the Pen of Divine Power and Destiny.

Humanity displays, albeit on a small scale, the same well-ordered art seen in the universe. Just as the universe's art points to the Single Maker, humanity's microscopic art testifies to that Maker and demonstrates His Oneness. Just as humanity is a meaningful missive of the Lord, a well-composed ode of His Destiny, the universe is another well-composed ode written by the same Pen of Destiny but on a vast scale. Given this, how could anything or anyone other than the Single One of Unity place His stamp on

³³² Past eternity (*azal*) is not just the starting-point of time and therefore essential for the existence of things. In reality, it is like a mirror reflecting all past, present, and future time. People tend to imagine a limit for past time, which extends through a chain of things, and call it past eternity. But this is incorrect, as the following example shows: Imagine yourself holding a mirror that reflects the past on the right and the future on the left. The mirror can reflect only one direction at a time, for to show both simultaneously you would have to rise high above your original position and reach a point where both right and left unite, thereby making it impossible to call anything first or last, beginning or end.

people's faces, thereby giving them the same structure and appearance but making each one unique, or set His seal of Unity on the universe, all of whose creatures work with each other so closely?

SECOND SECTION: He invented the macrocosm and made it a place of prostration and worship. The All-Wise Maker created the macrocosm in a novel and wonderful form, and inscribed His Grandeur's signs upon it to make it a huge mosque. Within it, He created men and women as intellectual beings to read those signs, and with a disposition to bow before Him in worship and prostrate in wonder at His miraculous art and wonderful, origina-tive Power. Given this, how can humanity worship something other than that Single Maker of Unity?

THIRD SECTION: He created the microcosm, causing it to prostrate. He owns the former and makes the latter His servant. The Majestic Master of Sovereignty made the macrocosm, especially Earth, in the form of count-less concentric spheres, each one being an arable field in which He sows, reaps, and harvests crops throughout eternity. He unceasingly administers His property and causes it to work. He made the world of particles or atoms (the largest sphere) a field in which He sows and harvests the universe's crops with His Power and Wisdom, and then dispatches them to the invisible world, from the sphere of Power to the sphere of Knowledge. Earth (a medi-um sphere) is another place of cultivation in which He plants species every season and then reaps and harvests them. He sends its immaterial crops (results of every thing's life) to the immaterial world of the Unseen.

He constantly fills each garden (a smaller sphere) with Power and empties it with Wisdom. He causes all animate creatures (an even smaller sphere) to yield crops far greater than themselves. In short, that Majestic Master of Sovereignty makes all things as models and dresses them in ever-different ways.

Using His art's weavings, He embellishes them with ever-new inscrip-tions to manifest His Names and His Power's miracles. Everything is a page on which He inscribes in countless ways His meaningful missives, displays His Wisdom's signs, and has conscious beings to read them. Having made the macrocosm a cultivated property, He created and endowed humanity with structures and organs, senses and emotions, and especially with a soul. He then implanted such desires, appetites, drives, and demands that each person is in infinite need of the whole of that vast property.

Given this, who or what thing or being could have free control over that property and be lord of its servants other than that Majestic Master of Sovereignty, Who made everything a cultivated property; Who appointed humanity (despite its physical insignificance) as a superintendent, inspector, tiller, merchant, herald, and worshipper in that vast property; and Who took men and women as His honored guests and beloved addressees?

FOURTH SECTION: His art in the former was manifested as a book, and His fashioning and “coloring” in the latter exhibited itself through speech. The Majestic Maker manifests His meaningful art in the macrocosm as a book, thus making the universe intelligible. As a result, people acquire all true scientific knowledge from it and write all scientific treatises according to it. This universal book of wisdom, based on absolute truth, is proclaimed in the form of the Qur'an, a copy of that vast manifest book.

Just as His perfect art is manifested as above, His coloring and His Wisdom's inscriptions in humanity open the flower of speech. In other words, His art is so meaningful, delicate, and beautiful that it causes the components of that animate being to speak.

That Divine art so colored humanity (the “fairest of forms”), that an immaterial, incorporeal, and yet organic thing—the flower of speech—opens within each person's material, corporeal, and solid head. Further, that Divine art equipped the power of speech and expression with the developed tools and elaborate abilities and faculties needed for it to evolve into the Eternal Sovereign's addressee. Thus the Divine coloring in humanity's essential nature opened the flower of Divine speech. Who or what else, other than the Single One of Unity, can do such a miraculous thing?

FIFTH SECTION: His Power in the former reveals His Majesty; His Mercy in the latter organizes His bounties. The Maker's Power, manifesting Itself through grandeur and majesty, creates the universe as a magnificent palace adorned and illuminated with the sun (its electric light), the moon (its lamp), and stars (candles). He makes Earth a laden table, an arable field and garden, and each mountain a storehouse, a peg, a fortress. He provides all things on a vast scale and in the form of that palace's necessities, thereby demonstrating His Lordship's majesty in a most dazzling manner.

Similarly, He manifests His Mercy in the form of graciousness by bestowing His bounties on every living creature. As He sustains them through His Bountifulness, He adorns them with manifestations of His Kindness and

Munificence. And so He causes huge bodies like the sun to proclaim His Majesty through His Names the All-Gracious, All-Great, reciting: “O Majestic One, O Great One, O Mighty One,” while tiny animate creatures like flies and fish proclaim His Mercy, reciting: “O Gracious One, O Compassionate One, O Munificent One.” Who or what else, other than the Gracious One of Majesty, the Majestic One of Grace, can interfere in this macrocosm’s creation?

SIXTH SECTION: His Majesty in the former bears witness to His Unity; His bounty in the latter proclaims that He is One and Unique. Just as His Lordship’s Majesty manifested throughout the universe proves and demonstrates God’s Unity manifested with all His Names, His Lordship’s Bounty, which dispatches every living creature’s regular provision, proves and demonstrates His Oneness or Uniqueness manifested with some of His Names on parts or particulars.

God is *Wahid*: all creatures belong to, look to, and are created by One God. God is *Ahad*: most of the Creator’s Names are manifested in every individual thing.³³³ For example, sunlight’s reflection on Earth may be seen as analogous to Unity (*Wahidiya*), whereas the sun manifesting itself in each transparent object and water drop simultaneously (by its light, heat, and the seven colors within its light) may offer an analogy to Oneness (*Ahadiya*). In the same way, the manifestation of most Divine Names in each thing, especially in each living creature and above all in each person, points to Oneness.

Thus this section indicates that the Lordship’s Majesty, which controls the universe, makes that huge sun a servant, a lamp, and a furnace for Earth’s living creatures; the mighty Earth a cradle, mansion, and place of trade; fire as a cook and friend; clouds as water filters and a means of nourishment; mountains as storehouses and treasures; air as a fan for living creatures, all of which breathe; and water as a nurse to newcomers to life, a distributor of sweet drink supplying animate beings with the moisture necessary for existence. This Divine Lordship clearly demonstrates Divine Unity.

³³³ It is very difficult to render God’s two kinds of manifestations, namely *Wahidiya* and *Ahadiya*, in another language. *Wahidiya*, usually translated in this book as Unity, means God’s overall manifestation throughout the universe or on wholes with almost all of His Names. *Ahadiya*, usually translated as Oneness and/or Uniqueness, means God’s particular manifestation of one or a few of His Names on particular things or on parts. This kind of manifestation gives each thing or being its own nature and identity, and causes distinction among creatures. (Tr.)

Who but the One Creator can make the sun serve Earth's inhabitants? Who but the Single One of Unity can arrange the air and use it as a swift servant with many Earth-related duties? Who but the Single One of Unity can make fire a cook, and cause a tiny flame to consume thousands of tons of things? Every thing, element, and heavenly body points to the All-Majestic One by manifesting Its Lordship's Majesty.

Just as Unity is apparent on the horizon of Grace and Majesty, Bounty and Benevolence proclaim Divine Oneness on the horizon of Grace and Mercy. Each living creature, especially men and women, are among the highest works of the all-embracing Divine artistry, and contain developed structures and organs that recognize and appreciate, desire and accept, innumerably different bounties. In particular, humanity absorbs the reflections of all Divine Names manifested in the universe. Like a focal point, all people display most of God's Beautiful Names and proclaim His Oneness together through the mirror of their essential nature.

SEVENTH SECTION: His stamp on the former is on all things having totality; His seal on the latter is on each particular body and limb. Just as the Majestic Maker's greatest stamp is on the macrocosm as a whole, His stamp of Oneness is on each of its parts and species. Each person's (the microcosm) face and body demonstrates that God is One, so does each limb. In short, the All-Powerful One of Majesty places on all things a stamp of Oneness bearing witness to Him, and on each a seal of Unity pointing to Him.

FIFTH PHRASE: *To Him belongs all praise.* Since the perfections observed in all creatures (occasions of giving praise and paying tribute) are His, all praise belongs to Him. All odes and acclaims, regardless of origin and time, are addressed to Him, for praise is caused by bounty and beneficence, perfection and grace, and because everything leading to praise belongs to Him. Indeed, the Qur'an points out that whatever a creature does or is seen to do is, in reality, its worship, glorification, prostration, supplication, and praise—all of which rise continuously to the Divine Court. The following comparison shows this truth affirming God's Unity.

We see the universe as a huge enclosed park, its roof gilded with lofty stars and its ground inhabited by ornamented creatures. In this form, we see its well-ordered, luminous heavenly bodies and purposeful and ornamented earthly creatures pronounce, simultaneously and in their particular tongues:

"We are miracles of an All-Powerful One of Majesty's Power. We bear witness to the Unity of an All-Wise Creator, an All-Powerful Maker."

Viewing Earth as a garden containing countless varieties of multicolored and beautifully ordered flowering plants and through which innumerable animal species are scattered, we see them proclaim, through their well-ordered structures and well-proportioned forms: "Each of us is a miracle, a wonder of art created by a Single All-Wise Maker, a herald and witness to His Unity."

Looking at the upper parts of that garden's trees, we see knowingly, wisely, generously, and beautifully made fruits and blossoms. They proclaim with one tongue: "We are miraculous gifts and wondrous bounties of an All-Merciful One of Grace and an All-Compassionate One of Perfection."

Thus the park's heavenly bodies and beings, the garden's plants and bushes, and its trees' and vegetation's blossoms and fruits testify and proclaim: "Our Creator and Fashioner, Who has granted us such gifts, controls all things. Nothing is difficult for Him or beyond His Power, in relation to which everything is equal and has the same value. The largest is as easy as the smallest in relation to His Power; and the small is as full of artistry as the large. In fact, the artistry in the smaller is greater than in the larger."

All past events, which are wonders of His Power, bear witness that the Absolutely Powerful One brings into effect and existence all wonders of the future's contingencies. The One Who brought about yesterday will bring about tomorrow, the All-Powerful Being Who created the past will create the future, and the All-Wise Maker Who made this world will make the Hereafter. So, just as the All-Powerful One of Majesty is the true object of worship, He also is the only one worthy of such praise. As He is the exclusively Worshipped One, all praise and glory belong to Him.

Would the All-Wise Maker Who created the heavens and Earth leave people to themselves and without purpose, even though they are the Tree of Creation's most significant and perfect fruit? Would He abandon them to random cause and effect, thereby reducing His profound Wisdom to futility? Would a wise and knowledgeable being plant and care for a tree in order to prepare it for important purposes, only to leave its fruits to rot or for thieves to sack? Of course not, for the whole point is to produce fruit.

Humanity is the universe's conscious being, most perfect fruit, result, and aim. Given this, why would the universe's All-Wise Maker give human-

ity's fruits—praise and worship, thanks and love—to others? Doing so would nullify Divine Wisdom and the purpose for creating humanity, stain His Power with impotence, and convert His All-Encompassing Knowledge into ignorance.

Since conscious beings are the pivot of the Divine aims behind creating the universe, their thanks and worship given for the bounties they receive can be directed only to the Maker. One who cannot create spring or all fruits (which bear the same stamp) cannot create an apple, give it to someone as a bounty and grace, and then receive that person's thanks (sharing in the praise due to the only One Who deserves it).

Given this, the universe's Creator and Majestic Provider, Who sustains all creatures and makes Himself loved by conscious beings through His art's innumerable miracles, will not abandon their thanks and worship, praise and love, recognition and gratitude to nature and causes. Doing so would deny His Absolute Wisdom and nullify His Lordship's Sovereignty. All thanks and praise belong to Him alone, for the universe's reality unceasingly proclaims with the tongue of truth: "Every being, from past eternity to future eternity, praises Him."

SIXTH PHRASE: *He alone gives life* means that as only He can give life, only He can create anything, for the universe's spirit, light, essence, result, and cream is life. Thus the giver of life must be the universe's Creator and the One Who is Himself Ever-Living and Self-Subsistent. The comparison below proves God's Unity at this level of His manifestation.

We see the magnificent and innumerable armies of living creatures with their tents pitched on Earth's surface. Out of these armies, the Ever-Living, Self-Subsistent One sends a new and freshly mobilized army every spring from the Unseen world. This army comprises countless unique vegetable and animal nations. Although each one's uniform, provisions, instructions, discharge, and period of service differ, a single Commander-in-Chief meets all their needs through His infinite Power and Wisdom, boundless Knowledge and Will, infinite Mercy and inexhaustible treasures. There is no forgetting, confusion, or delay—only perfect orderliness and balance. He trains and demobilizes each according to its specific service and character.

Only the One with all-encompassing knowledge can know all particulars about that army. Only the One with absolute power can administer it and its necessities. Who or what else could interfere and share in this annu-

al mobilization displaying resurrection and precise administration, in this training and sustaining?

Our [inherent] incapacity allows us only to equip a battalion in a single fashion, even if it consists of ten different tribes. But the Ever-Living, Self-Subsistent One easily provides each of His magnificent army's countless tribes with the equipment necessary for their life and does so in a most wise and exact order. He causes that mighty army to pronounce with one tongue: "He is the One Who brings to life," and causes that vast congregation in the mosque of the universe to recite:

God! There is no god but He—the Living, Self-Subsistent, Eternal. No slumber or sleep seizes Him. He owns what is in the heavens and on Earth. Who can intercede with Him unless He permits it? He knows what is before and behind them, while they encompass of His knowledge only that which He wills. His Throne embraces the heavens and Earth, and it does not tire Him to uphold them both. He is the Most High, the Supreme. (2:255)

SEVENTH PHRASE: *He causes to die.* He gives and withdraws life. Death is not a destruction or extinction to be attributed to nature and causes. Rather, just as a seed outwardly dies and rots while inwardly growing into a new and more elaborate living plant, death is the beginning of eternal life. Thus the Absolutely Powerful One Who creates death grants and administers life. We point to a mighty proof of this manifestation of Divine Unity below.

Divine Will causes all existence to move in a continuous flow. For example, the universe moves incessantly by its Lord's Command. All creatures, by God's leave, flow unceasingly in the stream of time. Sent from the Unseen World, they are dressed in external (material) existence here and then orderly poured into the other world. By the Lord's Command, they continually come from the future, pause at the present, and then are poured into the past.

This ordered flow is carried out with the wisest mercy and benevolence. The consistent movement is done by a most knowledgeable wisdom and orderliness. The flow's current is managed with solicitude and equilibrium. Everything is done for definite purposes, benefits, and aims. In other words, an All-Powerful One of Majesty, an All-Wise One of Perfection continually gives life to and employs the families of beings, from their individual members to the worlds they form, and then discharges them for a purpose. He makes

them die, sends them to the other world, and transfers them from the sphere of Power to the sphere of Knowledge.

One who cannot administer this universe and time, give life to diverse creatures and call them to death as single individuals, create spring as easily as a flower and plant it and then pluck it through death, cannot claim to create death and make living things die. A most insignificant living thing's life and death must occur according to the Law of an All-Majestic Being in Whose Hand are all truths of life and varieties of death, and by His permission, Command, Power, and Knowledge.

EIGHTH PHRASE: *He is ever-living and dies not.* His life is perpetual and eternal, without beginning or end. Death and non-existence are meaningless to Him, because life originates in His Essence and is indispensable to it. He Who has no beginning has no end. He Who is Necessarily Existent is eternally enduring. How could non-existence befall a Life that renders all of existence its shadow? Non-existence and perishing cannot touch a Life that requires and is required by necessary existence. Cessation and extinction cannot affect a Life through Whose manifestation all lives come into being, on which the universe's permanent truths depend, and through which they subsist.

One of Life's manifestations gives uniformity to that which is subject to extinction and decrease in this world of multiplicity. Saving them from disintegration, it gives them a sort of permanence. In other words, life [in the universe, which is a manifestation of the Eternal Life,] gives a sort of unity to multiplicity and a form of permanence to existent forms [either through a species' life, seed, offspring or in other beings' memories.] As a result, ephemerality and transience have nothing to do with this Necessary Life, one manifestation of which causes innumerable instances of life.

The universe's transience and decrease bear witness to this truth. Just as existents bear witness and point to the Ever-Living and Necessarily Existent One's Life through their own existence and lives, they testify and point to that Life's permanence and eternity through their decay and death.³³⁴ The

³³⁴ While proving God's Existence, Unity, and absolute Sovereignty over the universe to Nimrod, Prophet Abraham argues that God gives life and causes death, and then mentions that He causes the sun to rise in the east and set in the west (2:258). This transition from a particular to a universal meaning of giving life and death demonstrates that proof's most illuminating and widest sphere. It is not, as some interpreters of the Qur'an assert, a transition from an implicit to an explicit proof.

appearance of new beings after their predecessor's deaths shows that an Ever-Living One unceasingly renews life's manifestation. Bubbles on a flowing river come in great numbers, display the sparkle of the one and same sun, and disappear, while the new, succeeding ones display the images of the sun. This points to a high and enduring sun's permanence. In the same way, the alternation of life and death in those constantly moving existents bears witness to an Ever-Living, Everlasting's permanence.

These beings are mirrors. As darkness is the mirror to light and the more intense the darkness the more brilliantly it displays the light, so do these beings act as mirrors to God's Names and Attributes through the contrast of opposites. For example, just as beings act as mirrors to the Maker's Power through their impotence and to His Riches through their poverty, they act as mirrors to His Permanence through their transience. In particular, soil and trees clearly reflect the Power and Mercy of One Absolutely Powerful and Absolutely Wealthy through their poverty during winter and their dazzling pomp and riches during spring. It is as if all beings supplicate in the language of their being, like Uways al-Qarani:³³⁵

Our God! You are our Lord because we see that we are mere servants. We cannot train ourselves, so train us. You are the Creator, because we are created and being made. You are the Provider, because we need provision and cannot provide for ourselves. Thus You make and provide for us. You are the true Owner, because we are owned. We do not have total control over ourselves, so You are the Owner.

You are the Mighty, having dignity and grandeur. Looking at ourselves, we see a mightiness manifested through us despite our poverty and helplessness. So we are mirrors to Your Sublimity and Might. You are the Absolutely Wealthy, and we are poor but granted riches that we cannot obtain by ourselves. Thus You are the Wealthy, the Giver.

You are Ever-Living, Everlasting, because we are born and die and thereby see the manifestation of a perpetual Giver of Life. You are Everlasting, because we see Your continuation and permanence in our demise and transience. You answer us and grant us gifts because

³³⁵ Uways al-Qarani is generally regarded as the greatest Tabi'un [member of the first post-Companion generation]. Although old enough to have seen the Prophet, he had no opportunity to do so. One day while sitting with his Companions, the Messenger advised them: "If you see Uways al-Qarani, ask him to pray for you." Muslim, *Fada'il al-Sahaba*, 223-24. (Tr.)

we, all creatures, always call out and request, either through words or in the language of our ways of being. All our desires are satisfied, our aims achieved. Thus You answer our pleas.

Every creature is a mirror having the meaning of supplication and reflecting Divine Power and Perfection through its helplessness, poverty, and deficiency.

NINTH PHRASE: *In His Hand is all good* means that all good deeds are in His Book and all benevolence is in His Treasury. Given this, those who desire good must seek it from Him, and those who desire what is best must entreat Him. To demonstrate this truth, we present the following instance of Divine Knowledge:

The Maker Who creates and exerts authority in this universe, as observed through His acts, has an All-Encompassing Knowledge inherent to His Essence. Just as this All-Encompassing Knowledge is indispensable to that Being—as the sun cannot be thought of without its light—it is essential to all things because it envelopes their being. Just as objects on Earth's surface see the sun, nothing can be hidden from the light of that Knowledge, Which encompasses and penetrates all things.

If that solid sun, those unconscious X-rays, and whatever else which is a source of light, as well as helpless humanity, can see and penetrate whatever faces them, despite being contingent, defective, and accidental, how can anything be hidden from the light of that necessarily all-encompassing and essential Eternal Knowledge? Countless signs point to this truth, as seen below:

All wisdom witnessed in all beings points to that Knowledge, for He Who acts out of kindness and graciousness does so because He knows. All well-ordered creatures, each of which has a precise balance, a balanced and measured form, and a perfect order, point to that All-Encompassing Knowledge, for order requires knowledge. All graces and adornments show knowledge. The artist who works according to a strict measure and balance relies on a powerful knowledge. Each creature's precise proportions, its shape determined according to its purpose and benefits, and its fruitful conditions and compositions indicate that they are made according to the principles of Divine Decree and the compasses of Divine Destiny or Determination. They all demonstrate His All-Encompassing Knowledge.

Only One with an all-encompassing Knowledge can give each thing a unique yet well-ordered form appropriate to and relevant for its life and existence. Only One with an all-encompassing Knowledge can meet all living creatures' needs in a suitable way, at the appropriate time, and from unexpected places. Only the One Who knows each thing's needs can meet them.

As each creature will die, its ignorance of when this will occur shows that death depends on Destiny or a law of determination and displays an all-encompassing Knowledge. Although it does not appear so at first sight, everything—particularly plants—will die at an appointed time. These things' seeds and offspring are preserved to continue their duties or functions, to be the means of transformation into new lives. This also demonstrates an all-encompassing Knowledge.

Each being is gratified by Mercy, Which encompasses all beings, for the One Who feeds sentient creatures' offspring with milk and sustains Earth's vegetation with water and rain must know the needs of all infants and vegetation. This points to a comprehensive Knowledge. The care seen in making all creatures, as well as their artistic design and skillful adornment, displays an all-encompassing Knowledge, for only such Knowledge can choose an orderly, adorned, artistic, and purposeful state from countless possible states.

The perfect ease in creating and originating things points to perfect Knowledge, for ease and facility of achievement are directly proportional to the degree of knowledge and skill. The more one knows about something, the more easily one accomplishes it. We can see how all things, each a miracle of art, are created quickly and miraculously with astonishing ease and facility.

In addition, thousands of other true signs show that the One Who controls the universe has an all-encompassing Knowledge. He knows all things' qualities and functions, and then acts. Since the universe's Owner has such Knowledge, He sees us and our actions and rewards and punishes us accordingly. He deals—and will deal—with us according to the requirements of His Wisdom and Mercy. So be sensible! Think carefully of this Being Who knows and watches you. Realize these truths and pull yourself together.

A POSSIBLE OBJECTION: If you say that Knowledge alone is not sufficient, for Will is also necessary, I reply: All creatures bear witness to Divine All-Encompassing Knowledge, and point to the universal Will of the One with that Knowledge.

A universal Will is demonstrated in many ways: Each creature, especially sentient beings, hesitates among many possibilities and yet receives a most well-ordered and specific identity through one probability determined from many, and through a certain way leading to one result out of many fruitless ways. This well-ordered identity, measure, and form are given according to a most sensitive scale and subtle organization, and are cut from solid elements flowing randomly in endless possibilities and fruitless ways. This shows that they are the works of a universal Will, for choice happens only through designation, preference, purpose and will, specification, deliberate intention and desire. Specifying requires one who specifies, and preference requires one who prefers. Only the Will specifies and prefers.

For example, a person resembles a machine composed of hundreds of systems and components, although he or she is created from a drop of water. A bird and a tree, both of which have hundreds of parts, are created from a simple egg and a simple seed, respectively. Such things testify to Power and Knowledge and indicate their Maker's universal Will, with which He specifies each being's members, parts, and unique shape.

In short, just as the resemblance and correspondence between an animal's major bodily parts with respect to their basic aspects and results indicate their Maker's Oneness, their unique identities and faces prove that their Maker of Unity has Will and absolute freedom in His acts. He does only what He wills to do, acts independently of the universe, and has an absolute, universal Will. Thus each creature, or each function of each creature, testifies to Divine Knowledge and Will. Given this, those who deny Divine Destiny, who claim that Divine Knowledge does not comprehend all particulars or that the existence of some creatures is due to natural cause and effect, are seriously mistaken and deluded. Their denial is a lie of infinite dimensions. So, consider how mistaken and contrary to the truth it is to say "naturally" of any event, for all occur through Divine Will. Rather, say: "If God wills."

TENTH PHRASE: *He is powerful over everything.* As everything is easy for Him, He easily clothes everything with existence and creates everything by saying: "Be."

If a very skillful artist only has to stretch out a hand to make something and everything operate as he wills, we may express such speed and skill by saying that the artist controls that work to such a degree that it seems to come into existence by a single touch or command. *His command when He*

wills a thing, is only to say to it “Be” and it is (36:82) declares that the Power of the All-Powerful One of Majesty controls everything and operates with utmost ease. The following five points explain five of this comprehensive truth’s countless mysteries.

FIRST POINT: The greatest and the smallest thing are equal for Divine Power. Creating a species is as simple as creating an individual, creating Paradise is as easy as creating spring, and creating spring is as easy as creating a flower. This mystery has been explained in The Tenth Word and The Twenty-ninth Word, which prove that Divine Power creates stars, particles, and all individuals as easily as one individual.³³⁶

SECOND POINT: Animals and vegetation, which contain infinite multiplicity and liberality, display the highest degree of mastery and artistry, the greatest degree of distinction and differentiation within utmost profusion and intermingling, and the highest degree of artistry and beauty of creation with the greatest abundance and profusion. Furthermore, although their creation seems to require vast amounts of machinery and time, they are made with utmost ease and speed, as if suddenly and out of nothing. This seasonal activity proves that size and number do not affect Power’s ability to create.

THIRD POINT: The All-Powerful Maker’s Power creates the highest universal as easily as the smallest particular, and with the same artistic value, due to the assistance coming from Divine Unity, the facility originating in the unity of the center governing the universe, and the manifestation of Divine Uniqueness or Oneness.

The assistance coming from Divine Unity—God’s universal disposal through the overall manifestation of His Names: If one being owns and commands all things, such oneness enables him to concentrate the power of all things behind one thing and so manage all things as easily as one thing. Consider the following comparison:

A monarch, being the country’s sole authority, can mobilize the army’s moral strength behind every soldier. This enables a soldier to capture another king and command him in the monarch’s name. Being the sole sovereign, that monarch also can manage the army and officials as easily as he uses one soldier and administers one official. As administrative power belongs to him

³³⁶ Said Nursi, *The Words*. The Tenth Word deals with the Resurrection, while The Twenty-ninth Word explains the mystery of creation’s ease through luminosity, transparency, reciprocity, balance, orderliness, obedience, and abstraction. (Ed.)

alone, he can send everyone to aid one soldier, which allows each soldier to rely on all soldiers. But if his unique sovereignty and authority are nullified, each soldier would lose his limitless strength and become a weak, ordinary individual. And, administering them would cause as many difficulties as the number of soldiers.

Similarly, the Oneness of the universe's Maker allows Him to concentrate the manifestation of all His Names operating on all things together upon one thing, thereby creating it with infinite and valuable art. He causes all things to help, thereby strengthening other things when necessary. Through His Unity, He also creates, controls, and administers all things as if they were one thing. This Divine Unity ensures that the universe contains the highest degree of art and value within utmost abundance and variety.

The facility originating in the unity of the center: Everything becomes easy if things are managed from one center, by one hand and one law. For example, applying this to equipping an army, it becomes as easy to equip all soldiers as it is to equip one soldier. Otherwise, equipping one soldier is as difficult as equipping an army. Also, thousands of fruits easily grow on a tree that depends on one law and one root. But if only one fruit could be grown on each tree, it would be as hard to produce a fruit as it is to grow a tree. It also would require the presence of all elements necessary for the tree to live.

Thus, because the universe's Maker is Single and One, He acts through Unity. Given this, all things are as easy for Him as one thing, and He makes one thing as artistically valuable as all things. Furthermore, by creating a limitless profusion of valuable individuals, through the tongue of boundless abundance, He displays His absolute liberality and manifests His infinite generosity and creativity.

The manifestation of Divine Uniqueness or Oneness: As the Majestic Maker is not physical or corporeal, time and place cannot restrict Him; nor can space interfere with His encompassing all things at the same time and witnessing all events; and means and mass cannot veil His acts. Both He and His acts are free of fragmentation or division. His acts do not impede one another, and so He performs innumerable acts as if they were one act. Thus He makes an individual contain a world, just as He encapsulates a huge tree in its seed, and directs and controls creation as if it were one individual.

The sun's image is reflected in every burnished and shining object, for its luminosity makes it somewhat non-restrictable. Regardless of how many mirrors are held toward it, each one contains its complete, non-refracted

image, without one preventing the other. If it were possible for everything to directly receive the manifestations of the sun—its image, seven-colored light, and heat—the sun could demonstrate its effects in each and every thing in all of its magnitude, and enter many places simultaneously as easily as one place. Similarly—for God's is the highest similitude—the Majestic Maker of the universe has, due to His Uniqueness, such a manifestation through all of His Attributes (which are pure light) and Names (which are luminous) that He is ever-present and witnessing everywhere, although He is nowhere. He does every act at the same time, in all places, and without any difficulty or obstruction.

It is due to these three means, namely, the assistance coming from Divine Unity, the facility originating in the unity of the center, and the manifestation of Divine Uniqueness or Oneness, that if creating and administering all creatures is attributed to One Maker, then they become as easy to create and administer as one thing only. Also, a single thing becomes as valuable in art as all things together. This truth is demonstrated by each individual's innumerable subtleties of art in the midst of creatures' endless abundance. If creation is not directly attributed to a single Creator, then creating each creature is as hard as creating all creatures, and the value of all creatures falls to that of a single creature.

This is why the Sophists, the most advanced in using reason among the philosophers, felt compelled to “renounce their intellects” and deny everything’s existence. Realizing that the path of associating partners with God is infinitely harder to follow than that of the truth and affirming God’s Unity and, because they already rejected the latter path, they fell into denial.

FOURTH POINT: Creating Paradise is as easy as creating spring for the Power of the All-Powerful One Who administers the universe with readily observable acts. Likewise, a flower can be as delicate, beautiful, and valuable as a whole spring. This truth comes from three sources: the Creator’s necessary Existence and total detachment from creation, the complete otherness of His Essence and His unrestricted Being, and His not being bound by space and His indivisibility.

First source: The Creator’s necessary Existence and total detachment from creation cause infinite ease and facility. Consider the following allegory: Existence has varying degrees and levels, and so the worlds of existence are not the same. Thus a particle from one level deeply rooted in existence

can contain a mountain from a less substantial level. For example, the mustard-seed-sized faculty of memory in a head belonging to the manifest corporeal world can hold as much as a library in the World of Meanings. Through reflection, a huge city is encompassed by a fingernail-sized mirror belonging to the external world.

If that memory and mirror had consciousness and creative power, they could use the power of their minute existence in the external world to be endlessly operative and bring about endless transformations in the worlds of meaning and reflection. In other words, an existent's power is directly proportional to the firmness of its establishment in existence. If existence attains complete firmness and stability, and thus complete detachment from corporeality and is therefore unrestricted, even its partial manifestation can direct many worlds belonging to less substantial levels of existence.

The universe's Majestic Maker is Necessarily Existential. His Existence is indispensable to His Essence and is eternal, for His non-existence is inconceivable and the cessation of His Existence is impossible. As His Existence is the most firmly established, fundamental, strongest, and perfect level of existence, all other levels are like pale shadows. His Necessary Existence is so deeply rooted and real, and the existence of all other beings (which are contingent) is so pale and insubstantial, that such discerning researchers as Muhiy al-Din ibn al-'Arabi conclude that only He really exists. Thus they reduce other levels of existence to illusion or the imaginary.

Given this, the Necessarily Existential Being's Power, which is both indispensable and substantially related to His Essence, creates the accidental, weak, and relatively stable existence of contingent beings with infinite ease. To resurrect the dead for the Supreme Muster and then judge them is as easy for Him as returning a tree to life every spring and causing it to yield leaves, blossoms, and fruit.

Second source: The complete uniqueness of His Essence and His unrestricted Being makes everything easy for him, for the universe's Maker differs from the universe. As His Essence is unique, no obstacle or restraint impedes Him or constrains His acts. He has complete and free control over everything. If managing the universe and its events were attributed to the universe itself, the resulting difficulty and confusion would prevent any form of existence and destroy all order and harmony.

For example, could the stones of a fine, vaulted dome fashion and arrange themselves, or a battalion be commanded effectively by the soldiers themselves? Even if such things were possible, everything would be in chaos. If the stones' arrangement is attributed to an artisan, and the battalion's command to an officer, both the artistic arrangement and the command are easy, for while the stones and soldiers block each other, the artisan and officer can deal with them from all sides and give orders without obstacle.

Thus the Necessarily Existent Being's sacred Essence differs from the essence of contingent beings. Rather, all truths are rays from the Truth, one of that Essence's Beautiful Names. Since His sacred Essence is necessarily existent, completely detached from materiality, and totally unique, that All-Majestic Being's Eternal Power easily sustains and administers the universe as if it were springtime or a single tree. Also, creating the other world, Paradise, Hell, and the Resurrection are as easy as resurrecting a tree that died last autumn.

Third source: The All-Powerful Maker's transcendence of space allows Him to be omnipresent through His Power. Being indivisible, He has total control over everything through His Names. As a result, His acts cannot be hindered by existent beings, means, and masses, for they have no need to do so. If there were some such need, then, like electric wires, tree branches, and veins, things would make His control easier, conduct life, and make His acts more prompt and speedy, rather than restricting, obstructing, and impeding such events. In essence, everything obeys and submits to the Majestic All-Powerful One's Power.

In conclusion, the All-Powerful Maker creates everything in an appropriate form without trouble, swiftly and easily, and without any process. He creates universals as easily as particulars, and particulars as artistically as universals. The Creator of universals and of the heaven and Earth is the Creator of particulars and the animate individuals contained therein, for those tiny particulars are the universals' fruits, seeds, and miniature specimens.

As particulars are like seeds and tiny copies of universals, He Who creates particulars must be the Creator and Controller of the universal elements and the heavens and Earth. If this were not so, how could He, in accordance with His Wisdom's principles and His Knowledge's balances, make particulars encapsulate the contents, meanings, and samples of universal, all-encompassing entities?

As regards their wondrous art or the marvelous creativity they display, particulars are not inferior to universals. Flowers are not lower than stars, and seeds are not inferior to trees. Rather, the meaning of a tree inscribed in the seed by Divine Destiny is more wonderful than the actual, fully grown tree woven by Divine Power. Likewise, creating humanity is more wonderful than creating the universe. If a Qur'an of wisdom were inscribed on an atom in some ethereal substance's particles, its value would surpass a Qur'an of grandeur written in the heavens' stars. Moreover, many particulars are superior to universals with respect to their miraculous art.

FIFTH POINT: The infinite ease and utmost speed in creating beings gives this firm conviction to the people of guidance: In relation to the Power of the One Who creates beings, it is as easy to create paradises, springs, and gardens as it is to create spring, gardens, and flowers, respectively. Also, as: *Your creation and your upraising are as but a single soul* (31:28) states, resurrecting humanity is as easy as making one person die and then live again. As stated explicitly in: *It will have been only one cry, then behold, they are all arranged before Us* (36:53), resurrecting humanity for the Supreme Mustering is as easy as assembling a dispersed army with one trumpet blast.

Although this utmost speed and ease prove the Maker's perfect Power, they have led the misguided to attribute the creation of things to the things themselves. Seeing that some ordinary things come into existence very easily, they mistakenly assume that they are self-created. They take what proves an infinite Power's existence for proof of Its non-existence! Through this mistaken attribution of perfection (e.g., infinite power and all-encompassing knowledge) to each particle, for all perfections are essential attributes only of the universe's Maker, they open the door to boundless impossibility.

ELEVENTH PHRASE: *And unto Him is the homecoming.* Everything will return from the realm of transience to the Abode of Permanence and go to the Seat of the Everlasting One's Eternal Sovereignty. Everything will transfer from the world of multiple causes to the Sphere of the Majestic One of Unity's Power, [where His Power operates without the veil of cause and effect]. Thus your place of recourse is His Court, and your place of refuge is His Mercy.

This eleventh phrase contains many more truths. Among them, the truth concerned with eternal happiness and Paradise is explained so clearly in the Tenth and Twenty-ninth Words that no need remains for further

explanation. Those two Words convince the reader that, just as the sun that sets will rise again the following morning, life, this world's "immaterial sun," will rise to shine permanently on the morning of the Resurrection after it sets with the world's destruction. At that time, some jinn and human beings will be rewarded with eternal bliss, while the rest will be condemned to eternal torment.

Indeed, the universe's All-Wise Maker, Who has boundless All-Encompassing Knowledge, limitless universal Will and infinite All-Enveloping Power, the All-Compassionate Creator of human beings, promises in His Scriptures and decrees that believers will enjoy Paradise and eternal happiness. And so it will happen, for He does not break His promises, as doing so is a most ugly fault arising from either ignorance or incompetence. Since the One of Absolute Perfection cannot be sullied by any fault, or the Absolutely Powerful, the All-Knowing One by ignorance and impotence, breaking a promise is inconceivable.

Moreover, all Prophets, saints, scholars, and believers—above all the Prophet—continually request and entreat the All-Compassionate and Munificent One for His promised eternal bliss through His Beautiful Names. Also, His Mercy, Compassion, Justice, and Wisdom (His Names: the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate, the All-Just, and the All-Wise), as well as most of His other Beautiful Names (e.g., Lord and God) and Attributes (e.g., Lordship and Sovereignty), require the Hereafter and eternal happiness and testify to their reality. The Qur'an, His greatest Revelation, shows and teaches this truth, and Prophet Muhammad, His most beloved, taught it throughout his life and proved it through countless miracles.

O God, bestow blessings and peace and benedictions upon him, his Family and Companions, to the number of the breaths belonging to the people of Paradise in Paradise. Resurrect us and the publishers (and translators) of this treatise, together with our friends, our companion Said, and our parents and brothers and sisters, under his banner. Grant us his intercession through Your Mercy, and cause us to enter Paradise in the company of his Family and Companions, O Most Merciful of the Merciful. Amen. Amen.

Our Lord, do not take us to task if we forget or err. Our Lord, do not make our hearts swerve after You have guided us. Bestow on us the gift of Your Mercy, for You are the Bestower of gifts. My Lord, open my heart and ease my task. Loosen a knot from my tongue so that

people may understand my words. Our Lord, turn toward us in forgiveness, for You are the Acceptor of Repentance, the Compassionate. Glory be to You! We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Addendum to the tenth phrase

In His Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

Behold, it is only in (constant) remembrance of God that hearts are at rest. (13:28)

God gives a parable: A man who is shared by many masters, each pulling him to himself. (39:29)

QUESTION: You proclaim infinite ease in unity and endless difficulty in multiplicity and associating partners with God. Thus it can be said that the ease in unity makes the existence of something necessary, while the difficulty in multiplicity makes it almost impossible. However, the difficulties and impossibilities you cite seem to be present with unity.

For example, [with respect to the existence of the universe] you say that if particles were not under the One God's command, each particle would require an all-encompassing knowledge and absolute power, or would have to be able to command innumerable conceptual operations. But even if God controls all of them, do they not still have to have the same qualities to accomplish their infinitely orderly duties?

ANSWER: We put forward three brief allegories to reassure the soul and the mind about this truth, as follows:

FIRST ALLEGORY: In its own right, a tiny transparent and glistening speck cannot contain a light larger than its own dimensions and mass. However, if that speck is open to the sun's manifestation, it can comprehend that immense sun, its (seven-colored) light and heat, and so display a most comprehensive manifestation of it. On its own, a speck's functioning is limited by its dimensions. But if it connects to the sun by facing it and serving as a mirror, it can display examples of the sun's functioning to some degree.

Thus if each being's or particle's existence is attributed to nature, causes, or itself, each one must have the all-encompassing knowledge and absolute power or countless operative devices needed to perform its wonderful duties. But if existence is attributed to a Single One of Unity, each particle becomes His officer through the resulting connection. This enables it to manifest Him somehow and, along with being an object of His manifestation, depend on His Infinite Knowledge and Power. This relationship with the Creator's Power allows it to perform functions and duties far beyond its own power.

SECOND ALLEGORY: Imagine two people, one brave but self-dependent and the other patriotic and devoted to the country. When war breaks out, the first one wants to act independently of the state, and so carries the necessary equipment and ammunition on his back. Given his strength, he can engage only one enemy corporal in combat.

The second one, realizing his powerlessness, enlists in the army and becomes connected with the monarch. This connection enables the army to support him, and so he fights with the army's strength behind him. Encountering a enemy field marshal of the defeated army's king, he captures him in his own monarch's name. The first soldier must carry his equipment and sources of strength himself, and so can offer only an extremely insignificant service. The second soldier allows the army and the monarch to carry these. Just as though he were connecting his receiver through a tiny wire to the existing telecommunication network, this connection connects the second soldier to an infinite power.

If all creatures and particles are attributed and submitted directly to the Single One of Unity, they can use the resulting power and strength to achieve great feats. For example, an ant destroyed Pharaoh's palace, and a fly sent Nimrod to Hell.³³⁷ In addition, a microbe can send an unjust tyrant to his or her grave, a wheat-grain-sized seed can produce a huge pine tree, and an air particle can enter all flowers and fruits in an orderly fashion. Such ease arises from that submission and being an officer. If everything is left to itself and, associating partners with God, attributes each creature's existence and operation to independent causes or to itself, then each creature's functioning is restricted to its own body and consciousness.

³³⁷ This refers to the mosquito that entered through one of Nimrod's nostrils, thus causing the death of this tyrant who had cast Prophet Abraham into the fire. (Tr.)

THIRD ALLEGORY: Imagine two friends who want to use statistical data to write a geographical work on a country they have never visited. One friend forms an intimate connection with that country's government. Entering the national telecommunication center and connecting his receiver to the state lines by a cheap piece of wire, he connects his telephone, communicates with every place and receives information, and writes an accurate and well-researched book. The second friend [depending upon himself] would have to travel continuously for 50 years to see every place and obtain all the necessary information. Or, spending a great amount of money, he would have to set up his own comprehensive telegraph and telephone system.

If countless things and creatures are attributed to the Single One of Unity, each connection becomes an object through which the "Eternal Sun" manifests Himself. This enables it to be connected with His Wisdom's laws, His Knowledge's principles, and His Power's laws. Through Divine Strength and Power, it rises to the rank of displaying a certain manifestation of the Lord and acquires an all-seeing eye, an all-looking face, and (all-important) words that have weight in all matters. Severing this connection reduces it to its own mass, for the universe is an organism composed of interrelated parts, and means that it would have to have absolute divinity to perform the functions described above.

The way of unity and belief represents such infinite ease that the existence of things becomes necessary and inevitable, while that of associating partners with God has insurmountable difficulties. One being may arrange many things with great ease and in a particular way to obtain a certain result. However, this is beyond the ability of the things themselves. According to The Third Letter, ascribing the fine spectacles made by planets under the sun's "command," and Earth's yearly and daily movements that cause seasonal, diurnal and nocturnal cycles, to One Eternal Sovereign makes it easy for Him to use a "soldier" (Earth) to achieve this splendid result. Being told to "Move!" Earth rises with joy, whirls like a Mawlawi dervish in glorification of its Lord's Names, and the desired result is obtained easily and with perfect orderliness. If heavenly bodies tell Earth to move, the only possible result is chaos, even if millions of far larger stars set themselves in motion.

In conclusion, the Qur'an and believers attribute all creatures to One Maker and ascribe every affair directly to Him. Their way is so easy to follow that every creature's existence and every event become necessary. But those who ascribe one thing to innumerable causes follow such a difficult way that

it becomes impossible. What is necessary for the coming into existence of one creature in the explanation of the misguided is sufficient for the creation of the whole universe in the explanation of the believer in the Qur'an. It is far easier for all things to issue by one command than for one thing to issue by innumerable commands. For example, an officer can command 1,000 soldiers as easily as one soldier, while 1,000 soldiers commanding one soldier would cause chaos, for it would be like commanding 1,000 soldiers separately.

This magnificent verse hurls this truth at those who associate partners with God:

God gives a parable: A man who is shared by many masters, each pulling him to himself; and a man who belongs only to one master. Can the two be equal in comparison? Praise be to God! Nay, but most of them do not know. (39:29)

Glory be to You. We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. O God, bestow blessings and peace on our master Muhammad to the number of particles in the universe, and on his Family and Companions. Amen. All praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.

O God, O Unique One, O Single One, O Besought-of-All. O He other than Whom there is no other god but Himself alone, Who has no partner. O He Whose is the Sovereignty, and Whose is all praise. O He Who gives life and causes to die. O He in Whose Hand is all good. O He Who is powerful over everything. O He to Whom is the homecoming. For the sake of the mysteries contained in these phrases, join the publishers (and translator) of this treatise, their friends, and its author Said with the perfected affirmers of God's Unity; the truthful, meticulous researchers; and God-conscious believers. Amen.

O God. For the sake of Your Oneness' mystery, make the publishers (ahd translator) of this book spread the mysteries of Your Unity. Fill their hearts with the lights of belief and make their tongues speak the Qur'an's truths. Amen. Amen. Amen.

*The
Twenty-first Letter*

The Twenty-first Letter

Affection toward parents

In His Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

Your Lord decrees that you worship only Him and be good to [your] parents. If one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say even a single word of contempt to or chide them, but speak to them in terms of honor. Lower unto them the wing of humility out of mercy, and say: "My Lord, have mercy on them, as they took care of me when I was young." Your Lord knows best what is in your minds [hearts]. If you are righteous, He is All-Forgiving to those who are patient. (17:23-25)



YOU WHO ARE UNAWARE OF FILIAL RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD PARENTS, whose house contains an elderly parent, a helpless and invalid relative, or a coreligionist unable to earn a living. Heed these verses and see how they insist in five ways that you show filial affection.

As paternal affection for children is a sublime reality of worldly life filial gratitude is a most urgent and heavy duty. Parents lovingly sacrifice their lives for their children. Given this, children who try to please them and gain their approval without showing them sincere respect or serving them

willingly have no humanity and are monsters of ingratitude. Uncles and aunts are considered parents.

Know, you who neglect such duties, how terribly disgraceful and unscrupulous it is to be bored with their continued existence and so hope for their deaths. Know this and come to your senses! Understand what an injustice it is to desire the deaths of those who sacrificed their lives for you.

O you immersed in earning your livelihood! Know that your disabled relative, whom you consider a burden, is a means of blessing and abundance. Never complain about the difficulty of making a living, for were it not for the blessing and abundance bestowed upon you, you would face even more hardship. If I did not want to keep this letter brief, I would prove this to you.

I swear by God that this is a reality that even my devil and evil-commanding self accept. All existence can see that the infinitely Merciful and Compassionate Creator of Majesty and Munificence sends children here along with their sustenance: their mother's breast milk. He sends sustenance for the elderly, who are like children and even more worthy and needy of compassion, in the form of blessing and unseen, immaterial abundance. He does not load their sustenance onto mean, greedy people.

The truth expressed in: *God is the All-Providing, the Possessor of Strength and the Steadfast* (51:58) and: *How many an animate creature bears not its own provision, but God provides for it and you* (29:60) is proclaimed by all living creatures through the tongue of their disposition. So not only is the sustenance of elderly relatives sent in the form of blessings, but also that of pets, created as friends to people who feed and take care of them. I have personally observed this: Years ago, my daily ration was half a loaf of bread. I barely managed with this until four cats became my daily guests. As soon as they began sharing my bread, the same ration was always enough for all of us. I saw this so often that I became convinced that I benefited from the blessing coming through the cats. I declare that they were not a burden upon me; rather, I was indebted to them.

O people, you are the most esteemed, noble, and worthy-of-respect of all creatures. Among people, believers are the most perfect. Among believers, the helpless and elderly are the most worthy and needy of respect and compassion. Among the helpless and elderly, relatives deserve more affection, love, and service than others. Among relatives, parents are the most truthful confidants and most intimate companions. If an animal is a means of blessing and

abundance when it stays as a guest in your house, consider how invaluable a means of blessing and mercy your elderly parents are if they stay with you. The following Tradition shows what an important means for removing calamities they are: “But for the old bent double, calamities would pour down upon you.”³³⁸

So come to your senses. If you have been assigned a long life, you also will grow old. If you do not respect parents, then, according to the rule that one is rewarded or punished in accordance with one’s action, your children will not respect you. Further, serious reflection on your afterlife shows that gaining your parents’ approval and pleasing them through service is a precious provision for your afterlife. If you love this worldly life, please them so that you may lead a pleasant life. If you consider them a burden, break their easily offended hearts, and desire their deaths, you will be the object of the Qur’anic threat: *He [She] loses both the world and the world to come* (22:11). So, those who wish for the All-Merciful’s mercy must show mercy to those entrusted to them by God.

I noticed that Mustafa Cavus, my brother-in-religion, usually succeeded in both his worldly and otherworldly affairs. I did not understand why until I learned that he strictly observed his parents’ rights. Whoever desires prosperity in both worlds should follow his example.

O God, bestow blessings and peace on him who declared: “Paradise is beneath the feet of mothers,” and on his Family and Companions. We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

³³⁸ Al-Ajluni, *Kashf al-Khafa'*, 2:163.

*The
Twenty-second Letter*

The Twenty-second Letter

- *Islamic brotherhood [and sisterhood]*
- *Contentment and greed*

In His name.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

(This letter has two chapters. The first one calls believers to brotherhood [and sisterhood] and mutual love.)

First chapter

In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

Verily the believers are brothers, so make peace between your brothers. (49:10)

Repel (evil) with what is better; then he between whom and you there is enmity shall be as if he were a loyal friend. (23:96)

Those who restrain their rage and forgive people. God loves those who do good. (3:134)

DISPUTE, DISCORD, PARTISANSHIP, OBSTINACY, AND ENVY CAUSE RANCOR and enmity among believers, and therefore are sins that harm personal, social, and spiritual life. Truth and wisdom, as well as Islam

(the viewpoint of supreme humanity) all prove this. Moreover, they poison human life. Out of this truth's numerous aspects, we mention only six.

FIRST ASPECT: It is wrong from the viewpoint of truth. O unjust one who nourishes rancor and enmity for a believer, imagine yourself on a ship or in a house with one criminal and nine innocent persons. If someone tried to destroy the ship or the house (because of that one criminal), you would understand the magnitude of such an injustice and protest. Even if there were one innocent person and nine criminals on that ship, it would still be unjust to sink it.

A believer may be compared to a house or a ship belonging to God. Such a person has not nine, but as many as 20 innocent attributes such as belief, Islam, and neighborliness. If you cherish rancor and enmity for a believer because of one criminal attribute you do not like, and you want to destroy that ship or house created by God, your crime would be most atrocious.

SECOND ASPECT: It is wrong from the viewpoint of wisdom. Love and enmity are opposites, like light and darkness, and so their true nature cannot be combined in a single heart. If love is truly felt, hostility assumes the form of pity. Believers should love—and indeed do love—their coreligionists and be pained by any evil seen in them. They should try to improve their coreligionists only with gentleness, for a Prophetic Tradition states: “Believers should not be angry with each other, nor refuse to speak to each other for more than 3 days.”³³⁹ If the causes producing enmity predominate and hostility invades the heart, love becomes merely formal and no more than pretense and flattery.

O unfair people, see what a great injustice such attitudes are! If you regard worthless pebbles as more valuable than the Ka‘ba and greater than Mt. Uhud, you are guilty of a repugnant folly. Since all Islamic attributes like belief (as valuable as the Ka‘ba) and Islam (as splendid as Mt. Uhud) demand love and concord between believers, it is an enormous disgrace, folly, and injustice to nurture hostility for any believer. Doing so means that you prefer certain hostility-arousing shortcomings to belief and Islam!

Unity in belief requires unity of hearts, and oneness of creed demands oneness of society. If you are in the same squadron as someone else, you will feel friendly toward him and so form a mutually friendly relation because you are commanded by one commander. You also will experience a fraternal rela-

³³⁹ Bukhari, “Adab,” 57; Muslim, “Birr,” 23; Abu Dawud, “Adab,” 47.

tionship because you live in the same barracks. Given this, understand your intimate attachment to believers through mutual ties of unity as numerous as the Divine Names, and the bonds of accord and fraternal relations coming from the light and consciousness of belief.

Both of you serve the same One Creator, Sovereign, Object of Worship, Provider... so there are as many ties between you as there are Divine Names. Your Prophet, religion [Islam], and *qibla* are one and the same,³⁴⁰ and the number of such ties amount to almost a hundred. Your town, country, and state is one, and tens of things are one and the same for you.

These ties require unity and oneness, union and concord, love and brotherhood. Such immaterial chains are strong enough to link all planets together. Preferring something as frail and trivial as a spider's web, which causes dispute, discord, rancor, enmity, and grudges toward fellow believers, shows your great disregard for such ties. You seriously offend those causes of love and transgress against those brotherly relationships!

THIRD ASPECT: According to: *No soul bears the load of another* (6:164), which expresses absolute justice, nurturing rancor and enmity for believers is like condemning all of their innocent attributes on account of one criminal attribute—a very great injustice indeed! If you extend your enmity to their relatives, you are the object of *People are much given to wrongdoing* (14:34). Since truth and Islam's law and wisdom warn you against such a great injustice, how can you consider yourself to be right?

In the view of truth, the forms of evil that arouse enmity are in themselves evil, and they are dense like earth. They should not infect or pass on to others. But if others see others who commit them and imitate them, it becomes a different matter entirely, for such people do so more from their own inclination toward such evils than to those evils' effective powers. In contrast, good actions and qualities spring from love, arouse love, and are luminous (for love is luminous). They are by nature transmittable. This is why we have such proverbs as: "The friend of a friend is a friend" and "Many eyes are loved for the sake of one eye."

So, O unjust ones, consider how great an offense it is to harbor enmity toward innocent fellow believers who are worthy of love, or toward their relatives because you do not like individual believers.

³⁴⁰ *Qibla*: The direction of the Ka'ba in Mecca, which all Muslims must face during prayer. (Ed.)

FOURTH ASPECT: It is wrong from the viewpoint of personal life. Consider the following four principles that are the basis of this aspect:

FIRST PRINCIPLE: When you know your way to be right and your opinions to be true, you may be justified in saying: "My way is right and better." But you cannot say: "Only my way is right." As we know, "the eye of contentment is too dim to perceive faults, whereas the eye of anger exhibits all vice." So your unjust view and distorted opinion cannot judge between the ways, and should not condemn another's way as wrong.

SECOND PRINCIPLE: Whatever you say should be true, but it is not proper to say (carelessly and on every occasion) whatever is true. If you do, the other person may be irritated by your advice and react unfavorably, especially if your intention is not quite sincere.

THIRD PRINCIPLE: If you want to nurse your hostility, direct it against the enmity in your heart and try to remove it. Fight your carnal self and its fancies and try to reform it, for it is your most dangerous enemy. Do not nurse anger and hostility toward believers to please that injurious self. If you cannot remove this enmity, there are many unbelievers and heretics deserving enmity. As the attribute of love deserves to receive love, enmity deserves to receive enmity.

If you want to defeat your enemy, meet evil with good, for responding with evil increases enmity. Even though outwardly defeated, such people nurture rancor and enmity in their hearts. If you respond with good, they will repent and become your friends, as expressed in the couplet:

If you treat the noble nobly, they will be yours,
But if you treat the ignoble nobly, they will revolt...

Believers are noble by nature and so will submit to you if you treat them nobly. If one believer seems to be ignoble, he or she is yet noble with respect to belief. If you repeatedly tell someone that he or she is good or bad, it is often observed that he or she becomes good or bad respectively. So heed the following sacred principles established by the Qur'an, for happiness and salvation are found therein:

If they come across vanity, they pass by with dignity. (25:72)

But if you pardon, overlook, and forgive, God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate. (64:14)

FOURTH PRINCIPLE: Those who indulge in rancor and enmity wrong and transgress their own souls, fellow believers, and Divine Compassion. They condemn their souls to painful torment, inflict anguish upon themselves whenever they see their enemies obtain a blessing or advantage, and suffer pain because they fear their enemies. Enmity arising from envy is the severest torment, for envy consumes and destroys the envious while leaving the one envied untouched (or largely untouched).

If those ensnared in such envy want to be cured, let them ponder the fate of what or who engenders such envy. Doing so will cause them to see that physical beauty and strength, worldly rank and wealth are transient. Their benefit is slight, but the trouble they cause is great. If you envy others because of their merits with respect to the Hereafter, you are either a hypocrite who wants to use up here the rewards to be paid in the Hereafter, or unjustly consider the object of your envy a hypocrite.

If you rejoice when those you envy suffer misfortune and grieve when they receive a bounty, you are offended by Destiny and Divine Compassion and thus indirectly criticize and object to them. Those who criticize Destiny mean they strike and break their heads on an anvil; those who object to Compassion are deprived of it.

How can justice and sound conscience accept that you elevate something unworthy of even one day's enmity to cause a year of rancor and enmity? Moreover, you cannot attribute any evil you have suffered at his or her hand to a fellow believer alone for three reasons: Destiny has a part in allowing it, so accept it quietly; consider the share of Satan and the evil-commanding self, which will cause you to pity—and not resent—your fellow believer who was defeated by them; and God may use such people to punish you for a defect of which you may be unaware or keep secret.

By responding to the remaining small share with tolerance, forgiveness, and magnanimity, you will conquer your enemy swiftly and safely, and will avoid any wrongdoing and harm. Otherwise, you will be like a drunken or crazed merchant who buys ice and glass fragments at the price of diamonds. In other words, you will respond to worthless, transient, and insignificant affairs with violent, persistent hostility and permanent rancor, as if you and your enemy would remain in this world forever. Such an attitude leads to excessive wrongdoing, drunkenness [in the sense of being unaware of reality], and a kind of insanity.

If you care about yourself, do not allow enmity and desire for revenge, both of which are so harmful to your life, to enter your heart. If they are already in your heart, ignore them and heed the words of Hafiz al-Shirazi: "The world is not a commodity worth contending for." The world is worthless because it is transient. Given this, understand how insignificant are its petty affairs!

Hafiz also says: "The tranquillity of both worlds lies in two things: magnanimity toward friends and the wise management of enemies." If you say: "But I have no choice, for enmity is part of my nature. Moreover, these things angered me and so I cannot overlook them," I respond:

If you do not act badly, such as backbiting or under the influence of such impulses toward those for whom you cherish enmity, and if you are conscious that you err, it is harmless. For awareness of your error and admission that your evil impulse is wrong means repenting and seeking God's forgiveness, which will deliver you from its evil consequences. This is why I wrote this section—so that you might seek forgiveness, distinguish right from wrong, and prevent your rightful enemy from presenting it as wrongful.

A case worthy of notice: I once saw a partisan yet pious scholar of Islam condemn another pious scholar of a different political opinion by implying that the latter was an apostate, and then respectfully praise a fellow partisan hypocrite holding his own view. Appalled at such an evil result, I sought refuge in God from Satan and politics and withdrew from politics.

FIFTH ASPECT: Obstinacy and partisanship only harm social life.

QUESTION: A Tradition says: "Difference among my community is a mercy."³⁴¹ Difference requires partisanship that, although a social disease, does relieve the oppressed masses from an oppressive elite that, if united, tends toward tyranny. If there are [political] parties, the oppressed may protect themselves by joining one. Also, do you agree that different opinions and ideas allow the truth to shine forth?

ANSWER: In such a context, difference is positive, meaning that it allows each side to promote and propagate its own argument, to improve and reform a competing view instead of destroying it. The Prophet rejects a negative difference, for it seeks to destroy another side because of partisan bias and hos-

³⁴¹ Al-Munawi, *Faydh al-Qadir*, 1:210.

tility. Those who are at each other's throats cannot act positively (toward each other).

Partisanship in the name of truth can be a refuge for those seeking their rights. But the current biased and self-centered partisanship is only a refuge and a focus of support for the unjust. If devilish people support those engaged in biased partisanship, such partisans will call God's blessings upon them. Moreover, if angelic people join another side, the same partisans will call God's curses upon them.

If people differ in the name of truth, this is only a difference of means. In reality, it is an agreement and a unity with respect to aim and basic purpose. Such a difference can reveal all aspects of truth, and so serves justice and truth. But a confrontation between biased, partisan opinions driven by egotism and fame-seeking, one engendered by a tyrannical, carnal self, only can bring forth the flames of dissension. Opposing views based upon such a source can never converge, for only differences based upon seeking the truth in the name of a united purpose can do so. Since they do not differ in the name of truth, they split into extremes and give rise to irreconcilable divisions.

In short, if their conduct is not based on exalted principles, loving, disliking, and judging for God's sake alone, dispute and discord will result. If one ignores these principles, attempts to do justice will result in injustice. This can be seen in the following incident: Imam 'Ali once felled an unbeliever. Just as he was about to kill him, the unbeliever spat at him. 'Ali released him. When the unbeliever asked why, 'Ali replied: "I was going to kill you for God's sake. But I became angry when you spat at me, and so my intention's purity was clouded by my soul's inclinations. So, I did not kill you." The unbeliever replied: "I spat at you so that you would become mad and kill me instantly. If your religion is so pure and disinterested, it must be truth."

An incident worthy of notice: Upon seeing a judge display signs of anger while executing a sentence, the just ruler fired him. If the judge had performed his task in the Sacred Divine Law's name, he would have felt pity and shown neither mercy nor anger. Since his soul's inclinations had some share in his deed, he could not perform this task with justice.

The Muslim world is beset with a regrettable social condition and a perilous disease that paralyzes its social life. In short, a harmonious social life requires that internal enmities be forgotten and abandoned when the nation

is confronted with foreign enemies. Even the most unsophisticated people recognize and practice this. So why do those who claim to serve the Muslim community nurse their petty hostilities at a time when numerous enemies are ready to attack us, and thereby prepare the ground for our enemies? This is nothing less than corruption, barbarity, and treachery directed against the community of Islam!

Our current situation reminds me of the Hasanan bedouins, a tribe had two mutually hostile clans. Although more than 50 had been killed on each side, whenever another tribe (e.g., the Sibkan or the Haydaran) attacked them, they would forget their tribal enmity and unite until the enemy was repelled.

O people of belief! There are more than 100 “tribes” and enemies, like a series of concentric circles, ready to attack the “tribe” of believers. At a time of assuming defensive positions and supporting each other, how can believers insist on pursuing their biased partisanship and hostile rancor and thereby facilitate the enemy’s assault and grant access to the fold of Islam?

As many as 70 circles of hostile forces, ranging from the misguided, the atheists and the people of false belief, to the vicissitudes of worldly life, are watching you. Each one looks for ways to hurt you, and studies you with anger and hatred. Your firm weapon, shield, and citadel is Islamic unity. Pursuing your petty enmities and other pretexts is a flagrant contradiction of the Muslim community’s conscience and unity, both of which are based on all believers’ feelings of unity. Come to your senses!

Prophetic Traditions report that such harmful and terrible people as Dajjal and Sufyan will lead the unbelievers and hypocrites at the end of time.³⁴² Although they will have only a small force, they will reduce humanity to anarchy and the Muslim world to slavery by exploiting people’s worldly ambitions and dissension.

O people of belief! If you wish to avoid such a fate, come to your senses. Take refuge in the citadel of your fellow believers and fight those oppressors who exploit your differences. If you do not, you cannot preserve your lives or defend your rights. While two champions fight each other, even a child can beat them. If two mountains are balanced in the scales, even a small stone can cause one to rise and the other to fall.

³⁴² Dajjal is the Islamic counterpart of the “Anti-Christ” in Christianity. Sufyan is a type of Dajjal. Both will cause great havoc and confusion among believers.

So, my fellow believers, control your passions and hostile partisanship, otherwise your strength will weaken so much that even a small force can beat you. If you have any commitment to a collective life of social harmony and solidarity, make the principle of “the believers are together like a firm building, one part of which supports the other” your guiding principle in life!³⁴³ This will deliver you from humiliation in this world and wretchedness in the next.

SIXTH ASPECT: Enmity and rancor spoil spiritual life and worship, for they spoil your intention’s purity—the means of salvation. Biased partisans seek superiority over the enemy while performing good deeds and so do not act purely for God’s sake. Slanting their judgments and dealings toward their supporters, they cannot be just. Their intention becomes impure, and their justice becomes injustice, both of which void their good deeds. This aspect could be elaborated upon, further, but we keep it short to reserve space for other matters.

Second chapter

In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

God is the All-Providing, the Possessor of Strength, the Steadfast.
(51:58)

How many a creature bears not its own provision, but God provides for it and you! He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. (29:60)

O people of belief, now you understand how harmful enmity is. Greed is another great disease, and just as harmful for Islam’s [social] life, for it causes disappointment, sickness, humiliation, deprivation, and misery to arise. The humiliation and misery of the Jews, who leap at this world more avidly than any other people, proves this.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Bukhari, “Salat,” 88; Muslim, “Birr,” 65; Tirmidhi, “Birr,” 18.

³⁴⁴ The Qur’an says: *Ignominy shall be their portion wherever they are, unless they (seize) a rope from God or a rope from people* (3:112). This means that the Jews can make progress when they begin to obey God’s commands or are backed by some powers, as is the case today. Otherwise, ignominy shall follow them. Regardless of their current status, when compared with their long history of ignominy, they still live in constant fear, insecurity, and uncertainty about their future. (Tr.)

Greed shows its evil consequences wherever there are animate beings. In contrast, seeking one's provision while trusting in God is a means to tranquillity and displays its good effects everywhere. For example, fruit trees and plants need provision and yet remain stationary, "contentedly trusting in God and showing no impatience." And so their provision hastens to them and they reproduce more vigorously than animals. Animals attain only an insufficient provision after great effort, since they pursue it with impatience. Only young animals, who "demonstrate their trust in God through their weakness and impotence," receive in full measure their rightful and delicious provision from Divine Compassion's treasury. On the other hand, wild beasts that leap greedily at their provision obtain "illicit" and coarse food at the cost of great effort. These examples show that greed causes deprivation, while trusting God and contentment are the means to Divine mercy.

The Jews, who more than any other people cling greedily to this world and are passionately attached to worldly life, exert great efforts to secure control over usurious and therefore illicit wealth of little benefit. In return they suffer international humiliation, misery, death, and insult. This shows that greed is a source of humiliation and loss. There are so many examples of greedy people being exposed to disappointment and loss that this principle is now proverbial and a universally accepted truth. Thus if you love wealth, seek it with contentment so that you may earn it abundantly.

Contented and greedy people can be likened to two people entering a great one's audience. One thinks: "It is enough that he admits me so that I can escape from the cold outside. Even if he seats me in the lowest position, it will be a favor." The second person arrogantly hopes for the highest position, as if he had some right to it and as if everyone were obliged to respect him. He enters with greed and, fixing his gaze upon the highest position, attempts to advance toward it. But the owner turns him back and seats him in a lower position. Instead of thanking the owner, the man is angered and criticizes him, thereby annoying the owner. The first one enters most humbly and shows his willingness to be seated even in the lowest position. His modesty pleases the owner, who invites him to sit in a higher position and thereby causes his gratitude to increase. This world is like the All-Merciful One's audience hall. Earth's surface is like a banquet laid out by Divine Compassion, with the different degrees of provision and grades of bounty corresponding to the seating positions.

Everyone can experience the evil effects of greed. For example, you are offended by a beggar who importunes greedily and are inclined to refuse the request, whereas you give to the peaceable one out of pity. Or you may fall asleep quickly if you do not think about sleeping, instead of trying to fall asleep immediately. If you are impatient, you might lose your whole night's sleep. Or, if you impatiently wait for someone and complain continually, finally you will lose patience and leave. But a minute later the person will come, and so your purpose will remain frustrated.

The reason for this is as follows: A loaf of bread is made only after tilling the field, harvesting the crop, taking the grain to a mill, and baking the loaf. Similarly, Divine Wisdom arranges everything according to a certain deliberation. If you do not comply with this deliberation and neglect to follow all the arranged steps, you cannot achieve the desired result.

O brothers and sisters dizzied with earning your living and stupefied by greed for this world! When greed is so harmful and injurious, why do you humiliate yourselves for it? Why do you accept wealth without distinguishing between the allowed and the forbidden, thereby sacrificing much of the Hereafter? To satisfy your greed you even abandon *Zakat*,³⁴⁵ one of Islam's most important pillars, a means of being blessed with increase and fertility and of repelling misfortune. Those who neglect it lose an equal amount of wealth either through buying useless things or suffering misfortune.

I had a true, highly interesting, dream during the fifth year of WWI. In it, I was asked the reason for this hunger, financial loss, and bodily trial afflicting the Muslims. I replied:

From the wealth He grants to us, God Almighty requires, as *Zakat*, either a tenth or a fortieth so that we may benefit from the poor people's grateful prayers and avoid their rancor and envy.³⁴⁶ As our greed did not allow us to pay, God Almighty removed its accumulated amount: three-fourths where a fortieth was owed, and four-fifths where a tenth was owed.

³⁴⁵ *Zakat*: This word literally means purification and growth, for Muslims believe that it purifies their possessions. For most purposes, it consists of setting aside 2.5 percent of one's capital, provided that this capital reaches a certain minimum amount after its owner's needs have been met, to help those who qualify for it and to benefit the local community in general. *Zakat* is considered so important that those who ignore it are not considered part of the Muslim community. (Ed.)

³⁴⁶ A tenth of wealth that annually yields a new crop; a fortieth of whatever yields a financial surplus during the year, or of at least 40 pasturing animals (e.g., sheep or goats). (Tr.)

He asks us to fast for a month each year so that we may benefit from as many as 70 beneficial purposes. But we pitied ourselves and did not fast. And so God Almighty compelled us to fast for 5 years with a hunger that combines almost 70 kinds of afflictions.

God requires believers to spend no more than one hour out of 24 in prayer, a pleasing and lofty, illuminating and beneficial form of Divine training. But we were too lazy to observe the five daily prayers and so wasted all 24 hours. In return, God Almighty chastened us by making us undergo a form of training and physical exertion for 5 years.

I awoke after this and, pondering over it, realized a very important truth. As The Twenty-fifth Word indicates, by comparing modern civilization's principles to the Qur'an's commands, all immorality and disturbances in human social life proceed from two sources and two attitudes: "Once my stomach is full, what do I care if others die of hunger?" and "You work and I will eat."

These attitudes are perpetuated by the prevalence of usury and interest and the abandonment of *Zakat*. The only remedy is to implement *Zakat* as a universal principle and duty and then ban usury. *Zakat* is a most essential pillar for individuals, particular communities, and humanity to live a happy life. Humanity usually comprises two classes: the elite and the masses.³⁴⁷ Only *Zakat* can arouse the elite's compassion and generosity toward the masses, and the masses' respect and obedience toward the elite. Without *Zakat*, the elite cruelly oppresses the masses and thereby often engenders revolt. Such a development gives rise to a constant struggle and opposition, finally resulting in labor and capital confronting each other, as in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century.

O people of nobility and fairness, of munificence and liberality! If you do not act generously in the name of *Zakat*, your acts are useless and potentially harmful. If you do not give in God's name, you make poor people feel obliged to you and so deprive yourself of their prayers, which are acceptable in God's sight. Also, your subsequent belief that you own your wealth shows

³⁴⁷ Said Nursi uses *elite* for those who can give *Zakat*, and *the masses* for those eligible to receive it. These designations are relative, for they depend upon local standard of wealth. As Islam does not allow a deep socioeconomic gap to form between Muslims, the gap between these groups is not very great. In many Muslim societies today, members of both groups can be found within the middle class. As the main purpose for *Zakat* is for the poor to receive enough money to provide for their families, we should consider the living standard envisaged by Islam when considering *Zakat*. (Tr.)

great ingratitudo. But if you give *Zakat*, you are rewarded for giving for His sake and thank Him for the bounties received. What is more, its recipients will not feel obliged to flatter or fawn, and thus damage their self-respect. Moreover, their prayers for you will be accepted.

See the vast difference between giving to earn fame and impose obligation, and giving as *Zakat* to fulfill your religious duty, gain a reward, be sincere, and have poor peoples' prayers for you accepted.

Glory be to You, we have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are All-Knowing, All-Wise. O God, bestow blessings and peace on our master Muhammad, who said: "Believers are together like a firm building, one part of which supports the other" and: "Contentment is a treasure that will never be exhausted," and on his Family and Companions. And all praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.

Addendum: Concerning backbiting

In His Name.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

The verse: *Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?* (49:12) induces an aversion to backbiting in six miraculous ways and shows how disgusting this practice is. Thus there is no need or possibility for further explanation. It reprimands backbiters with six degrees of reprimand and restrains them with six degrees of severity. Read as addressed to backbiters, it means:

The *hamza* (') at the beginning of the original Arabic sentence is interrogative. This sense penetrates the verse like water, so that each word carries an interrogative accent. Thus the first word following the *hamza* asks: "Do you have no intelligence with which to ask and answer, to discriminate between good and bad, so that you cannot perceive how abominable such a thing is?"

The second word *like* asks: "Is your heart, with which you love or hate, so spoiled that you love such a repugnant thing?" Third, the phrase *any of you* asks: "What has happened to your sense of social responsibility and civilized life, which derives its meaning and energy from living together as a community?" Fourth, the phrase *to eat the flesh* asks: "What has happened to your sense of humanity that you tear your friend to pieces with your teeth like a wild animal?"

Fifth, the phrase of *your brother [sister]* asks: “Do you have no human tenderness, no sense of kinship, and so sink your teeth into an innocent person tied to you by many links of brotherhood [sisterhood]? Do you have no intelligence that you so senselessly bite your own limbs?” Sixth, the word *dead* asks: “Where is your conscience? Is your nature so corrupt that you commit so disgusting an act as eating the flesh of your dead brother [sister] who deserves great respect?”

In its totality, this verse shows that slander and backbiting are repugnant to one’s intelligence, heart, humanity, conscience, human nature, and religious and social unity. Its six degrees of condemnation are very concise and precise, and restrain people in six miraculous ways.

Backbiting is a shameful weapon commonly used by people of enmity, envy, and obstinacy. No self-respecting, honorable person has anything to do with it. A celebrated person once said: “I hold myself in so great esteem as not to punish (my enemy) with backbiting, for backbiting is the weapon of the weak and the low.”

Backbiting means speaking about absent people in ways that would repel and annoy them if they were present. If the words are true, it is backbiting; if they are not, it is both backbiting and slander and thus doubly loathsome.

In a very few cases, backbiting is permissible. Four of these are:

- A wronged person presents a formal complaint to right a wrong and restore justice.
- If someone thinking about cooperating with someone else asks what you think of that person. If your reply is disinterested and given only for the sake of the questioner’s benefit, it is not backbiting.
- If you describe a fact (and not exposing someone to disgrace or notoriety), such as: “That crippled, homeless person went to such-and-such a place.”
- If the person being criticized is an open and unashamed sinner who glories in sin and enjoys doing what is wrong.

Backbiting may be permissible in such cases if done disinterestedly and purely for the sake of truth, and in the collective interest. Otherwise, it is like a fire that consumes good deeds as a flame consumes wood.

If you have engaged in backbiting or listened to it willingly, seek God’s forgiveness: “O God, forgive me and the one about whom I talked.” When you meet the person, ask for forgiveness.

*The
Twenty-third Letter*

The Twenty-third Letter

*Seven different matters • Patience and a fine point
about the end of the story of Joseph*

In His Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

Upon you be peace and God's mercy and blessing forever, to the number of your life's seconds and minutes, and to your body's particles.

 Y DEAR, PERSEVERING, TRUTHFUL, SINCERE, AND CAPABLE BROTHER, differences of time and place cannot hinder friendly conversations of brothers-in-truth like us. Even if they are as far apart as east and west, past and future, this world and the Hereafter, they may be considered as being together and engaging in conversation. In particular, those who perform the same duty are accounted as the same as each other. I imagine you with me every morning, and assign one-half or one-third of my spiritual reward to you (may God accept it!). I include you, 'Abd al-Majid, and 'Abd al-Rahman in my prayers, and hope that you are receiving your share.

I have felt, feeling with you, some sorrow due to the trouble you face in your worldly affairs. Yet since this world is impermanent, and since some good lies behind its troubles, it occurred to me for your sake that they would end one day. *The only real life is that of the Hereafter.* Having thought this, I recited: *Surely God is with the patient* (2:153), and then: *Surely we belong to*

God, and to Him we are returning (2:156). Thinking with you, I found some consolation.

If God loves someone, He causes him or her to see the world as ugly and renounce it. I hope you are among those people. Do not become sad about the growing number of obstacles to publishing *The Words*. I am hopeful that when the portions you have published already receive God's Mercy, they will flourish like seeds growing into a multitude of flowers.

You asked me several questions. Most of *The Words* and *The Letters* used to be beautiful, for they came to me suddenly and involuntarily. So if I answer your questions relying on the strength of my own knowledge, as the Old Said did, they will be dim and imperfect. Inspiration has stopped for some time and my memory has weakened, but I will attempt brief answers to your questions.

YOUR FIRST QUESTION: What is the best kind of petitionary prayer (*du'a*) to say for another believer?

ANSWER: One that accords with the conditions of acceptability. A prayer is more or less acceptable if certain conditions are met. First, cleanse yourself by seeking God's forgiveness. Then call God's blessing on Prophet Muhammad as an intercessor before and after the prayer, for calling God's blessing on our Prophet is acceptable and a prayer said between two acceptable prayers is usually acceptable. Also, such a prayer should be said in the absence of the believer in question and be of the kind mentioned in the Qur'an and the Traditions. For example, prefer such comprehensive prayers as:

O God, I ask forgiveness of You, for me and him [her], and soundness in religion, in this world, and in the Hereafter. Our Lord, grant us good in this world and in the Hereafter, and guard us against the chastisement of the Fire.

Pray from your heart with sincerity, religious seriousness, and solemn reverence. Do so after the five daily prayers and, particularly, after the early morning prayer and in such blessed times as Friday—especially during the hour when prayer is absolutely accepted, in the three blessed months, particularly on the special nights, during Ramadan, most particularly, on the Night of *Qadr* (the Night of Power and Destiny).

Further, try to supplicate in the mosque. God is expected, through His Mercy, to accept petitions meeting such conditions. He either answers it here or causes the one in whose name it is made to benefit from it in the Hereafter.

So if you do not obtain the desired result, consider your prayer as having received a better acceptance.

YOUR SECOND QUESTION: It has become a preferred tradition to say of a Companion: “May God be pleased with him [or her].” Is it proper to say this after the names of others?

ANSWER: Yes, for it is not particular to the Companions exclusively. Rather it should be said of people who, like the founders of the four legal schools, as well as ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Imam Rabbani, and Imam Ghazzali,³⁴⁸ were approved by God through succession to the Prophetic mission (the greatest rank of sainthood). Nevertheless, according to the common usage of religious scholars, we tend to say: “May God be pleased with him [or her]” when mentioning a Companion; “May God have mercy upon him [or her]” of those belonging to the two succeeding generations after the Companions; “May God forgive him [or her]” of those who followed them; and “May God sanctify him [or her]” for saints.

YOUR THIRD QUESTION: Whose virtue is higher: the greatest jurists or the greatest saints who inspired or founded sound *tariqas*?³⁴⁹

ANSWER: Not all the jurists who are qualified to derive judgments from the Qur'an and Sunna, but the four founders of Islam's schools of law are higher in virtue than the greatest saints. Although extraordinary saints like ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, known as the “pole of the age,” are superior in certain virtues, these four Imams are superior to the leading saints of all *tariqas* and to everyone else, except [Prophets and Messengers,] the Companions and the Mahdi.

YOUR FOURTH QUESTION: What does: *God is with the patient* (2:153) mean?

ANSWER: God's Name the All-Wise requires the establishment of an order, a definite procedure, for things to come into existence. Impatient people are not deliberate—either they overleap and fall, or omit some steps and fail to reach their goal. This is why avarice causes deprivation and patience

³⁴⁸ Al-Ghazzali (1058-1111): Muslim theologian and Sufi whose great work, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), made Sufism an acceptable part of mainstream Islam. (Ed.)

³⁴⁹ *Tariqa* is defined literally as a “way” or a “path.” It is commonly used to mean a path of strict spiritual discipline and practices that leads its adherents toward God. It is a very common term in Sufism, and is discussed at great length in the Twenty-ninth Letter. (Ed.)

is a key to solving problems. As a proverb says: “Greed is subject to disappointment and loss, but patience is a means of relief.”

God Almighty helps the patient and makes them successful. There are three kinds of patience, as follows:

- Piety and God-consciousness, or resisting the carnal self’s temptations and avoiding sins. Such patient people are included in: *God is with the God-conscious and pious* (2:194).
- Endurance during misfortune by patient reliance on and total submission to God, Who numbers the patient among: *God loves those who rely on Him* (3:159) and *God loves the patient* (3:146). Impatience implies complaining of God by criticizing His acts, accusing His Mercy, and disapproving of His Wisdom. A weak, helpless person should not wail over misfortune, but should complain to—not of—Him, just as Prophet Ya‘qub (Jacob) did: *I complain of my anguish and sorrow unto God* (12:86). It is futile and even harmful to encourage self-pity and complaining.
- Insistence on worshipping God. This elevates the patient person to the highest spiritual rank, that of being one of God’s perfect and beloved servants.

YOUR FIFTH QUESTION: A man is usually believed to reach puberty, and therefore be responsible for performing his religious duties, when he is around 15 years old. How did the Messenger worship before his Prophethood?

ANSWER: He worshipped according to those principles of Prophet’s Abraham’s religion that still survived in Arabia, albeit in an indistinct fashion. He worshipped not because he was obliged to, but did so in a supererogatory way. This subject demands a much full explanation, but let this short observation suffice for the time being.

YOUR SIXTH QUESTION: Why was he raised as a Prophet when he was 40, which is regarded as the age of maturity, and die when he was sixty-three?

ANSWER: There are many purposes, one of which is as follows: Prophethood is a great and heavy duty that can be performed only through the intellectual faculties’ perfection and the spiritual potentialities’ full development. The age of this development and perfection is forty.

Youth is a time of carnal desire and worldly ambition and therefore not suitable for the holy and divine duty of Prophethood, which is purely related to the Hereafter. However noble and sincere people may be before 40, fame-seekers might regard them as pursuing fame and glory. They cannot

free themselves from such accusations (no matter how false) easily. But after they pass 40, they are nearer to the grave than the world and so are more likely to be free of such accusations. Also, people may free themselves from groundless suspicions.

One of the many reasons why he lived for 63 years is that believers must love and respect God's Messenger absolutely, and commend his manners without feeling any dislike. As old age is usually troublesome and humiliating, God sent him to the highest abode when he was 63, the average lifespan of his community's members. Thus, God made him an example in this respect as well.

YOUR SEVENTH QUESTION: Is "The best of your young people are those like your old people, and the worst of your old people are like your young people" a Prophetic saying? If so, what does it mean?

ANSWER: I have heard it referred to as a Prophetic saying. It means that the best young people, like an old person, think of death and, without being captivated by youth's fancies, strive for the next life. The worst old people are those who, trying to imitate the young in worldly aspirations by ignoring the Divine commands, obey their carnal selves' temptations.

The correct form of your framed inscription's second part is as follows. I hung it on the wall as a warning, and look at it every morning and evening to take a lesson:

If you want a friend, God is sufficient. Indeed, if He is a friend to you, so is everything.

If you want companions, the Qur'an is sufficient. Imagine yourself with the Prophets and angels mentioned in the Qur'an. Study their experiences and become intimate with them.

If you want wealth, contentment is sufficient. The content become thrifty, and the thrifty are blessed with great wealth.

If you want to feel enmity, your evil-commanding self is sufficient. The self-conceited obtain grief; the humble obtain care and peace.

If you want counsel, death is sufficient. One who thinks of death gets rid of his or her love of the world and strives for the next life.

I am adding an eighth, which is as follows:

A few days ago, a memorizer of the Qur'an recited a certain portion of *Sura Yusuf*, down to: *Make me die submissive (unto You), and join me with the righteous* (12:101). A subtle point suddenly occurred to me: Everything relat-

ed to the Qur'an and belief is, regardless of its apparent insignificance, of great significance. Since anything contributing to eternal happiness is significant, we should regard it as worthy of explanation.

Being the first among my students who study such matters and is appreciative of subtle Qur'anic points, Ibrahim Hulusi will desire to hear this finest, most subtle point of the finest Qur'anic narrative: *Make me die submissive (unto You), and join me with the righteous*, which marks the end of the story of Prophet Joseph (Yusuf). It contains the following glad tiding in a vivid and miraculous fashion:

The pleasure received from a happy story ends in deep sorrow because of final separation or death. Or, it arouses more sorrow when we learn that the person(s) encounter separation or death just after finding ease and happiness. But the verse quoted above, even if it contemplates Joseph's death when he became Egypt's 'Aziz (grand vizier or chancellor) and was reunited with his parents and brothers (the happiest moment in his life), gives it in a different way.

It declares: "To receive a far greater happiness, Joseph asked God for death and, through death, received that happiness." This means that a more attractive and pleasure-giving bliss than the world's greatest happiness waits on the grave's other side. Knowing this, he asked for death, which is apparently very painful, when he was enjoying the world's greatest happiness.

Consider the eloquent way in which the Qur'an reports this narrative's end. See how it adds to the audience's joy and happiness, instead of giving pain and regret.

Another benefit of such an ending is that it encourages us to strive for the grave's other side, where we will find real happiness and pleasure. It also shows Joseph's exalted truthfulness and announces that even the most joyful and brightest condition of worldly life cannot captivate him; rather, it leads him to ask for death and the other life.

The Everlasting. He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

*The
Twenty-fourth Letter*

The Twenty-fourth Letter

- *Why Divine Mercy allows death and misfortune*
- *Prayer • The Prophet's Ascension*

In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

God does and decrees whatever He wills.



QUESTION: CAN THE TENDER CARE, BENEFICIAL MANAGEMENT, AND loving-kindness required by such of God's Greatest Names as the All-Compassionate, the All-Wise, and the All-Loving be reconciled with worldly decay, death, separation, misfortune, and trouble? Even if we can bear the death of people, since it is a door to eternal happiness for believers, why do delicate plants and flowers and animals, which cling to life and continuance, suffer transformation, trial and separation, and finally perish? How and why does Divine Compassion and Wisdom allow this?

ANSWER: We will use five signs to show the motive and necessary cause for, and five indications to show the purposes and benefits behind, the sublime truth displayed by the decay and death of living creatures.

FIRST STATION: The first station consists of five signs.

First sign: As the Twenty-sixth Word shows, a skillful clothes designer pays an ordinary model to display jeweled and artistically fashioned outfits. To display his skill and artistic ability, the designer tells the model to sit and stand. Does the model have any right to object, asking: "Why do

you continually change the shape of this garment, which makes me look good, and annoy me by making me sit and stand?"

In the same way, the All-Majestic Creator takes each species as a model and, to manifest His Names and display His perfect art, causes everything (especially living creatures) to wear a garment of existence bejeweled with senses, and embellishes it with the Pen of Destiny and Decree. In return, He "pays" each being with a certain perfection and pleasure as well as bounteous gifts. Thus, how can anything object to any act of the All-Majestic Maker, the Owner of the Kingdom, Who controls everything therein as He wills?

If creatures have any "right" against the Necessarily Existent Being, it is to give thanks for the level of existence God has given them. All such levels are actual, concrete realities dependent on a necessary cause, whereas levels not conferred are only possibilities. A possibility does not have an actual, external existence, and there are infinite possibilities for a thing to have existence.

Besides, there is no necessary cause whereby something infinitely possible should attain existence. For example, minerals cannot complain that they want to be plants, for there were infinite possibilities for them to have any level of existence. So they must thank their Creator for their mineral existence. Plants and animals cannot complain to God about why they were not granted a higher level. Plants must thank Him for being favored with existence and life, and animals for being granted a precious gem of spirit as well as life and existence.

As for you, O people of complaint! You are favored with existence and have experienced life's pleasures. Further, you enjoy a healthy human existence. O people of belief, you were favored with the blessing of Islam and with being led out of misguidance. Complaining about God shows ingratitude. Be grateful for whatever level He bestowed on you as a pure blessing, and do not show ingratitude by complaining that He did not favor you with still greater blessings to which you aspire passionately, though wrongly, since they are only possibilities and thus non-existent.

Suppose people elevated to a high position, like being favored with a specific blessing at each step while climbing to a minaret's top, complain that they have not been elevated high enough. Even the most foolish people would see this as a great ingratitude and injustice on such people's part.

O people of complaint, if you act greedily and spurn contentment and thrift, know that contentment is a profitable thanksgiving while greed is an ingratitude causing loss. Thrift shows a beneficial respect for the bounties received, whereas extravagance makes light of the bounties in a harmful and shameless way. If you are sensible, try to be content and accept what you have. If you suffer abject poverty [although you do what you can and must in lawful ways], turn to the All-Patient One and try to acquire a becoming patience. Do so without complaining. If you want to find fault with someone, focus on your carnal self and complain to God Almighty about that.

Second sign: One Divine purpose for the All-Majestic Creator's continuous renewal and re-creation of beings through His Lordship's awesome activities is, as explained fully in The Eighteenth Letter, as follows:

Every creature is active because it yearns for and takes pleasure in activity. It can even be said that every activity contains a kind of pleasure; moreover, activity itself is some sort of pleasure. Pleasure is turned toward perfection and is a kind of perfection. Since activity is turned toward perfection, and indicates pleasure, and beauty, and since the Necessarily Existent Being, the Perfect One of Majesty has all perfection in His Being, Attributes, and acts, for sure, in a manner fitting to His Necessary Existence and Holiness (in accordance with His essential independence and absolute Perfection and uniqueness), He has infinite sacred affection and love.

Such affection and love will cause an infinite sacred enthusiasm, the origin of an infinite, sacred joy that is the source of infinite sacred pleasure. Due to this pleasure as well as His Compassion, the All-Merciful and All-Compassionate has infinite sacred gladness and pride when His creatures' realize their full potential and attain their relative perfection through their deeds by His Power. This sacred gladness and pride require creation's incessant, infinite whirl that, in turn, demands incessant change, renewal, and transformation. This incessant activity also calls for decay, death, and separation.

Once the motives and causes posited by human philosophy for all beings' creation and life seemed very insignificant to me. I inferred from this why such philosophy inevitably results in absurdities that lead prominent philosophers to misguided naturalism or sophistry, denying the Maker's Will and Knowledge, or regarding the Creator as self-compelled (to do what He does). At that point, Divine Compassion came to my aid with the Divine Name

the All-Wise, and showed me the comprehensive purposes for creating beings. That is, each creature is a Divine missive for conscious beings to study.

I remained content for a year with this purpose, but later began to seek other purposes. First, the wondrous Divine art in beings became manifest to me and, afterwards, another purpose showed itself: The greatest purposes for their life and creation are related to the Maker. I perceived that they present to His View His art's perfection, His Names' embellishments, His Wisdom's jewels, and His Compassion's gifts; they are mirrors reflecting His Grace, Beauty and Perfection. After a long time of satisfaction, I noticed His Power's miracles and His Lordship's actions in a very rapid change and renewal brought about through His creativity's amazing acts.

Still not content, I thought there should be another still greater purpose. At that time, the motives and purposes partly explained in this second sign (and which will be discussed further below) became obvious. I knew that the Divine Power's actions and the incessant flux of things are so meaningful that the All-Wise Maker causes all beings to speak through that flux. It is as if all active creatures in the heavens and on Earth, along with all their actions are words of their speech, and as if each movement is an act of speech. In other words, all creatures glorify God through their movements, including their birth and death.

Third sign: Things do not go into absolute non-existence; rather, they are transferred from the sphere of Power to the sphere of Knowledge, from the visible, material world (of change and mortality) to the Unseen world (of light and permanence).

In reality, a thing's beauty and perfection belong to the Divine Names, as they are manifestations of those Names. Since those Names and their never-ending manifestations are permanent, their inscriptions will be renewed, freshened, and made even more beautiful. As nothing enters absolute non-existence, only their relative forms of existence change. In other words, their real nature and identity, the sources of beauty and the object of enlightenment and perfection, are permanent.

Inanimate beings owe their beauty to the Divine Names, and so the admiration and love felt for them belong to those Names. In addition, their changing (since they are mirrors reflecting Divine Names) does not detract from the Names. When animate beings without intelligence die, they do not enter complete annihilation; rather, they are freed from the corporeal

body and life's turbulence and have the fruits of their duty transferred to their permanent spirit, which, depending on a Divine Name, attains its own kind of happiness. The death of intelligent beings is a journey through the All-Wise Maker's stations of the Intermediate World of the grave and the Worlds of Ideal Forms and Spirits, which are more beautiful and illumined than this world, and on to the World of Permanence, where eternal happiness as well as material and spiritual perfections are obtained.

In short, since the All-Majestic Maker exists and is permanent with His Attributes and Names, their inscriptions and manifestations are renewed constantly in spiritual permanence. They are not subject to absolute non-existence.

People's humanity connects them to most creatures. People derive pleasure from their happiness and grieve over their misfortune. They especially rejoice over animate beings' happiness, particularly over that of other people, and especially over that of the approved and loved people of perfection, and share their grief. Like affectionate mothers, they may sacrifice their own rest and happiness for such people's welfare.

Thus all believers, according to the degree of their belief and through the Qur'an's light and belief, may be happy with creatures' happiness and permanence, their being saved from nothingness, and their being valuable missives of the Lord. They may acquire thereby a light so comprehensive that it fills the world and benefits everyone according to his or her capacity.

But people of misguidance, who regard death as absolute annihilation, fall into despair and depression and become pessimists due to all creatures' misfortune and death. Their unbelief causes them to become obsessed with the fear of going to absolute non-existence, and as a result they suffer hellish torment even before reaching Hell.

Fourth sign: A sovereign's government has many departments representing his functions as supreme ruler, judge, commander, and head of the religious office. In the same way, God Almighty's Names have infinite manifestations and thus cause the great variety and difference of creatures. Since every possessor of perfection and grace tends to see and show that perfection and grace, God's permanent Names will to manifest themselves on the Most Sacred Being's behalf, to behold their inscriptions, and to see and show their reflected perfection and grace in their inscriptions' mirrors.

As a result, they tend to renew or rewrite constantly the great Book of the Universe and the various missives of creatures in a most meaningful way. Or, they write thousands of letters on a page and present it to the Most Holy Being to view, and to all conscious beings so that they may read and ponder. The following stanza of truth expresses this:

The sheets of the Book of the Universe are of infinite kinds,
Its individual letters and words are also countless.
Written in the printing house of the Preserved Tablet of Truth,
Each creature in the universe is a meaningful word.

Consider the lines of the Book of the Universe, for they are missives to you from the Highest Abode.

Fifth sign: This consists of two points.

First point: Since God exists, everything exists. Since everything is connected to God, His Unity causes each thing to be connected to everything. Thus each thing is an object of the infinite light of existence. Since decay and separation cannot impede this reality, one can receive an infinite light of existence by living even for a moment with consciousness of this connection.

If this connection cannot be established or is ignored, one suffers infinite separation and non-existence due to the resulting endless despair and depression felt when a creature to which one feels a connection decays and dies. If people were to live in this state even for a million years, they would never taste the true pleasure of a moment lived in connection to God. This is why people of truth conclude that a moment of life enlightened through this connection is preferable to a million years of life devoid of such light. They also conclude that the light of existence can be received only by recognizing the Necessarily Existent Being.

For those who recognize God, the light of existence fills the universe with angels and other spiritual and conscious beings. For those who do not recognize God, the universe is a vast, dark, and desolate place in which beings wait for death and separation. Consider that each fruit on a tree is connected to all fruits on that tree, and so has as many kinds of secondary existence as the number of fruits. Picking it separates it from the other fruits and envelopes it in the darkness of non-existence. The connection to the One Eternally Besought's Power gives each being or thing an actual existence. Without this connection, there are as many types of non-existence as the number of things. Ponder this sign when considering the comprehensive

light of belief and the frightful darkness of misguidance. In fact, belief is the essence of the sublime truth explained in this sign. Everything means non-existence for unbelievers, as they have no belief, just as nothing exists for people without senses.

Second point: The world and things have three facets, as follows:

- The first facet turns to the Divine Names. Being the mirrors of those Names, it experiences no decay or separation; rather, it is refreshed and renewed continually.
- The second facet turns to the Hereafter (the World of Permanence). Resembling a field sown with the seeds of the Hereafter to grow into permanent trees with permanent fruits, it serves the World of Permanence by causing transient things to acquire permanence. This facet also manifests life and permanence.
- The third facet turns to transient beings. People of desire and fancy love this facet; however, it is the marketplace of sensible, conscious persons and the stage of trial for the duty-bound. This facet is apparently the object of decay and death. However, its inner dimension contains manifestations of life and permanence to heal the sorrows related to death, decay, and separation.

In conclusion, these streams of beings and flux of creatures are moving objects, ever-changing and renewed mirrors to renew and brighten the Necessarily Existent Being's lights of existence and creation.

SECOND STATION: This station consists of an introduction and five indications. The introduction comprises two topics.

First topic: Analyze the following comparisons to understand the Essential Qualities and acts of God's Lordship. Although they cannot express or measure fully the truth of His Lordship's acts and Essential Qualities, they are permissible if they further understanding. The expressions in them as well as in the foregoing signs that do not fit the Essential Qualities and acts of the All-Holy Divine Essence are my fault.

For example, colloquial meanings of pleasure, joy, and gladness cannot express the sacred acts and Essential Qualities adequately; rather, they are only aids to reflection, means of contemplation. Also, by pointing to the tip of an encompassing, mighty law of Divine Lordship, such comparisons may serve to see the truth and nature of that law in His Lordship's Essential Qualities.

For instance, when we mention as an example that a flower dies, but leaves behind thousands of instances of its existence, we point to a mighty law of Divine Lordship prevalent in all plants, spring flowers, and creatures.

In fact, the All-Compassionate Creator annually changes Earth's robe by the same law with which He changes a bird's feathered garment. He changes the world's appearance every century with the same law that He will use to change the universe's form and shape on the Last Day. With the law He uses to control particles, He causes Earth to rotate and revolve like a Mawlawi dervish turning in ecstasy. He controls, again by the same law, all spheres and causes the solar system to move.

He renews your garden and vineyard every year, and refreshes them every season by the same law He uses to break down, repair, or renew your body's cells. He renews Earth's face every season, arraying it in a new garment via the same law. Every spring, the All-Powerful Maker revives that tree in front of us and Earth with the same law of Wisdom that He uses to revive an insect. And He will use that same law to revive all creatures on the Day of Judgment: *Your creation and upraising are as but a single soul* (31:28).

Many other laws of Divine Lordship prevail in everything from particles to the universe. Reflect on the might and comprehensiveness of those laws in the Divine Lordship's acts, and notice the Divine Oneness they display. See how their being both comprehensive and unitary, as well as manifestations of Knowledge and Will, establishes God's Knowledge, Will, and Unity.

Comparisons and allegories in many of the *Words* (the books of the *Risale-i Nur*) show the tips of laws, and by doing so, establish the Divine laws' existence in any of the Divine acts under discussion. Thus, most of *The Words'* comparisons, allegories, and parables can be regarded as decisive proofs.

Second topic: As argued in The Tenth Word, each flower and fruit contains as many instances of wisdom and purposes as the number of those flowers and fruits. These instances of wisdom are of three kinds: those related to the Creator and demonstrating His Names' inscriptions; those related to conscious beings and functioning as valuable, meaningful messages for them; and those related to the fruits or flowers themselves, their life, maintenance, and benefits for humanity.

While pondering over such multiple purposes for every creature's existence, the following thoughts came to me in Arabic. These form the main themes of the following five indications concerning universal purposes:

All things that we see are in flux, are mirrors moving and acting to renew the manifestations of His creation's light. This renewal occurs through the incessant changing of individual beings having relative existence. In other words, all objects receiving Divine manifestations are replaced by new ones, but only after, • firstly, their subtle meaning and metaphysical identities have gained permanence; • secondly, they have left behind truths pertaining to the Unseen World and forms recorded on the ideal tablets; • thirdly, they have produced otherworldly fruits and everlasting scenes; • and fourthly, they have glorified the Lord and manifested what His Names necessitate; • and, fifthly, so that the Glorious One's acts and Essential Qualities, as well as His Knowledge's objects, may be displayed.

Each creature, especially living ones, therefore contains five kinds of wisdom and purposes. O mortal people, if you want your little seed-sized truth to grow into a permanent tree (with the fruits of purposes explained below), try to acquire true belief. Otherwise you will be deprived of those fruits, pressed into that seed, and rot away with it.

First indication: All objects receiving Divine manifestations are replaced by new ones only after their subtle meaning and metaphysical identities have gained permanence. Something dies and appears to enter non-existence. But in reality, the meaning it expressed is permanent, for its form, nature, and metaphysical identity are preserved in the World of Ideas, on the copies of this World (the guarded tablets), and in memories (samples of the guarded tablets). Thus it exchanges its apparent, material existence for hundreds of other types of immaterial existence that are related to knowledge.

Printing a page involves arranging the necessary lead types and then removing them after the printing is finished. This page can be duplicated as many times as desired, thereby gaining permanence in countless forms and, with its meaning, in countless memories although the lead types are no longer there. In the same way, the Pen of Divine Destiny determines a shape, form, and period for the meanings in Divine Knowledge. For example, Divine Power gives vegetation external, material existence during spring. After their forms and identities are transferred to the Unseen World's register, Divine Wisdom requires that they be replaced with new ones next spring so that the latter can exhibit their meanings.

Second indication: ... they have left behind truths pertaining to the Unseen World and forms recorded on the ideal tablets. When each thing dies, especially each

living thing, it leaves all the forms it assumed while alive on the ideal tablets in the World of Ideas' registers and brings forth many truths pertaining to the Unseen World. These forms serve as words or sentences of its life-history (its life's Divinely destined events), upon which spirit beings reflect.

A flower dies but leaves thousands of its forms on the Unseen World's little guarded tablets and in thousands of memories (miniature guarded tablets), and deposits the essentials of its existence in hundreds of its seeds. It dies only after showing conscious beings how it glorified the Lord and manifested His Names' inscriptions through the forms it assumed while alive.

Likewise spring, being a flower in the global pot, decays and appears to enter non-existence. But in reality, it exchanges its present reality and leaves behind as many truths pertaining to the Unseen World as the number of its seeds, as many ideal identities as the number of its flowers, and as many instances of wisdom as the creatures it contains. Also, it makes room for the next spring to come and fulfill its function. In short, spring is stripped of a garment of apparent existence in exchange for a thousand garments of immaterial existence.

Third indication: ... produced other-worldly fruits and everlasting scenes. This world is a factory or an arable field in which the products necessary for the Hereafter's market are obtained. Just as jinn and human deeds are transferred to the Hereafter's market, other creatures perform many functions for the Hereafter's sake and thereby produce different "crops."

It may even be said that Earth, this Divine ship revolving rapidly around the sun and thus drawing the Place of Supreme Mustering's periphery, moves as it does so that its inhabitants may reap the harvest of their work in the Hereafter. We say this because the people of Paradise will desire to narrate worldly experiences to each other and take great pleasure in watching them as though on a screen. Given this, as indicated in: (*they recline) face to face on couches raised* (15:47), they will talk about the events of their worldly life, and those events' images will be present as everlasting scenes.

Thus the world produces those everlasting scenes by means of the beautiful creatures appearing one after the other and then disappearing. In today's civilized world, for example, strange and spectacular things and events are filmed and so attain a kind of permanence for future generations. Similarly, the All-Wise Maker of creatures records, as His Names the All-Wise, All-Compassionate and All-Loving require, the outcomes of the functions per-

formed for the sake of the Hereafter and gives them permanence as everlasting scenes in the Eternal World.

Fourth indication: ... glorified the Lord and manifest what His Names necessitate. All creatures glorify God in their own ways during their various life-stages. As they glorify the All-Wise Maker to the number of their bodily members, they also use their life and existence to display the Divine Names' requirements or actions (i.e., compassion required by the Name the All-Compassionate, provision by the Name the All-Providing, favor by the Name the All-Favoring).

People eat delicious fruits, which then decompose and apparently die in their stomachs. But in addition to the taste they produce in the mouth, they give a pleasure to all the bodily cells they enter, and so become the means of such purposeful functions as nourishing the body and maintaining life. As sustenance, they are promoted from the level of plant life to that of human life.

When creatures die, they entrust the works and inscriptions of many Divine Names to the Names themselves and thereby obtain permanence. Given this, should we mourn for a creature who has gained thousands of kinds of permanent existence in return for a transient one through death? We should think that (Divine) Compassion, Wisdom, and Love require this, for preferring the reverse means refusing thousands of benefits just to avoid one discomfort, a preference that would result in thousands of kinds of harm. To conclude, the Names the All-Compassionate, All-Wise, and All-Loving necessitate death and decay.

Fifth indication: ... and are replaced so that the Glorious One's acts and Essential Qualities, as well as His Knowledge's objects, may be displayed. All creatures, particularly living ones, shed their apparent existence after leaving behind many permanent things. On account of His Lordship's Essential Qualities and in accordance with His Holiness and absolute independence, the Necessarily Existing Being has infinite love, affection, and pridea, and if the terms are permissible, endless sacred delight and pleasure and boundless transcendent happiness, the traces of which are observed. Thus, the amazing activity of those Essential Qualities require, cause all creatures to undergo a process of continuous change and transformation that moves them from the visible, material world to the Unseen world.

This continuous flux and restless movement is required by the Essential Qualities of God's Lordship. The creatures impress the people of misguidance with wails of death and separation, and the people of guidance with voices of Divine remembrance and glorification. As a result, each dying creature

leaves behind many meanings, qualities, and states through which the Necessarily Existent Being's permanent Essential Qualities and actions may be manifested. It also leaves, through the forms and states it assumed while alive, an expanded existence representing its external, material existence in the spheres of Divine Knowledge (i.e., the Manifest Record, the Manifest Book, and the Preserved Tablet).³⁵⁰ Given this, we can say that each creature strips off one existence in exchange for a thousand kinds of permanent existence.

Consider another example: A factory burns raw materials to produce valuable chemical substances, and uses the resulting thermal energy to manufacture the desired product. This combustion results in many new things of greater value. If this is so, why should we complain about the consumption of raw materials or wail that the manufacturer shows no mercy toward them?

The All-Wise, All-Compassionate, and All-Loving Creator sets the factory of the universe in motion, as a requirement of His Compassion, Wisdom, and Love, to use each mortal existent as a seed that will grow into many kinds of permanent existence. This end result is His essential qualities' glorious object, the means of His Lordship's purposes, the ink for His Pen of Destiny, and a shuttle for His Power's textiles. In short, He keeps the universe in constant operation for these and many other sublime purposes unknown to us.

He sets particles or atoms in restless motion, elements and plants in continuous flux, animals in endless procession, and planets in ceaseless revolution, thus making the universe speak and write expressively of His signs. His Lordship causes Him to make air, light, water, and soil imperial mediums for the operation of, successively, His commands and decrees, Knowledge and Wisdom, bounties and Mercy, and preservation and revival. Each supports a living creature's continued existence.

This bright, sublime truth can be discerned only through the Qur'an's light and acquired through the power of belief. If it cannot be discerned, it will be replaced by a dense, dreadful darkness. This is why the people of misguidance see the world as a place of death and separation, where everything goes to absolute non-existence. They view the universe as a kind of hell,

³⁵⁰ The Manifest Book symbolizes Actual Destiny, a title for Divine Will, God's creative and operational laws of the universe, and the physical order displayed by living creatures. The Manifest Record means the Preserved Tablet, the book of Divine Knowledge, and symbolizes the Formal Destiny determining the immaterial order and the life of the universe. The Guarded Tablet refers to that upon which God has predetermined and recorded all events, a kind of Divine blueprint for creation. (Ed.)

and its contents as being enveloped by an overall non-existence after a very brief existence. They see the past and the future as engulfed by layers of the darkness of non-existence, believing that only in the twinkle of the present can a tragic life of existence be found. But for the people of guidance, the Qur'an and the light of belief illumine all time by the light of existence and thus enable them to gain eternal happiness.

In conclusion: I pronounce in the manner of the poet Niyazi Misri:

When my soul is annihilated in God
And the cage of my body breaks into pieces;
When my tongue is reduced to silence,
I call: "O Truth, O Existent One,
O Ever-Living, O Worshipped One,
O All-Wise, O Desired One,
O All-Compassionate, O All-Loving!"

And I shout:

There is no deity but God, the Sovereign, the Evident Truth; Muhammad is the Messenger of God, true to what he promised and the Trustworthy.

Also, I believe and prove:

The Resurrection, Paradise, Hell, and eternal bliss are true. God is Compassionate and Wise and Loving, and Compassion and Wisdom and Love encompass all things and their actions required by their existence.

Praise be to God, Who guided us to this. We could not have been led aright if God had not guided us. Our Lord's Messengers brought the truth.

Glory be to You. We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Our Lord, take us not to task if we forget or err. O God, bestow blessings on our master Muhammad in a way to please You and to perform his due, and on his Family and Companions, and bestow peace also! Amen! All praise be to the Lord of the Worlds.

Glory be to Him Who made the garden of His Earth a place where His art's works are exhibited, His creatures are assembled, His Power and Wisdom are manifested, His Mercy blooms, the seeds of His Paradise are sown, created beings appear and then disappear, exis-

tent things stream in and out, and creatures come and go according to a fixed measure. Adorned animals, embellished birds, fruitful trees, flowering plants are all miracles of His Knowledge, wonders of His art, gifts of His Munificence, proofs of His Grace, evidences of His Oneness, subtleties of His Wisdom, and witnesses of His Compassion. Flowers smile because of fruits, birds sing because of the morning breeze, and raindrops trill on the cheeks of flowers. The finery displayed by the fruits in these gardens, and the compassion of all animal and human mothers for their young, come from the All-Loving's recognition, the All-Merciful's love, the All-Affectionate's compassion, and the All-Bounteous' affection for all created beings, be they jinn, people, spirits, animals, or angels.

First addendum: Prayer

In His Name.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

Say (O Muhammad): "My Lord would not concern Himself with you but for your prayer." (25:77)

Reflect on the following five points concerning this verse:

FIRST POINT: Prayer, a great mystery and the very essence of servanthood, is of three types, as follows:

- That made by the tongue of innate disposition. All seeds and seed-pits pray to the All-Wise Creator through their disposition and nature to grow into an elaborate plant or a huge tree so that they may manifest fully His Names' inscriptions. The presence of the necessary circumstances to engender a particular effect is also such a prayer, a plea that the effect be realized. Arranging these circumstances may be likened to a tongue of disposition asking the All-Powerful and Majestic One to create the desired effect. For example, water, heat, soil, and light come together for a seed to grow into a tree. In effect, they pray: "O Creator, make this seed grow into a tree." As creating a tree is a miracle of Divine Power, and as they have only unconscious, inanimate, and individual material existence, they cannot create it by themselves.

- That made with the tongue of natural need. All living beings pray to the All-Compassionate Creator, through their need, to satisfy their needs. God satisfies their needs by sending the necessary provisions, something that the beings themselves cannot do. In this sense, their need is a kind of prayer that reaches God's Court, and causes are petitions to God to create the desired result.
- That made by conscious living beings for their special needs to be satisfied. Such prayers are divided into two categories. The first consists of supplications made in desperation or in connection with natural needs, by the tongue of disposition and with sincerity and pure intention. Most such supplications are accepted. As most scientific discoveries and technological innovations (regarded as a means of pride by supporters of modern civilization) are the results of such petitions, they are normally acceptable.³⁵¹ The second consists of our daily prayers, which are divided into active and by disposition, and verbal and from the heart. For example, plowing the land is an active prayer that can be understood as knocking at the door of the treasury of God's Mercy and Munificence instead of begging provision from the ground.

SECOND POINT: Prayer has a great effect and always yields a result, especially when it is universal in nature. It may even be argued that prayer is one reason for the universe's creation. As the Creator knew before creating the Prophet that he would desire eternal happiness for humanity and all creation, and to be favored with the Divine Names' manifestations, we may say that God answered his future prayers by creating the universe. If prayer is so significant and comprehensive, how could He reject the prayers of countless Muslims and blessed people, as well as jinn, angels, and other spiritual beings, made for the last 14 centuries for the Prophet to achieve the greatest Divine Mercy, eternal happiness, and his aims?

³⁵¹ For example, Newton must have seen many apples or other things fall before he "discovered" gravity. But as a reward for his endeavors and studies, God made his discovery dawn on him unexpectedly. This is true also for Archimedes' "discovery" of water's force of lifting. Some discoveries, such as that of needle by Elias Howe, were realized by means of a dream. No one can dream on one's own and by one's will, but God causes one to dream, even though one's mental conditions have a small part in dreams. The dreams which give a warning or tidings of a future event are purely in God's favor. (Tr.)

The resulting prayers have acquired such permanence, comprehensiveness, and universality that they have reached the level of being done in the tongue of potential and natural need. And so Prophet Muhammad has acquired, along with Prophethood and personal merits, an exalted rank far beyond humanity's powers of understanding and comprehension. So, Muslims, consider how great an intercessor you may have on the Day of Judgment. If you desire his intercession, follow his Sunna.

QUESTION: If he is the Beloved of God, why does he need so many prayers on his behalf?

ANSWER: That blessed person concerns himself with his followers' individual and collective happiness, and worries over what may befall them. Although he has infinite degrees of eternal happiness and levels of perfection, he longs for each one's happiness in all times and degrees, and grieves over each misfortune. Thus he needs and deserves countless blessings and prayers.

QUESTION: Why do we pray for things that will happen and for things that will never happen?

ANSWER: Prayer is a kind of worship through which servants proclaim their helplessness and poverty before God. Its apparent purposes are causes for praying, and its rewards are given mainly in the Hereafter. If your prayer seem to be unanswered, do not say: "My prayer has not been accepted," but: "The time for prayer is not over." How can believers not receive the eternal happiness for which they ask continually with great zeal and sincerity? How can the absolutely Benevolent and Compassionate One, to Whose infinite Mercy the universe itself testifies, reject their prayer to establish the World of Eternal Happiness?

THIRD POINT: Voluntary verbal prayer is accepted in two ways: either what is requested is given, or something better is given. For example, someone prays for a son but God Almighty sends a daughter like the Virgin Mary. In that case, we should say: "The prayer has been accepted in a better way." Likewise, one prays for worldly happiness but is answered with eternal happiness. In this case, we should say: "The prayer has been accepted in a more beneficial way." Since God Almighty is All-Wise, we pray to Him and He answers in accordance with His Wisdom. For instance, a feverish patient may ask for honey but receive quinine sulfate. How can the patient criticize

the doctor for this, for the doctor diagnosed the illness and gave the patient something better.

FOURTH POINT: The most beautiful, pleasurable, and quickest result of prayer is received by those who know that there is One Who has Absolute Power over everything, Who hears, pities, and cures their pains. They are not alone in this guesthouse of the world; rather, an All-Munificent One looks after them and provides them with companionship. They consider themselves in the presence of the Being Who satisfies all needs and overcomes all enemies. Feeling relief, as if a heavy burden were lifted, they say: "All praise be to the Lord of the Worlds."

FIFTH POINT: Prayer is the essence of servanthood to God and an indicator of sincere belief. Those who pray demonstrate that the One ruling the universe is fully aware of all affairs, hears their prayers, and enables them to achieve their aims. Seeing that this Being does everything, they hope that He will fulfill their expectations.

So consider how prayer shows a comprehensive Divine Unity and the pleasure and purity of the light of belief. Ponder the meaning of: Say: "*My Lord would not concern Himself with you but for your prayer,*" and heed the Divine decree: *Your Lord said: "Pray to me and I will answer you."* (40:60). If He did not will to give, He would not give the desire to want.

Glory be to You! We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

O God, grant blessings to our master Muhammad from past eternity to future eternity, to the number of what is contained in God's Knowledge, and to his Family and Companions, and grant them peace. Also, grant us peace and protect us and Islam. All praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.

Second addendum: The Prophet's Ascension

In His Name.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

And He saw him another time by the Lote-Tree of the Utmost Boundary, nigh which is the Garden of Abode, when the Lote-Tree

was shrouded by that which shrouds. His eyes did not swerve or go astray. Indeed, he saw one of His Lord's greatest signs. (53:13-18)

(We explain in five points the truths mentioned in the *Mi'rajiya* section of Suleyman Celebi's *Mawlid Nabawi*.³⁵²)

FIRST POINT: Suleyman Celebi, the writer of *Mawlid Nabawi*, depicts a poetical love story concerning Buraq,³⁵³ which was brought out of Paradise. As this saintly author surely relies on a definite tradition, he may be describing the following truth: The Permanent World's inhabitants are deeply interested in the Messenger's light, for only it will cause Paradise to be filled with humanity and jinn, who can use each species in Paradise to gain true happiness.

As The Twenty-fourth Word explains, like the nightingale announcing its legendary love for the rose, each animal species has a nightingale-like singer to announce its love of those plants for which it has a great need. They sing the praises of the plants that bring their food from the treasury of Divine Mercy. Gabriel's serving the Prophet on behalf of all angels with perfect love demonstrates why these beings were devoted to and submitted to Adam, since Muhammad is the ultimate cause for creation, the means of eternal happiness, and the Beloved of the Lord of the worlds. In the same way, all inhabitants of Paradise, whether human or animal, are interested in and attached to the Prophet. All of this was expressed through Buraq's love for him.

SECOND POINT: We read also in the *Mi'rajiya* that Almighty God expressed His sacred love for His Messenger with: "I have fallen in love with you." As this seems to violate the Necessarily Existent Being's holiness and essential independence, it must have another meaning, as follows: The Necessarily Existent Being has infinite Grace, Beauty, and Perfection. Their counterparts in the universe, all of whose parts share in them, are signs and indicators of His Grace, Beauty, and Perfection.

Since those with any degree of beauty and perfection love their beauty and perfection, the One of Majesty loves His Beauty and Perfection in a way appropriate for Him. He loves the radiances of His (Names of) Grace and Beauty. Loving His Names, He loves His art that shows His Names' beau-

³⁵² The *Mi'rajiya* recounts the Prophet's miraculous ascent to God's Presence through all material and spiritual worlds. Suleyman Celebi's *Mawlid Nabawi* is a long poem depicting some significant events of the Prophet's life. (Tr.)

³⁵³ Buraq: The heavenly being that carried the Prophet during his Ascension. (Tr.)

ty, and His creatures that are mirrors reflecting His Beauty and Perfection. Since He loves those that reflect His Beauty and Perfection, He loves the beauties of His creatures that indicate His Names' beauty and perfection. The Qur'an indicates these five forms of love.

Since the Messenger is the most perfect and distinguished member of creation; appreciates and exhibits the Divine art via an exuberant recitation and glorification of God's Names; discloses the Divine Names' treasures of beauty and perfection through the Qur'an; shows through the Qur'an how the creational and operational laws of the universe testify to its Maker's perfection; functions as a mirror to the Divine administration and sustaining of the universe through his universal servanthood and worship; and is a perfect object of the Divine Names' manifestation through his comprehensive nature, the All-Gracious and Beautiful One of Majesty loves Prophet Muhammad, the most perfect mirror of that Grace and Beauty, on account of His Love for His own Grace and Beauty.

And He loves, on account of His love for His own Names, Prophet Muhammad, the brightest mirror of those Names, and those who resemble him in belief and conduct according to the degree of their resemblance.

And He loves, because of His love for His own art, Prophet Muhammad, who exhibits that art in the universe in a most expressive way, and whose vigorous recitation and glorification of God's Names enraptures the inhabitants of the heavens, Earth, and its seas. He also loves those who follow him.

And He loves, because of His love for His creatures, living beings (the most perfect creature), conscious beings (the most perfect living beings), and human beings (the best conscious beings), and most of all Prophet Muhammad, the most perfect human being.

And He loves, on account of His love of His creatures' laudable virtues, Prophet Muhammad, the highest in laudable virtues, and those who resemble Him according to the degree of their resemblance. In short, God Almighty's Love, like His Compassion, encompasses the universe.

In conclusion, the Prophet deserves the title of "the Beloved of God" because in each of the five aspects attracting Divine Love, his rank is far above all other beloved ones. Calabi described this highest rank of being beloved by the Divine expression: "I have fallen in love with you," as this allows us to contemplate such a great truth. If this expression still seems inappropriate with the Divine Lordship's Essence, we can say: "I am pleased with you."

THIRD POINT: The events and dialogues described in the *Mi'rajiya*, if taken literally, seem incompatible with the pure sacred truths. But when viewed as means of contemplation and indicators of sublime, profound truths, they remind us of various truths of belief and point to certain meanings that are hard to express explicitly. So although we cannot extract truths therefrom, our heart or soul can obtain a pleasure of belief and a spiritual joy. Just as Almighty God has no like in His Essence and Attributes, He has no equal in the His Lordship's Essence and functions. Just as His Attributes are not like those of creatures, His Love is not like that of contingent beings.

In short, such descriptions are figurative and serve to remind us that the Necessarily Existent Being has some attributes like love. But these conform to His Necessary Existence and Holiness, and His absolute Perfection and essential independence.

FOURTH POINT: The *Mi'rajiya* relates that Prophet Muhammad saw God Almighty from behind 70,000 veils. This expresses spatial distance, whereas the Necessarily Existent Being transcends space and time and is nearer to everything than itself.

ANSWER: I gave a detailed answer in The Twenty-first Word. Here, I say only that God Almighty is the nearest to us while we are infinitely far from Him. We are far from the sun, and yet it is very close to us through the mirror in our hand. Its reflection in our eyes makes it even nearer to us than ourselves, and its light and heat are manifested in every transparent thing. If it were an animate conscious being, it would communicate its messages to us through our mirror. Likewise, remember that God is unique, and that because His Existence as the "Eternal Sun" is necessary, He is nearer to everything than itself. Although He transcends space and nothing veils Him, everything is infinitely far from Him.

This fact, stated in: *We are nearer to him than his jugular vein* (50:16), explains how God's Messenger covered almost an infinite distance in his Ascension (*Mi'raj*) and came back in an instant. In one respect, His Ascension is his journey of spiritual elevation in God's way and his sainthood's title or final rank.

Just as saints attain the rank of certainty of experiencing the truths of belief within a period of 40 days to 40 years, the Messenger's (the king of saints) Ascension enabled him to attain the highest rank of experiencing the

truths of belief within a period as short as 40 minutes.³⁵⁴ He ascended to the Divine Throne of Majesty, witnessed with the certainty of vision the truths of belief in God and the Hereafter, drew near to God to the distance of “two bows” length, and experienced Paradise’s eternal happiness. This event enabled him to open a broad way for those seeking the rank of sainthood to follow in their spiritual journey.

FIFTH POINT: Reciting the *Mawlid Nabawi* and *Mi’rajiya* is a beautiful and beneficial Islamic tradition, a pleasurable and lovely means of social gatherings, and an agreeable way to remember the truths of belief. It also shows and draws our thoughts and feelings to the lights of belief and love for God and the Prophet. May God Almighty allow such traditions to last forever. May He have mercy on those who, like Suleyman Effendi, write *Mawlid*, and admit them into the *Jannat al-Firdaws*, Paradise’s highest abode. Amen!

In conclusion, since the universe’s Creator created a perfect and distinguished individual among every species to serve as its pride and means of perfection, He also created a most distinguished and perfect person to manifest His Greatest Names. As He has a Greatest Name, there must be a most perfect person upon whom He can concentrate all perfections and through whom He can observe Himself.

This perfect person must be a living being (the most perfect species), a conscious living being (the most perfect), and a human being, for only human beings can realize infinite progress. Finally, he must be Prophet Muhammad, for a person of equal rank has never appeared. For 14 centuries, he has been the spiritual ruler of half the globe and one-fifth of humanity, as well as a teacher of all kinds of truth to people of perfection.

Friend and foe agree that he has all laudable virtues to the highest degree. At the outset of his mission, he challenged the whole world alone. That distinguished being must be Prophet Muhammad, who had all of these qualities and brought the Qur'an of Miraculous Expression, which has been recited daily for 14 centuries by countless people. He is the Tree of Creation’s seed and fruit. Upon him, his Family, and Companions be blessings and peace to the number of species and creatures in existence.

³⁵⁴ This event is one of his sainthood’s greatest wonders. He ascended physically, as well as through his heart and spirit, his outer and inner senses and faculties. (Tr.)

See how pleasant, joyful, good, pride-enhancing, and light-diffusing such a religious ceremony is for believers who consider the Prophet their master, leader, and intercessor. Consider how they benefit by hearing the beginning and end of his spiritual progress and learning the spiritual meaning of his life's important events.³⁵⁵

O God, for the sake of Your Holy Beloved and Your Greatest Name, allow and enable the hearts of those who publish this treatise, and their friends, to receive the lights of belief. Enable them to use their pens to multiply the treatises concerning the Qur'anic mysteries, and to follow the right path without any deviation. Amen.

Glory be to You. We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

The Everlasting: He is the Everlasting.

Said Nursi

* * *

The Twenty-fifth Letter

[Although the writer intended to write this letter, he did not do so.
We do not know the reason for this.]

³⁵⁵

The Prophet progressed spiritually and continues to do so, for according to the rule that “the cause is like the doer,” he benefits from every good, God-approved deed done by each member of his community. Thus he continues to make progress until the Day of Judgment.

*The
Twenty-sixth Letter*

The Twenty-sixth Letter

- *The Qur'an's argument against Satan and his party*
- *Negative nationalism and various matters of belief and worship*

(This letter has four topics in little relation to each other.)

In His Name, glory be to Him.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

If a provocation from Satan should provoke you, seek refuge in God.
He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. (7:200)

First topic

HE FIRST TOPIC COMPRISES A RATIONAL DISCUSSION WITH SATAN to refute one of his deceptive arguments. In the discussion, he and the transgressors finally are silenced and overcome.

One day 11 years ago during Ramadan, I was listening to a Qur'anic recitation in Istanbul's Bayazid Mosque. Suddenly, I felt as if an invisible person were telling me: "You regard the Qur'an as highly exalted and radiant. Study it objectively, that is, suppose it to be a human fabrica-

tion, and see if it is so exalted and radiant as you regard.” I was taken in for a brief moment, but perceiving that the speaker was Satan, who wanted to lead me astray, I sought help from the Qur'an and immediately felt a light in my heart. This encouraged me to argue:

Objective reasoning means impartial judgment, but the “impartial” judgment used by you and your disciples means siding with the Qur'an's opponents and following temporary unbelief. Supposing the Qur'an to be a human work and arguing thusly is to side with unbelief or falsehood.

When he retorted: “Then accept it as neither the Word of God nor the work of a human being,” I replied:

I cannot justify such a position. If two people argue about an item, it is deposited with a third person, provided that the two parties are in reasonable proximity to each other. If they are not, the property is left with the one who already holds it until the dispute is settled. The matter is not left undecided.

To follow the analogy: As the Qur'an is a priceless item, there is an infinite distance between its owner (God) and its claimant (humanity). The matter cannot be left undecided, for there is no third party to whom it can be entrusted. Thus it should be left in the “hands” of God. Second, since its revelation, billions of people have accepted it as God's Word. Therefore those who oppose it have to prove that it is the work of a human being. If they cannot, there is no justification for arguing whether or not it is His Word.

Therefore, Satan, who would dare to remove that brilliant Qur'an from the Greatest Throne of God, onto which it is fixed with thousands of “nails” of decisive proofs? Despite you, O Satan, the people of truth and justice deal with the issue by just reasoning and strengthen their belief in the Qur'an through even the smallest decisive proof. Those who are deceived by you and your disciples find it very difficult to move from unbelief's darkness to belief's light, for it requires a proof as strong as all these “nails,” once it has been cast to the ground by supposing it to be the work of a human being. Thus many people are deceived into that false pretence of “objective” reasoning and ultimately lose their belief.

But Satan insisted: “The Qur'an resembles human speech, for it follows a human style or conversation. If it were the Word of God, it should be extraor-

dinary in all aspects. As God's artistry cannot be likened to what is human, His Word likewise should not resemble human speech," and I countered:

Our Prophet was a human being. All of his acts and attitudes, except for his miracles and states of Prophethood, originated in his humanity. Like all other human beings, he was subject to and dependent upon God's creative and operational laws. He suffered from cold, felt pain, and so on. He was not extraordinary in all his acts and attitudes, and so set an example to humanity through his conduct. If he had been extraordinary, he could not have been an absolute guide in every aspect of life or a mercy for all through all his states.

In the same way, the Qur'an leads conscious beings, directs humanity and jinn, guides people of perfection, and instructs truth-seeking people. Thus it must follow the style of human speech and conversation. Humanity and jinn take their supplications and prayers from it, talk about their affairs in its terms, and derive their principles of good conduct from it. In short, every believer adopts it as the authorized reference for all of his or her affairs. If, by contrast, it had been like the Word of God heard by Moses on Mount Sinai, no one could have borne it or used it as a reference. Moses, one of the five greatest Messengers of God, heard only a few pieces of that Word and asked: "Is this Your speech?" God answered: "I have the power of all tongues and languages."

Satan continued: "In the name of religion, many people discuss almost the same subjects as those in the Qur'an. And so a human being could have written it." I replied, through the Qur'an's light:

FIRST: Religious people speak the truth out of their love of religion and in the name of God's commandments. They do not lie against or imitate God and speak on their own for fear of the Qur'anic threat: Who is greater in wrongdoing than the one who lies against God? (39:32).

SECOND: People can imitate only those of nearly the same level. Only those of the same species can take each other's form. Only those of nearly the same level can pretend to each other's level. However it is very difficult, even in that case, for them to deceive people for long, as their pretensions and false display eventually unmask them to perceptive people. If, on the other hand, counterfeits are greatly inferior to those they try to imitate (e.g., an ordinary person claiming Ibn Sina's knowledge, or a shepherd pretending to be a king), they would open themselves to ridicule.

Could a firefly make itself appear as a star for 1,000 years, or a fly make itself appear as a peacock for a year? Could a private pretend to be a famous marshal and occupy his chair for a long time without giving himself away? Could an unbeliever sustain a false display of a most pious person's loyalty, truthfulness, and conviction for a lifetime in the presence of discerning people?

If these "ifs" are inconceivable or unacceptable to any intelligent person, considering the Qur'an a human work would mean seeing that Manifest Book, which has been like a star of truths or a sun of perfections radiating the lights of truths in the sky of the Muslim world for centuries, as a collection of falsehoods invented by a counterfeiter. It would mean that his Companions of 23 years, as well as all who followed him during the next 14 centuries, were unaware of his real identity. This is beyond belief.

O Satan, you cannot deceive sensible people in such a way, even if you were far more advanced in your devilish craft. You only can deceive people into looking at the Qur'an and the Prophet from a very great distance and seeing those star-like objects as fireflies.

THIRD: Calling it a human work means that a most bright, true, and comprehensive criterion of the human world, miraculous of exposition and bringer of well-being to the world, is the product of an illiterate man. Moreover, his pretence and counterfeiting have appeared as earnestness, sincerity, and purity of intention for 14 centuries to even great intellects and exalted geniuses. This is inconceivable.

Further, accepting it would mean the following: A most illustrious and virtuous being who spent his entire life displaying and preaching conviction, truthfulness, trustworthiness, sincerity, earnestness, and uprightness in all his states, words, and actions, as well as raising many truthful persons, was a mean and discreditable rascal, wholly insincere, and the foremost in disbelief. Even Satan would be ashamed to conceive of such a great lie.

There is no third alternative. If the Qur'an were a human work, it would be so debased that it could be a source only of superstition. Its author's rank also would be degraded from being a source of perfection to the greatest cheat. Thus he could not be God's Messenger, for one who lies in His name is the worst person. Such a supposition is as inconceivable as imagining a fly to have the qualities of a peacock. No normal person could regard such suppositions as possible.

FOURTH: The Qur'an directs the Muslim community, which contains some of history's greatest and most magnificent people. The Qur'an has enabled them to conquer this world and the next; has equipped them materially and spiritually; and has instructed and educated them in all rational, moral, and spiritual matters according

to their particular level. It has purified them and used each bodily member, sense, and faculty in its most proper place.

Prophet Muhammad, who brought the Qur'an from God, exemplified His laws in his attitudes and actions throughout his life. He instructed us through his actions and sincere practice of the principles of truth as long as he lived. He showed and established the ways of true guidance and well-being through his sincere and reasonable sayings. In addition, as his life and good conduct testify, he is the most knowledgeable of God and the most fearful of His punishment. He established his splendid rule of perfection over half the globe and one-fifth of humanity. He truly became, through his well-known manners and actions as a Prophet, statesman, commander, spiritual and intellectual guide, father, husband, friend, and so on, the pride of humanity and of creation.

If you consider the Qur'an a human work, it would be no more than a worthless fabrication of a liar who did not recognize or fear God. No intelligent person, O Satan, could be deceived by such an inconceivable supposition, not even if you were far more powerful in your devilish tricks.

Satan retorted: "How can I fail to deceive? I already have deceived most people, including the foremost in rational thought, and led them to deny both the Qur'an and Muhammad." I said:

FIRST: When looked at from a great distance, the largest thing can look like a tiny particle; a star can be considered a candle.

SECOND: When considered superficially and in a way vulnerable to distraction and illusion, an inconceivable thing can appear conceivable. Once an old man was scanning the horizon to catch sight of the new crescent moon. A white hair from his eyebrow curved over his eye and came into his line of sight. Thus deceived by that illusion, he said: "I have seen the crescent."

THIRD: Denial differs from non-confirmation, which is a kind of indifference and lack of judgment. Thus many inconceivable things may exist unintentionally in non-confirmation. Denial is a judgment and a means confirming non-existence that usually is reached through reasoning. A devil like you deprives people of sound judgment and leads them to denial. You use heedlessness, deviation, sophistry, obstinacy, demagogery, arrogant superiority, conceit, seduction, and custom to cause people to see falsehood as truth and the inconceivable as conceivable. Thus you have led many people (human in appearance but perhaps not in essence) into umbelief, which requires accepting many inconceivable things.

FOURTH: The Qur'an is a book of pure truths and matchless value, a guide to saints and scholars of truth and purity. It invites all people, regardless of time or place, as well as those seeking perfection, to truth and love of the truth, truthfulness and loyalty, trustworthiness and reliability. It secures happiness in both worlds through Islam's pillars of beliefs and fundamental principles. The Prophet is the most trustworthy being, the foremost and firmest in belief and conviction. This is testified to by Islam and its law, which he preached and showed by his acknowledged piety and sincere worship manifested throughout his life, as required by his laudable virtues and confirmed by all people of truth and perfection.

Given this, considering the Qur'an a human work would mean that it is a collection of fallacies and lies, and that the Prophet is an unreliable, unbelieving liar with no fear of God. This supposition is the most dangerous kind of unbelief, deviation, and wrong-doing. Even devils and Sophists would be ashamed to conceive of such things.

In short: The Nineteenth Letter states that those whose power of hearing allows them to appreciate the Qur'an's miraculousness acknowledge that it is not of the same kind and degree as all other books they have heard. Thus it is either inferior or superior to all other books. As not even a devil would assert the former, we must accept that it is superior and therefore a miracle. That being the case, based on the two decisive proofs of dichotomy and reductio ad absurdum, we openly declare:

O Satan and your disciples. The Qur'an is either God's Word manifested through His Highest Throne and Highest Name, or the fabrication of an unbeliever who neither recognizes nor fears God. Even you, O Satan, could never say that this second alternative is true. Thus the Qur'an is, of necessity and undoubtedly, the Word of the Creator of the universe, given that there is no third alternative, as explained above.

Likewise Muhammad is either a Messenger of God, as well as the most perfect Messenger and superior to all other creatures, or a man of unbelief and the lowest nature, since he lied against God and neither recognized Him nor His punishment.³⁵⁶ Not even European philosophers or hypocrites of other lands, in whom you place great trust, have alleged such a thing, O Satan. Since no one will heed and accept such an allegation, even the most corrupt philosopher and

³⁵⁶ Since the Qur'an mentions such a supposition to refute the unbelievers' unbelief and bad language, I felt justified in mentioning it, though fearfully and with aversion, only as a most impossible supposition to show how groundless and false are such assertions.

unscrupulous hypocrite are bound to admit that Muhammad was a very wise man and of exemplary good conduct.

Finally, there are only two alternatives. As with the Qur'an, the second option is inconceivable and unacceptable. Therefore he is self-evidently and of necessity God's Messenger, the most perfect Messenger, and superior to all other creatures. This is true whether you or your followers like it or not. Upon him be blessings and peace to the number of angels, human beings, and jinn.

Satan's second, insignificant objection

While I was reciting:

Not a word he utters, but by him is an observer ready. And the agony of death comes in truth; that is what you were shunning. And the trumpet is blown; that is the Day of the Threat. And every soul comes, along with it a driver and a witness. "You were heedless of this. Now We have removed from you your covering, and so your sight today is piercing." And his comrade says: "Cast, you twain, into Hell each rebel ingrate." (50:18-24)

Satan said: "You find the Qur'an's eloquence primarily in its fluent style and intelligible expression. Yet, where there is fluency and coherence in these verses, there are also great gaps, for they jump from the throes of death to the world's destruction, from the blowing of the Trumpet to the end of the Reckoning and therefrom to throwing the sinful into Hell."

I made the following points in reply:

A most fundamental element of the Qur'an's miraculousness is its eloquence and precision. It contains so many instances of this that observant critics have been filled with wonder and admiration. For example, eloquent people have prostrated before: *And it was said: O Earth. Swallow your water and, O sky, cease (your rain). And the water was made to subside. And the commandment was fulfilled, and the Ark settled in al-Judi, and it was said: Away with the people of the evildoers* (11:44), which tells of the Flood's might so precisely and miraculously within a few short sentences.

In: *Thamud denied in their rebellious pride when the most wretched of them rose up; then the Messenger of God (Salih) said to them: "Let the She-Camel of God drink." But they denied him, and slaughtered her, so their Lord doomed them for their sin and leveled them. He fears not the issue thereof* (91:11-15), the Qur'an recounts precisely and clearly the people of Thamud's story and fate in a most comprehensible way.

In: *And Dhu al-Nun, when he went forth in anger and was convinced that We would not straiten him: then he called out in the layers of darkness:* “There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I have been a wrongdoer” (21:87), much remains unsaid between *We would not straiten him and he called out in the layers of darkness*. Those few words retell the chief points of Prophet Yunus’ (Jonah) story in a way that neither diminishes comprehensibility nor mars eloquence. What is not stated directly is left to the person’s understanding.

Also in *Sura Yusuf*, seven or eight sentences are omitted between *so send me forth* (end of verse 45) and *Joseph, O you truthful one* (beginning of verse 46). This neither affects comprehensibility nor mars the Qur'an's eloquence.

The Qur'an contains many more instances of miraculous precision. The precise description given in the verses in question from *Sura Qaf* make them even more beautiful and miraculous. Pointing to the unbelievers' future, which is so long that a day of it is equal to 50,000 earthly years, they draw attention to the fearful events that will befall them. They bring before our minds the whole span of those upheavals like a flash of lightening, thereby compressing it into one page so that we can ponder it. By considering the unmentioned events understood, they achieve a sublime fluency. *When the Qur'an is recited, give ear to it and pay heed, that you may obtain mercy* (7:204).

I then asked Satan if he had any more objections, and he replied: “I don't oppose those truths. But many foolish people follow me, and many devils in human form assist me. Many philosophers are just as conceited as Pharaoh. I teach them things that contribute to their pride and selfishness. They will prevent the publication of *The Words*, and so I will never yield to you.”

Glory be to You. We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Second topic

[Since this topic deals with why Said Nursi feels uneasy when his two disciples praise him at great length, and so is personal in nature, it is not included in the translation.]

Third topic

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

O humanity, We created you male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know each other ... (49:13)

In other words, people are to form social relationships and help one another. This topic consists of seven matters.

FIRST MATTER: I feel compelled to write about nationalism (in the form of racism or chauvinism) in order to serve the Qur'an and refute unfair attacks. I choose not to do this according to the style of New Said, who would like to withdraw from social life, but in the style of Old Said, who was connected with Islamic social life, for the exalted truth expressed in this verse is related to social life.

SECOND MATTER: I explain this principle of mutual knowledge and help as follows: An army is divided into army corps, regiments, battalions, squadrons or companies, and squads. This allows each soldier to establish his duties and relationships with the army as a whole, the army to perform a general task according to the principle of mutual assistance, and the nation to be protected. This division does not mean that the parts should compete with, feel enmity toward, or oppose one another.

Extending this analogy, the Muslim nation resembles a large army divided into peoples and tribes. However, their numerous common factors and values (e.g., their Creator is one, their Provider is one, their Prophet is one, their Book is one, their country is one, the direction or the center toward which they turn in worship is one) require unity. Since such common factors or values require unity and mutual love, the purpose for this division is mutual acquaintance and assistance.

THIRD MATTER: Nationalism or ethnic differences have been unleashed in this century, particularly by devious European officials following the well-known principle of divide and rule. The target of this insidious assault is the Muslim world.

Nationalism gives some satisfaction and encourages self-pride, and also produces a power. Given this, you cannot cause those who take an active part in social and political matters to give it up. However, people must realize that there are two kinds of nationalism: negative and positive. The first kind, which is ominous and harmful, is fed through swallowing others and sustained through enmity against others. As such nationalism causes mutual antagonism and discord, the Qur'an and the Prophet reject it: "Islam has forbidden the national (tribal) zealotry of the Age of Ignorance."³⁵⁷

The Qur'an is explicit on this point:

³⁵⁷ For different versions, see Bukhari, "Ahkam," 4; Tirmidhi, "Jihad," 28.

When non-believers set in their hearts zealotry, the tribalism of the Age of Ignorance, God sent down His peace and reassurance upon His Messenger and the believers, and fastened to them the word of self-restraint and God-consciousness to which they have better right and of which they are worthy. God knows everything. (48:26)

The sacred and positive Islamic nationalism contains no negative partisan nationalism. What state with more than 1 billion members, other than the Muslim state, has so many eternal brothers and sisters?

Earlier outbreaks of negative nationalism have harmed Islamic unity and the Muslim world. For example, the Umayyads preferred Arabs in their government and so both offended other [non-Arab] Muslims and suffered many misfortunes. European nations became excessively nationalistic during this century, which ignited the long-standing ominous French–German enmity and caused the vastly destructive First World War. And in our own history, just as Babylon was destroyed by internal tribal division, the beginning of the Ottoman State's second constitutional period [declared in 1908] saw the formation of many minority-based groups or societies, particularly among the Greeks and Armenians. What befell the Ottoman State as a result illustrates negative nationalism's harm.

The national or tribal conflict between Muslim peoples or communities is so great a misfortune that it is like getting bitten by a snake to avoid a mosquito. At a time when the European powers resemble huge dragons just waiting to attack us to satisfy their insatiable greed, our national integrity is harmed by encouraging hostility and taking sides, because of national differences, against our citizens in the eastern cities and the coreligionists among our southern neighbors.

There is no reason for enmity toward our southern coreligionists, from where the Qur'an's light and Islam's radiance came to us, for such national conflicts only benefit Europe. Also, such feelings may cause enmity toward the Qur'an and Islam, which means treachery to all Muslims' worldly and otherworldly lives. To destroy these two worlds' cornerstones under the pretext of serving social life through nationalism or patriotism is stupidity.

FOURTH MATTER: The second kind of nationalism is positive and, arising from social life's intrinsic requirements, engenders mutual help and solidarity, produces a beneficial power, and strengthens Islamic unity. Its goal should be to serve and protect—not replace—Islam, for the unity desired and established by Islam is manifold and counts in both the intermediate

and eternal worlds. Since nationalist unity is only as strong as one aspect of Islamic unity, trying to replace the latter with the former is as foolish as replacing the diamonds in a citadel with its stones.

Followers of the Qur'an! Your land has carried the flag of the Qur'an for 1,000 years, since the 'Abbasids, over three continents and challenged the world. You have made your national feeling and solidarity a stronghold to protect Islam and, by repelling the world's dreadful assaults, are included in the meaning of: *God will bring a people He loves, and who love Him, humble toward believers and dignified toward unbelievers, striving in His way and not fearing the reproach of any reproachers* (5:24).

You should be afraid of and avoid being led by the deceitful instigation of Europe and Westernized hypocrites, who are included in the meaning of that verse's first part: *O you who believe! Whosoever of you turns from his [her] religion...*

We also should remember that the Turks have the largest Muslim population in the world. All Turkish people, unlike any other people and wherever they are, are Muslim. Some Turkish communities, like the Hungarians who did not accept Islam, have lost their Turkish identity.

О Turkish people! More than anyone else, you should be careful! Your nationality is blended with and inseparable from Islam. If you separate them, you are lost! All your past accomplishments are a source of pride, an honorable record of serving Islam. No power can remove this record, so do not remove it from your own heart!

FIFTH MATTER: The awakening peoples of Asia³⁵⁸ blindly follow the European style of nationalism and sacrifice many sacred things for its sake. But a suit made from the same cloth cannot fit every body, and an elderly prayer leader does not wear a tango dancer's clothes designed. Thus each people should strive for authenticity. If Europe is like a market or a barracks, Asia is an arable field or a mosque. A merchant may go to dance, but a farmer cannot. A barracks' conditions differ from those of a mosque.

Most Prophets appeared in Asia, while philosophers usually emerged in Europe. This is a sign from eternal Destiny that Asian vitality and progress is possible through religion and spirituality. Philosophy and science should support—not replace—religion. Indifference to religion is a grave mistake. Do

³⁵⁸ Said Nursi uses Asia for the Muslim lands located in what we know today as the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa, and the Far East. (Ed.)

not forget that Europe is devoted to its religion, and that such Western leaders as Wilson, Lloyd George, and Venizelos are as fanatically devoted to their religion as a priest.³⁵⁹

Any comparison of Islam with Christianity is false. Europe progressed when it reformed its religion after 3 centuries of wars caused by the Church and religion's misuse by despotic rulers and priests who sought to crush the masses and the intellectuals [to preserve the status quo, which favored their interests]. But in Islam, religious devotion caused only one internal war.³⁶⁰ Moreover, Muslims realized a far greater progress than their contemporaries whenever they followed Islam earnestly, as seen in the Islamic state of Andalusia, the greatest teacher of Renaissance Europe.³⁶¹ Whenever Muslims have been indifferent to religion, they have declined and fallen to a miserable state.

Through its numerous principles of compassion, such as mandating the prescribed alms (*zakat*) and prohibiting interest, Islam protects the masses. Through its many warnings, like: *Will you not exercise your reason? Will they not contemplate and reflect? Do they not ponder?*, it considers intellect and science as proofs for its truths, and protects and encourages scientists to conduct research. Since it is the citadel of the masses and scientists, no one should regret being a Muslim.

Islam differs from other religions because it is founded upon pure monotheism and so denies any intermediary or intermediate causal creative or formative effect. Christianity admits such influences, for it allows saints and elders a certain partnership in the manifestation of God's Sovereignty by saying that God has begotten a son:

They have taken as lords beside God their rabbis, monks, and the Messiah son of Mary, when they were commanded to serve but One

³⁵⁹ Woodrow Wilson: American politician and president (1856-1924); Lloyd George (1863-1945), British statesman and prime minister. Eleutherios Venizelos (1864-1936): Greek statesman and premier.)

³⁶⁰ 'A'isha, Talha ibn 'Ubaydullah, and al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam opposed some of Ali's decisions. This later caused a war to break out between them. (Tr.)

³⁶¹ Andalusia is the name of Islamic Spain, a period lasting from 712 to 1492. At a time when most of Europe was lost in the Dark Ages, it was a beacon of knowledge and intellectual endeavor that attracted many European students. After its fall to Catholic Spain, its intellectual heritage was dispersed and was instrumental in Europe's intellectual re-awakening and the Renaissance. (Ed.)

God. There is no god but He, be He glorified from their associating partners with Him. (9:31)

Christians who rise to the highest worldly posts can remain Christians. They even become, like the late American president Wilson, bigoted and full of egotism. Their Muslim counterparts, however, are expected to renounce egotism and pride in order to be good Muslims. Followers of pure monotheism, Muslims who cannot do so either become indifferent to Islam or even lose their belief.

SIXTH MATTER: To those extreme negative nationalists and separatists, I say the following: Earth's surface has been the stage of many changes and emigrations. Once the center of the Islamic administration was formed in our country, many peoples, like moths to a light, flocked to it to settle. As the resulting intermingling makes it impossible to determine their national origins, except by reading the Supreme Guarded Tablet, it is meaningless and harmful to build a society and our attitudes on nationalism.

Even one of the racial separatist leaders, one who proclaimed great indifference to religion, had to acknowledge: "If a people have the same religion and speak the same language, they constitute a nation." When determining national identity, language, religion, and (geographical) land are key factors. Their joint existence means a strong national structure. But the lack of any one factor does not exclude the possibility of national identity and sentiment.

Of the hundreds of benefits that Islam's sacred nationality has given our country's social life, I cite only two examples: First, the Muslim state has maintained its vitality and existence, despite its population of only 20 or 30 million and European hostility, because of the conviction that: "If I die, I will die a martyr; if I survive, I will survive as a holy defender of Islam." This conviction comes from the Qur'an's light and is held by our state's army. Thus equipped, that army has welcomed death with perfect enthusiasm and terrified Europe for centuries. What else could inculcate such a sublime quality of self-sacrifice in our soldiers' minds, make them single-minded and pure-hearted? What kind of nationalistic zeal can be substituted for it and cause soldiers to sacrifice everything, even their lives, for its sake?

Second, whenever the dragons—the European great powers—afflict this Muslim state, it deeply affects and shakes the Muslim world. Those imperialist powers governing Muslim lands usually restrain their urge to attack this state, for they fear that the Muslims under their control will revolt. What

other force can substitute for this continual, and certainly non-trivial, spiritual support (Muslim unity)? Those who offer it should not be offended by [being forced to project] a negative nationalism and patriotism that make us indifferent to other Muslims.

SEVENTH MATTER: To those who offer patriotism as an argument for negative nationalism, I say: If you feel a sincere love and affection for this nation, your national and patriotic zeal should embrace the great majority of our people. If it only briefly enhances the social life of a small oligarchy who ignores the Divine commands, bringing unpitying disadvantage to the majority, it is neither nationalism nor patriotism. Such people do not need compassion.

Any patriotic zeal coming from negative nationalism may benefit at most two out of eight citizens. While these two may benefit from such undeserved zeal, the other six are neglected: the old, the ill, the afflicted, the weak, children, and pious individuals seeking light, consolation, and well-being not in this world but in the intermediate and other worlds for which they labor. This last group needs the help of public-spirited and compassionate people. What kind of patriotism allows the light of such individuals to be put out, their consolation to be removed? Where is the fellow-feeling for the whole nation? Where is the self-sacrifice for the nation's sake?

It is neither permitted nor proper to despair of God's Mercy. I hope that God Almighty will not ruin, because of some temporary setbacks, our mighty community and its magnificent army, which He appointed to bear the Qur'an's flag and to serve it for 1,000 years. He will enable the Qur'an's light to illuminate the world once again, and this community to continue to perform its essential duty.

Fourth topic

(Note: Like the topics of The Twenty-sixth Letter, the following topics are not related to each other. They were written as answers to a disciple's questions. So do not seek any connection among them.)

FIRST MATTER

SECOND: You ask about the number of the worlds in the phrase: *the Lord of the Worlds* (1:2), saying that the Qur'anic interpreters consider them to be 18,000 in number.

I do not know what is meant by “18,000.” But I can say the following: Each Qur’anic expression has a universal content addressing each level of understanding at all times. Thus any interpretation points to only one aspect of that universal content. Every interpreter or saintly scholar, depending on their spiritual discovery or intuition, the evidence they obtain or their natural disposition, prefers one aspect. Some interpreters believe that there are 18,000 worlds.

For example: *He let forth the two seas that meet together, between them a barrier they do not overpass* (55:19-20), which are repeated by saintly people in their daily recitations, indicates all pairs of “seas” or realms, spiritual or material, figurative or actual, from the realms of Lordship and servanthood to the spheres of necessity and contingency, from this world to the Hereafter, including the visible, corporeal world and the Unseen World, the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, the Mediterranean and Red seas, and the Suez Canal, salt water and sweet water in the seas and underground, and such mighty rivers as the Euphrates and Tigris carrying sweet water and salty seas to which they flow. All of these, together with many others I do not deem it necessary to mention here, are included in that expression’s content, whether literally or figuratively.

Likewise, the expression: *Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds* has many aspects. And so people of truth and discernment, depending on their own insight and spiritual discovery, explain it differently. My own understanding is that the sky contains thousands of worlds. For example, each of some stars may be a particular kind of world. Each species here constitutes a world, and each person is a little world. *The Lord of the Worlds* means that every world is directly trained and administered by God’s Lordship.

THIRD: God’s Messenger, declared: “When God wills a people well, He makes them watchful of their defects.”³⁶² Also, the Qur’an narrates that Prophet Joseph said: *I do not claim that my soul is always innocent; surely, the soul of humanity incites to evil* (12:53).

Those who rely on and trust in their carnal souls are unfortunate, while those who see their own defects are fortunate. That being so, you are among the fortunate. But sometimes, despite the carnal soul’s being refined and becom-

³⁶² Al-Ajluni, *Kashf al-Khafa'*, 1:81.

ing the “self-accusing soul” or even “the soul at rest,” it moves its attack to the nerves.³⁶³

As a result, those people cannot be free of anger and irritation until they die. Many pure and saintly people complain of their selfhood’s temptations and wail over spiritual ailments, even though their souls were at rest and their hearts were illuminated and pure. What they actually complain of is not having an evil-commanding self, but the transferal of those evil commands to the nerves. Their spiritual ailments are imaginary. I hope, my dear brother, that it is not your carnal self or spiritual diseases that afflict you, but that you are suffering from nerves, so that you may continue your struggle to make spiritual progress.

SECOND MATTER: The detailed answers to that old prayer leader’s three questions are found in some the *Risale-i Nur* collection. I give a brief summary, as follows:

³⁶³ Fethullah Gülen, a noted Turkish Islamic scholar, explains further: “Constant self-criticism and self-reprimand show the perfection of one’s belief. Everyone who has planned his or her life to reach the horizon of a perfect, universal human being is conscious of this life and spends every moment of it struggling with himself or herself. Such a person demands a password or a visa from whatever occurs to his or her heart and mind. Self-control against the temptations of Satan or the excitement of temper are practiced, and words and actions are carefully watched. Self-criticism is constant, even for those acts that seem most sensible and acceptable. Evening reviews of words and actions during the day are the rule, as are morning resolutions to avoid sins. A believer knits the ‘lace of his or her life’ with the “threads” of self-criticism and self-accusation.

So long as a believer shows such loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord and lives in such humility, the doors of heaven will be thrown open and an invitation will be extended:

Come, O faithful one. You have intimacy with Us. This is the station of intimacy. We have found you a faithful one. Every day he or she is honored with a new, heavenly journey in the spirit. It is God Himself Who swears by such a purified soul in: Nay, I swear by the self-accusing soul! (75:2)

For ordinary people, resignation means not objecting to what God has willed for them. For those with a deeper spiritual knowledge of God, resignation means welcoming their individual destinies. For those who live a life of profound spirituality, resignation means that, without paying attention to their own considerations, they are always attentive to what He wants them to do and how He wants them to be. The verses: *O soul at rest, return to your Lord, well pleasing and pleased. Enter among My servants, and enter My Paradise* (89:27-30) encompass all degrees of resignation, and contain responses to the desires of those resigned to the Divine Will and Destiny.” Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism* (Turkey: The Fountain, 1999), 9, 108. (Ed.)

HIS FIRST QUESTION: In his letter to Fakhr al-Din al-Razi,³⁶⁴ Muhiy al-Din ibn al-'Arabi says: "Knowledge of God is different from knowledge of His existence." What does this mean?

First: The parable in The Twenty-second Word's introduction, which shows the difference between superficial belief and substantial belief in God's Unity, answers this. Also refer to The Thirty-second Word.

Second: Ibn al-'Arabi, believing that the methodologists' and theologians' explanations on the principles of the Necessarily Existent Being's Existence and Unity could not establish the essential reality, wrote what he did to al-Razi.

Knowledge of God acquired through theology is imperfect and unsatisfactory, whereas following the way of the Qur'an results in acquiring perfect knowledge and complete satisfaction. I hope that each treatise of the *Risale-i Nur* collection functions as a lamp on the illuminating highway of the Qur'an.

Just as (in Ibn al-'Arabi's view) al-Razi's theology-derived knowledge of God is imperfect, knowledge gained through Sufism is incomplete when compared with knowledge acquired directly from the Qur'an via direct inheritance to Prophethood. Some of Ibn al-'Arabi's followers deny the universe's existence, saying that only He exists, in order to gain permanent satisfaction. Others, also seeking permanent satisfaction, ignore creation in their proposition that "there is no witnessed but He."

Knowledge acquired from the Qur'an gives a perfect and permanent satisfaction, and neither condemns the universe to non-existence nor ignores it. Rather, it elevates the universe from being chaos to the rank of cosmos, and employs it in the name of God Almighty. Thus each thing becomes a mirror to knowledge of God, as Sa'di al-Shirazi says: "In the view of discerning people, each sheet of the Book of the Universe opens a window on knowledge of God Almighty."³⁶⁵

In some parts of *The Words*, I have explained the difference between these two ways as follows: A town can be supplied with water either by constructing a network of canals or drainage ditches through hills to carry water

³⁶⁴ Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (865-923/932): Celebrated alchemist and philosopher, considered the Islamic world's greatest physician. (Ed.)

³⁶⁵ Sa'di al-Shirazi (c1571-1640): Philosopher who led the Iranian cultural renaissance during the 17th century; the foremost representative of the Illuminationist (Ishraqi) school of philosophers-mystics. (Ed.)

from a great distance, or by digging wells everywhere. The first way is very difficult and laborious; the second is easy for those who can do it. By interrupting the chain of cause and effect at the beginning or start-point of existence, for a never-ending chain of cause and effect is impossible, theologians go to great lengths to show the Necessarily Existent Being's existence. But there is an "inexhaustible source of water" everywhere along the highway of the Qur'an. Like the staff of Moses, each Qur'anic verse can make "the water of life" gush out wherever it strikes and show the truth. Every thing contains a sign showing that He is One.

Besides, in addition to knowledge, belief should be imbibed and appropriated by many other human faculties. As digested food is distributed throughout the body to meet each part's need, all matters of belief, after being received by the intellect through learning, should be assimilated by such spiritual faculties as the spirit, heart, soul, and other innermost senses according to each one's need and capacity. If even one thing does not receive its share, belief remains imperfect. This is what Ibn al-'Arabi pointed out to al-Razi.

THIRD MATTER: How can we reconcile *We have honored the children of Adam* (17:70) with: *he (humanity) is very unjust and ignorant?* (33:72)

ANSWER: This matter is explained in the Eleventh, Twenty-third, and Twenty-fourth Words. I present here a brief summary: God Almighty makes many things from one substance so that it will serve many purposes, and inscribes the content of 1,000 "books" on a "page." Likewise, He created humanity as a single, comprehensive species, for He willed each person to perform the duties and functions of all animal species. As a result, unlike those of animals, human feelings and faculties have no natural restrictions and so function in an infinite space.

Since each person is a mirror reflecting the endless manifestations of the Creator's Names, his or her faculties are endowed with infinite potential. For example, if someone were given the whole world, his or her greed would engender the question: "Is there any more?" In addition, their selfishness would allow them to sacrifice the well-being of thousands for their own self-interest. Given this, people can increase in evil until they become just as unjust as Nimrod or Pharaoh, or can increase in good conduct until they attain the rank of truthful ones or Prophets.

In addition, people are ignorant of life's necessities and so must learn everything, whereas animals have no such need. Since humanity's need is infi-

nite, all people are born in a state of profound ignorance. But animals need only a few things when they are born, and can acquire the necessary knowledge in a few months or days, or sometimes in a few hours. Animals adapt so quickly to their lives that it seems they were perfected in another world. But humanity learns how to walk only after a couple of years, and can distinguish between benefit and harm only after 15 years. The above verse alludes to this by mentioning humanity's ignorance.

FOURTH MATTER: You ask about: *Refresh your belief with “there is no deity but God.”*³⁶⁶ Its meaning is explained in many sections of *The Words*. One of the many aspects of its meaning is this: Each person must renew and refresh his or her belief, because both they and their personal worlds are renewed continually. Each individual acquires or is transformed into a different individuality annually, monthly, daily, and even hourly. Subject to the passage of time, they daily assume the form of individuality. Given this, our transient world passes away and is replaced by a new one that opens its doors to us every day. Belief is the light of the life we acquire while alive, as well as the light of each world we inhabit. *There is no deity but God* is the key with which to obtain that light.

We are subject to our carnal self's constant influence. Our fancies and desires, when joined with Satan and enabled by our heedlessness, injure our belief and sever its light through evil doubts and suggestions. Furthermore, believers should refresh their belief constantly, for people are liable to frequent falling and doing and saying certain things that are contrary to Sharia and, according to some leading scholars, indicate unbelief (such as objecting to Divine judgments or displaying displease with Destiny and so on).

QUESTION: To prove God's Oneness, theologians draw attention to the universe's being contingent and having a beginning: Since it is the same whether the universe does or does not exist, its existence is described as not necessary. Since it actually exists and has a beginning, there must be a Necessarily Existing Being, Absolute and Eternal, Who willed to originate it. Some Sufis seek perfect satisfaction through Divine Unity by ignoring the universe's existence: "There is no witness but He." Other Sufis accord the universe only a nominal or imaginary existence and seek perfect satisfaction through: "There is no existent but He."

³⁶⁶ Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, 4:256; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 2:359.

You assert a different way, the existence of a main highway in the Qur'an, and show it through: "There is no worshipped but He" and "There is no one wished for except He." Could you demonstrate a proof of Divine Unity contained by this highway or a short path leading to it?

ANSWER: Although all Words and Letters point to that highway, I will summarize a mighty, comprehensive proof of it. Each thing shows that its Creator created all things. Each deed or effect shows that its Author produces all deeds or effects. Each act of invention proves that all acts of invention belong to its Inventor. Each Name manifesting in creation points out that all Names manifesting in the universe belong to the same Being to Whom it also belongs.

This means that each thing proves Divine Unity and is a window opening to knowledge of God. Each deed or effect, especially living existents, is a miniature of the universe, a seed of creation, and a fruit of this planet. Given this, the Being Who created that miniature, seed, or fruit necessarily created the universe, for the One Who created the fruit must be the One Who created the tree. Thus, just as each work demonstrates that its Author is the same Being Who produces all other works, each act shows that its Agent is the Doer of all other acts. We say this because each act of creation shows itself to be a tip indicating the Law of Creativity, which is so comprehensive that it encompasses everything in the universe. So, the same Being is the Agent of that single act of creation and all other acts with the same function depending on that universal Law.

The Being Who revives an insect after its hibernation also creates all insects and other animals and quickens Earth for spring. Whoever whirls particles also moves creation in a continuous succession and causes the sun and its planets to move, for a law is like a string stretching throughout the universe, and deeds and effects are arranged along it.

Each manifested Name proves, just as each work or act does, that all Names belong to its Owner. This is because these Names are like concentric spheres, one within the other, interrelated and mutually supportive, mutually perfecting and adorning each other's work. For example, when the Name the All-Life-Giver manifests Itself by giving life to something, the Names the All-Wise, All-Munificent, All-Compassionate, and All-Provider also manifest at the same instant, respectively, to arrange the living thing's body with wisdom, embellish it with munificence, prepare its needs with compas-

sion, and provide its necessary sustenance for maintenance in ways unexpected by itself. Thus the One Who owns the Name the All-Life-Giving also owns the Name the All-Wise, all-encompassing and radiating in the universe; and the Name the All-Compassionate, one training creation with compassion; and the Name the All-Provider, generously nourishing all living creatures.

Each Name, act, and work is such a proof of Divine Oneness and a seal of Divine Unity that each demonstrates that all words (creatures) written on the pages of the universe and the lines of ages are inscriptions of its Author's Pen.

O God, bestow blessings on him who said: "The best of what I and the preceding Prophets said is: 'There is no deity but God,'"³⁶⁷ and on his Family and Companions, and grant them peace.

FIFTH MATTER

SECOND: You ask whether confirming "There is no deity but God" without confessing "Muhammad is the Messenger of God" is enough to prosper in the Hereafter. This requires elaboration. However, I restrict myself to the following reflections:

The Islamic confession of faith's two propositions are not separate from each other; rather, they prove each other and belief in one requires belief in the other. Since Muhammad is the Last Prophet and thereby heir to all previous Prophets, he leads all the ways to reaching God. There is no way of truth and salvation other than his. Those most prominent in knowledge of God and meticulous research proclaim, as Sa'di al-Shirazi does: "Sa'di, it is inconceivable that there might be a way of salvation other than the way of Mustafa."³⁶⁸ They also declare "All paths are closed except that of Muhammad."

Some people who follow his highway are unaware that it is his way, while others partly follow his way without knowing the Prophet. Others may be content, unconsciously, with his way in the ecstatic bewilderment of "There is no deity but God," in a state of absolute seclusion and trance. However, we must make a distinction between non-acceptance and conscious denial. The non-acceptance of the Prophet by these people of ecstasy and seclusion comes from their ignorance of him. What they know of God consists of "There is no deity but God." People in this category may attain salvation.

³⁶⁷ Imam Malik, *al-Muwatta'*, "Qur'an," 32.

³⁶⁸ Mustafa, meaning "pure and chosen," is an attribute of Prophet Muhammad. (Ed.)

But if those who hear of the Prophet and learn of his message reject him, they cannot recognize Almighty God. Moreover, their saying “There is no deity but God” is not sufficient to express belief in Divine Unity, which brings salvation. We say this because their attitude is one of rejection and denial. Those who deny Prophet Muhammad, the pride of creation and the honor of humanity due to his miracles and accomplishments, cannot receive any light or gain true knowledge of God.

[As the sixth and seventh matters deal with matters that are of a highly technical nature and concern, they are not included in the translation.]

EIGHTH MATTER: Some ask: Each Qur’anic expression and formula of praise and glorification of God somehow illuminates humanity’s spiritual faculties and provides spiritual nourishment. But if their meaning is not known, just saying them will not give the same enlightenment. Is reciting them in one’s native language more beneficial?

ANSWER: The Arabic wording (letters) of the Qur’an and the formulas of God’s praise and glorification belonging to the Prophet, are like a living skin. A garment can be changed, but changing the skin harms the body. The prescribed prayers’ wordings (letters) and the call to prayer are a title or designation to their meaning. Neither a title nor a designation can be changed. Let me give an example from my own experience, as follows:

I used to recite *Surat al-Ikhlas* (The Chapter of Sincerity) 1,000 times on the eve of the ‘Id (religious festivals). While doing so in groups of 100, some of my spiritual faculties were nourished and satisfied quickly. Others (i.e., reflection) took their share after some concentration on the meaning and were satiated. After a few more recitations, still others (i.e., the heart) were satisfied by some understanding of the conceptions giving spiritual pleasure. Only the faculties not yet bored of recitation remained.

As they no longer needed the meaning or its subtleties, heedlessness did not mar them, although it did mar the faculty of reflection. The wording and the simple, literal meaning intended by it sufficed for their enlightenment. Faculties fed up with further concentration on meaning only need remembrance and encouragement, not learning and understanding. So the Arabic wording, which has the same function for the meaning as the skin has for the body, gives them constant enlightenment, especially because it continuously reminds the reciter that he or she is reciting God’s Word and Speech.

Thus it is harmful to use another language to try and express the truths contained in the *adhan* (call to prayer), in God's praise and glorification repeated after the prescribed prayers, and in such Qur'anic *suras* as *al-Fatiha* and *al-Ikhlas*. Once the Divine and Prophetic wording, that inexhaustible source of enlightenment, has gone, the most important human faculties will no longer receive their share of satisfaction or enlightenment. Moreover the rewards, as many as at least 10 per letter, will be lost. And since everyone cannot find uninterrupted peace during prayer, human translations may well, in heedlessness, darken the soul.

Abu Hanifa said: "The formula of Divine Unity: 'There is no deity but God' is a title or a designation for Divine Unity." This is true with the words of God's praise and glorification, especially those recited during the *adhan* and prescribed prayers, and should be considered with respect to their terminological (and not literal) meaning. Thus changing them is prohibited. Their clear, pithy sense, which every believer should know, can be learned easily.

How can Muslims who, despite spending a lifetime in a Muslim community and filling their minds with worldly things, fail to learn the clear, pithy sense of those blessed words that are the key to eternal life? How can they be called true Muslims and considered sensible? The "case" of those sources of light cannot be shattered just to accommodate such lazy people!

Also, all believers understand that they glorify God when saying *subhan Allah* (Glory be to God). Is this not enough for enlightenment? If they consider its meaning in terms of their own language, a single occasion of study will suffice. However, they repeat it at least 100 times a day, thereby giving the intellect its share and diffusing, through its words and brief contents, a great deal of enlightenment to others.

In short, nothing can replace or function as the blessed Divine wording, this "case" of Islam's obligations or fundamentals. Although a translation may seem adequate at first, it really is not when considered in terms of permanence, sublimity, and appropriate holiness. In addition, there is no need to change the language when dealing with the "case" of secondary religious principles, for people are instructed in such things through advice, preaching, and other methods of teaching in their native language.

In conclusion, then, Arabic is such a grammatically and syntactically strict and comprehensive language, and the Qur'anic expressions are so miraculous and unique, that no other language can convey the full meaning. All trans-

lations are rather simple and imperfect interpretations that are far from providing the true meaning of a verse, each of which has numerous connotations, resonances, and layers upon layers of meaning!

NINTH MATTER (an important discussion of sainthood): The Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a, the people of true guidance and truth who constitute the overwhelming majority of the world's Muslims, have preserved and maintained the truths of the Qur'an and belief in strict obedience to the Prophet's Sunna. Although most saints have appeared among them, a few felt the need to follow a way that does not agree with some of the Ahl al-Sunna's principles.

The sainthood of such people remains controversial. Some deny it and even accuse them of heresy, while others follow them blindly and say there is more than one true way. This latter group have formed a heterodox faction, unaware of the fact that not every person of guidance is a true guide. Even though their leaders may be excused on the grounds of excessive ecstasy, these people cannot be excused for their unorthodoxy. Yet a third group neither rejects their sainthood nor accepts their way, judging that such saints' untrue utterances should be considered like sayings of an ecstatic or as errors resulting from spiritual intoxication.

The first group, particularly scholars who judge by outward words and acts, try to defend the way of Ahl al-Sunna by denying many significant saints and accusing them of misguidance. The second group, due to its members' excessively high opinion of such spiritual masters, have forsaken the way of truth and become unorthodox, even misguided.

As a personal experience which can clarify this matter, I once called God's curse upon some people of misguidance. However, a powerful spiritual drive forced me to renounce it. Later on, I realized that those people mislead their followers by the help of a spiritual force, and that certain believers, due to this force's attraction, consider it alright to follow them. This startled me, and I asked myself: "Glory be to God! Can sainthood be achieved through ways other than the way of truth? Can truth-seekers support a grave trend of misguidance?"

On the eve of an 'Id (religious festival), while reciting *Surat al-Ikhlas*, the following truth occurred to me as a gift of Divine Mercy: Such saints as Jibali Baba, who reportedly lived during the reign of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror (d. 1481), are in a state of spiritual intoxication although they seem to be conscious and reasonable. Others alternate between being in a waking state and losing their self-control in an ecstatic state. Some members of this latter

group cannot separate the two states, and so tend to apply their ecstatic experiences in the waking state and unknowingly fall into error. God protects some of them from sin and misguidance, while others may be found among the people of deviation and heresy.

Since these saints are in a state of spiritual intoxication or ecstasy, whether permanently or briefly, they are considered blessed, insane ecstatists and are not responsible for observing the religious obligations. Since they are not religiously responsible, they are not held accountable for their actions and utterances. However, although they preserve their ecstatic sainthood, they may support misguidance and unorthodoxy and, by promoting their way, may cause some believers and truth-seekers to adopt their way.

TENTH MATTER (explains a principle regarding visitors, which some friends have reminded me of): Visitors come either for a worldly purpose (the door to such is closed) or for a matter concerning the next life. Some from this second group regard me as a blessed person of some spiritual rank, and so the door is closed to them as well. This is because I neither like myself nor those who like me. I thank God that He has not caused me to like myself. Members of the second group who want to visit me on account of my being the herald of Qur'anic truths are welcome. They fall into three groups: friends, brothers [sisters], and disciples.

To be a friend, one should earnestly support and try to benefit from *The Words* and our service in the way of the Qur'anic lights, and oppose all wrong-doing, misguidance, and heresy. To be a brother [sister], one should strive to multiply and promulgate *The Words*, perform the five daily prayers, and refrain from the seven major sins (e.g., unbelief and associating partners with God, murder, theft, fleeing the front when the army advances, drinking alcohol and gambling, treating one's parents badly, and slandering chaste women). To be a disciple, one should sponsor *The Words* as if they were his or her own work and dedicate his or her life to its service and promulgation.

These three groups are connected to three aspects of my personality. Friends are related to me through my personality as a common man, brothers [sisters] on account of my being a worshipping servant of God, and disciples on account of my being a herald of the Qur'an and a religious teacher. All of them may benefit from our meetings by finding, even if only once, the chance to learn some of the Qur'an's diamond-like truths; receive a share in my spiritual earnings through worship; and by turning, together with

me, to the Divine Court with the same feelings and cooperating in the Qur'anic service, to seek His help and guidance.

I feel disciples near me every morning by remembering their names or imagining their faces, and they receive a share in my spiritual earnings. At times, I remember brothers [sisters] via their names or faces and include them in my prayers and earnings. They also are included with all other brothers [sisters] when I mention them in my prayers as "my brothers- and sisters-in-religion" and introduce them into the Divine Mercy. Even if I do not know each of them by name or in person, the Divine Mercy knows and sees them. Friends also are included in this prayer, if they perform the five daily prayers and avoid the seven major sins. These three groups should include me in their prayers and spiritual earnings.

O God, bestow blessings and peace on him who said: "The believers are like a firm building, one part of which supports the other," on his Family and Companions. Glory be to You. We have no knowledge save only what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. They say: "Praise belongs to God, Who guided us unto this. If God had not guided us, we would never have been guided. Our Lord's Messengers came with the truth."

O God, O One Who answered Noah's prayer; Who helped Abraham against his enemies, Who returned Joseph to Jacob, Who relieved Job of his affliction, Who answered Zachariah's call, Who accepted Jonah son of Matta's supplication. Through the mysteries of those whose prayers were accepted, we entreat you to protect me, the publishers and promulgators of these treatises, and their friends from the evil of devilish persons and jinn. Help us against our enemies, do not leave us to ourselves, remove our grief and affliction, and cure our spiritual ailments. Amen. Amen.

* * *

The Twenty-seventh Letter

[This Letter consists of the letters written by Said Nursi to his students and by his students to him and to each other. Since they form a voluminous book much larger than this book, it has been published in three separate volumes under the title of The Addenda of Barla, Kastamonu, and Emirdag.]

*The
Twenty-eighth Letter*

The Twenty-eighth Letter

Dreams • Thanking God • Different issues

(This letter consists of eight issues, each a treatise in itself.)

First issue

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

If you know how to interpret dreams... (12:43)



ECOND³⁶⁹: MAY I SAY OF YOUR GOOD, PROMISING DREAM, WHOSE meaning became clear 3 days after we met 3 years ago?

I am neither of the night nor a worshipper of the night;
Rather I am a child of the sun and therefore give tidings of the sun.
Those fancies are the traps of saints;
And the reflections of the bright-faced ones of Divine gardens.

Given this, dear brother, as well as my habit of discussing the truth with you, and since it is not fit for the way of truth-seeking to discuss dreams (which usually have to do with human fancies), I will explain certain Qur'anic truths about sleep (a "brother" of death) in six points and interpret your dream in the seventh.

³⁶⁹ The Letter's first part is not included in the published text. (Tr.)

FIRST POINT: Like Prophet Yusuf's (Joseph) dream, the kernel of *Sura Yusuf*, such verses as: *We have appointed the night for you as a rest* (78:9) show that sleep and dreams contain important truths.

SECOND POINT: The people of truth do not approve of using the Qur'an as an oracle or of relying on dreams. Since the Qur'an often gives severe blows to unbelievers, believers who open it to receive counsel may despair if they encounter such a verse. Likewise, as dreams are often opposite to reality, they may cause despair or demoralization even if they are essentially good and promising. Many apparently bad and dreadful dreams prove to be good and pleasing in actual life. As not everyone can find the true relationship between a dream and its actual meaning, they become uneasy and anxious. This is why I quoted, as the people of truth do, Imam Rabbani: "I am neither of the night nor a worshipper of night."

THIRD POINT: God's Messenger says in an authentic narration that true dreams are one of Prophethood's 46 aspects.³⁷⁰ Therefore they contain some truths and have some connections with the Prophetic mission. But I leave any elaboration on this profound and significant lengthy matter to a later occasion.

FOURTH POINT: There are three kinds of dreams. Two are included in the Qur'anic category of "jumbled dreams." Either the imagination gives form to a bad temper's deviations or the mind remembers an exciting event and gives it a new form. Both are worthless.

The third kind is true dreams. As the dreamer's senses connected with the outer, material world do not function during sleep, the innate inner spiritual faculty can find an opening to the Unseen World. Looking at impending events through that opening, it meets a manifestation of the Guarded Tablet or an example of the "letters" of Destiny and sees real events. But since the imagination "colors" what the spiritual faculty sees, the dreamer does not see an accurate reflection. Thus such dreams require interpretation, even if their meanings are clear during the dream.³⁷¹

FIFTH POINT: A true dream is the result of a presentiment being highly developed. Both human beings and animals have a degree of presentiment. I have discovered that both also have two additional senses: motivating and enticing senses. Although people of misguidance and corrupt thinking call

³⁷⁰ As he had true dreams in the initial 6 months of his 23 years of Prophethood, true dreams of believers are a kind of Divine inspiration.

³⁷¹ A Prophetic Tradition reports that the Messenger's dreams during the initial days of his Prophethood were so clear that no interpretation was necessary. (Tr.)

these unperceived senses “instincts,” they should be regarded as “inborn inspiration” through which Divine Destiny directs people and animals.

Such direction allows a blind cat to find the necessary curative herb and, rubbing its eye against it, be healed. Likewise, such carnivorous birds as vultures, the sanitary officials of Earth’s surface who remove the corpses of wild animals, detect and locate a carcass tens of miles away through Destiny’s direction, inspired presentiment, or Divine orientation.

This happens with young bees that fly far away and then return to the hive without error. It also happens when someone you just mentioned appears unexpectedly. Your spiritual faculty felt, via presentiment, that person’s coming. Such occurrences are so common that we have a proverb: “When you mention a wolf, grab a staff to hit it with.” You do not know that that person or wolf is coming, nor has your reason informed you about it, but you feel it through presentiment and so mention it unintentionally. Among pious people and saints, such presentiment develops to the point of becoming a source of wonders.

Ordinary people with a kind of sainthood can grasp something of the future or the Unseen World in true dreams. Just as sleep is like a rank of sainthood in respect of true dreams, it is a time or space of recreation in which magnificent Divine moving pictures are shown. People of good conduct think of what is better and see beautiful tablets, whereas those of evil conduct think of what is worse and see ugly tablets.

True dreams make sleep a window opening on the Unseen World, a field of release and freedom for human beings (who are confined in a restricted area), a theater having a kind of permanence, and a realm in which only the present exists (past and future are united). In addition, sleep is a period of repose for living beings crushed under life’s burdens. Given this, the Qur'an teaches us the truth of sleep in such verses as: *We have appointed sleep for you as a rest* (78:9).

THE SIXTH AND MOST IMPORTANT POINT: My experiences with true dreams have added to my conviction that Divine Destiny encompasses everything. When I have true dreams, I know that whatever will happen to me tomorrow has been predetermined. I learn of them at night, as if reading them with my eyes. This has happened perhaps 1,000 times: The people I see or the matters I talk about in dreams become true the next day with only a slight interpretation. Thus nothing is accidental, coincidental, or random. Rather, everything is destined and predetermined.

SEVENTH POINT: Your beautiful dream is significant for us and the Qur'an. Time has interpreted it and continues to do so. It is being manifested in an

auspicious way, and you will understand it if you analyze it carefully. I will explain a few of its aspects to show its truth. That is, I will point out a reality, and what you saw in your dream are the forms that reality has assumed in this corporeal world.

The vast quarter you saw is the Muslim world. The mosque at its far end is Isparta. The muddy water is today's marsh of dissipation, laziness, and religious innovation. That you reached the mosque in security and without being dirtied by that water signifies that you obtained the Qur'an's lights earlier than anybody else and thereby maintained your purity of heart. The mosque's small congregation consists of those who convey *The Words*, such as Haqqi, Hulusi, Sabri, Suleyman, Rusdu, Bekir, Mustafa, 'Ali, Zuhdu, Lutfi, Husrev, and Rafet. The small pulpit is a small village like Barla. The loud voice you heard signifies *The Words'* power, influence, and rapid dissemination.

Your place in the first row is the seat left vacant for you by 'Abd al-Rahman. The congregation's desire to transmit *The Words* globally, as through radio, will come true, by God's will. Even if that community's members are now like seeds, with God's help they will grow into a tall, elaborate tree. The boy with a turban is expected to be included among the disciples and disseminators who will serve the Qur'an on the same level as Hulusi, or even ahead of him. I guess he will appear among certain people whom I know, but I cannot say exactly who he is. He will appear with the power of sainthood. You may interpret the other aspects of your dream on my behalf.

Since it is approved and pleasant to converse with friends like you, I dwelled on this matter longer than I had intended. But since I began with the intention of pointing out a kind of interpretation of relevant verses, I hope God will forgive or not consider it a waste of speech.

Second issue

(This treatise removes all doubt over the Tradition saying that Prophet Moses slapped Archangel Azrail, the Angel of Death, on the eye.³⁷²⁾

Someone bought me a reliable book, which contains a Prophetic Tradition bearing the sign to show that Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim agreed on its authenticity, and asked me whether it was so.

I replied: We should rely upon the judgment of the person who inserted that sign. Thus the Tradition is authentic. However, some Prophetic

³⁷² Bukhari, *Anbiya'*, 31; Muslim, *Fada'il*, 157.

Traditions, like some Qur'anic verses, are allegorical and have meanings that can be understood only by distinguished scholars. This Tradition may fall into this category.

Later, I heard that it had been discussed in Egridir. Such discussions are harmful, especially now. If I had known of this, I would have answered as follows:

FIRST: Such discussions may be permissible if they occur between qualified persons to discern the truth and result in clarity. Its participants must be able to admit the truth even if it is reached by their opponents. In such a case, those in the wrong have overcome their ignorance or corrected their error. If they are right, they have learned nothing new and may become boastful.

SECOND: Participants must know the degrees of Traditions, implicit Revelation, and categories of the Prophetic sayings. They cannot debate such matters in public, acting like advocates defending their own opinions and so displaying their virtues and placing their egoism over the truth. Such discussions usually affect people negatively, for they encourage people to deny authentic Traditions they do not understand, either because they are allegorical or because an allegorical Tradition's literal acceptance may cause the people of misguidance to reject them as superstitions. Given this, whether the Tradition concerned is authentic or not, a truth to remove doubts about such matters and allegorical Traditions must be explained.

Although I have analyzed such matters in The Twenty-fourth Word and The Nineteenth Letter, I discuss it here briefly, as follows: Angels are not limited to one form, for they can represent an entire species by assuming a particular form. As Archangel Azrail is the Angel of Death having subordinates or aids, scholars debate whether he takes every soul by himself or his subordinates also do so. While discussing the three opinions on this issue, I shall try to explain the meaning of: "Prophet Moses slapped Azrail on the eye."

FIRST OPINION: Azrail takes the soul of every body. Created from light, he can be omnipresent and simultaneously assume many forms and do countless things. All different forms of such light-created beings have that being's properties and so are considered to be identical with its essence. As the sun's reflections in mirrors display its heat and light, the ideal forms of light-derived spirit beings in various mirrors of the World of Ideas are identical with their essences and possess their properties.

Nevertheless, they take on forms according to the reflecting capacity of the mirrors. For example, Archangel Gabriel was present in thousands of

places and in different forms while prostrating before God's Supreme Throne of Honor with his magnificent wings stretching from east to west, and when the Companions saw him in the form of the Companion Dihya. He takes a different form according to the place's reflecting quality, and can be present in thousands of places at once.

According to this opinion, Moses, who was a glorious Messenger of God and one of the five greatest Prophets, could have slapped a particular human form of Azrail when he appeared to take his soul.

SECOND OPINION: Such archangels as Gabriel, Michael, and Azrail have subordinates that both resemble and are supervised by them and who differ according to the creature's species. For example, the subordinate angel taking the souls of the righteous differs from the one taking the souls of the wicked.³⁷³ This is indicated in: *By those who pluck out violently; by those who draw out gently* (79:1-2). According to this opinion, Moses could have slapped the ideal, energetic body of one of Azrail's subordinates because of his glory, might, inborn courage, and his being beloved by God Almighty.³⁷⁴

THIRD OPINION: As explained in The Twenty-ninth Word and indicated by various Prophetic Traditions, some angels have 40,000 heads, each with 40,000 tongues and 80,000 eyes, and 40,000 praises sung by each tongue. Since some angels supervise species of creatures in this world and represent their praises and glorifications in the World of Spirits, they should be as described by the Tradition mentioned above. For example, Earth is a creature that glorifies God. It does not have 40,000 tongues, but rather countless species, each corresponding to a head. Each species has countless individual members, each corresponding to a tongue. Given this, the angel supervising Earth should have countless tongues in countless heads.

According to this opinion, Azrail has a face turned to and an eye looking at each person. So Moses did not slap the person of Azrail in his essential nature to reject and humiliate him, but only one of his eyes that willed to end his mission, because he wanted to continue his duty of Messengership.

³⁷³ When the Angel of Death charged with taking the souls of saints approached a great saint known to us and having the title of "Sayda," those by his death bed heard him pray: "Let an angel charged with taking the souls of students of religious sciences take mine, for I like those students very much."

³⁷⁴ It is narrated that a brave man from our province saw the Angel of Death while dying. He exclaimed: "You have seized me in bed!" Mounting his horse and raising his sword, he challenged the angel and thus died bravely.

Only God knows the truth and the Unseen. Say: "Knowledge is with God only."

He sent the Book to you, and in it are clear and allegorical verses. Those with hearts that swerve pursue the allegorical, seeking dissension and (distorted) interpretations. Yet only God knows its (true) interpretation. Those firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in it, [for] it is all from our Lord." Yet, only people of discernment heed this.

Third issue

(This is a private answer to a question asked by my brothers, explicitly by most and tacitly by the rest.)

QUESTION: You advise your visitors: "Expect no miraculous help or spiritual support from me. Do not regard me as blessed, for I have no spiritual rank. Like a private delivering the marshal's commands, I relay a spiritual marshal's commands. Like a penniless person advertising a rich jeweler's jewelry, I advertise the Qur'an's jewelry." But we visit you because we require knowledge and our hearts and souls need enlightenment and spiritual satisfaction. We do not need a religious scholar, but a saint and perfected person who can satisfy our spiritual need. If you are not such a person, are we wasting our time?

ANSWER: Heed the following five points and judge for yourselves:

FIRST POINT: If an ordinary servant or private delivers the king's gifts to generals and commanders, or gives them their medals of honor in the king's name, they would be foolish to object, saying: "We will not lower ourselves by receiving those gifts and medals from a private." If that private does not stand up, when appropriate, to show the chief commander due respect, he would be displaying his own stupidity. If a general visits the private's barracks, the king would send a table from the royal kitchen to the respected visitor of his faithful servant so that the latter would not be embarrassed by having nothing suitable to offer.

In the same way, faithful servants of the Qur'an, regardless of their ordinariness, relay its commands to people of the highest virtue without hesitation and in its name. They offer its invaluable jewelry to those of spiritual wealth with pride and with indifference to their ranks. However great the addressees or customers are, they cannot assume an air of superiority over such servants when the servants are doing their job.

And, of course, the servants cannot boast of themselves, for doing so would cause them to breach the bounds of modesty and forget their place.³⁷⁵ If some aspirants to the Qur'an's sacred treasury regard such servants as saints, it befits, and is characteristic of, the Qur'an's compassion that, to avoid embarrassing its servants, it would enlighten their hearts and satisfy their souls by giving from the Divine treasury without the servants' knowledge or contribution.

SECOND POINT: Imam Rabbani says: "I prefer grasping one matter of belief fully and making it understood clearly to attaining thousands of spiritual pleasures and ecstasies and working wonders. The final station of all spiritual journeying is full perception of belief's truths." If such pure feelings drove this great saint, then *The Words* (that spring from reading the Qur'an), which explain belief's truths so clearly and convincingly, provide what is expected from sainthood.

THIRD POINT: Thirty years ago, I was almost overcome by the realization that death is unavoidable. Finding myself in a "swamp," I sought help and a way out by searching for a guide. Seeing various ways, I paused over which one to follow before finally consulting 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani's *Futuh al-Ghayb* (Discovering the Unseen). There, I read: "You are in Dar al-Hikma (House of Wisdom). Seek a (spiritual) doctor to heal your heart."

Curiously enough, I was a member of the Dar al-Hikma.³⁷⁶ I was regarded as a doctor and a spiritual guide, and was expected to heal the Muslims' spiritual diseases. And yet I was spiritually sicker than others, and so had to treat myself ahead of others.

Following the Sheikh's advice, I asked him to treat me and began to read his book. However, as it seemed too strict and wounded my pride severely, it performed a major operation on my carnal self. I could bear to read only half of it before putting it back in the bookcase. After a while, the operation's pains were replaced by the healing's pleasures. I then finished it and derived great benefit. By heeding his daily glorifications and supplications, I received much enlightenment and spiritual satisfaction.

After that, I consulted Imam Rabbani's *Maktubat* (The Letters) with a pure intention. Curiously enough, it contained two letters addressed to Mirza Bediuzzaman, who was one of Imam's pupils. "Glory be to God," I said, for my father's name was Mirza, and Bediuzzaman was one of my titles. And so I concluded that they were addressed to me as well.

³⁷⁵ In other words, they can only do what they do because He permits it. (Tr.)

³⁷⁶ The Dar al-Hikma was the leading Ottoman religious academy at that time. (Ed.)

Since both of us seemed to be in the same state, I found a cure in those letters. There, and in many other places, the Imam advises: "Unite the directions toward which you turn." In other words, follow only one master or way to the truth. My disposition and temper rejected this. As each way has its own attractions, for quite a while I could not decide which one to follow. Thus bewildered, God's Compassion revealed that the best way, the source of all channels and the "sun" around which these "planets" turn, is the Qur'an, into which all directions can be unified. And so I firmly grasped this greatest guide and most sacred master.

However imperfect and inadequate my capacity to absorb this bounteous gift, this "water of life" overflowing from that true guide, I hope that its guidance and enlightenment will enable me to relay this gift to people of purity and some spiritual state according to their receptivity. *The Words* and "Lights"—other parts of the *Risale-i Nur*—emanating from the Qur'an are not limited to scientific matters that address minds, but also include matters of belief that address hearts and souls, spiritual states, and provide knowledge of God at the highest degree.

FOURTH POINT: The greatest saints among the Companions and the two succeeding generations absorbed as much as they could from the Qur'an, and it became their true and sufficient source of guidance. This shows that it expresses the truth at all times and radiates enough effusive light for even the greatest saints.

Those who adhere sincerely to Islam's outward practice can penetrate to its truth in two ways: By joining a spiritual order and rising through its ranks, or through Divine grace without joining a spiritual order. This latter way, a most direct and exalted way, was followed by the Companions and their successors. Thus the "Lights" radiating from the Qur'anic truths and included in the *The Words* and other parts of the *Risale-i Nur* making them known can be said to—and actually do—enable reaching the truth by following the same way.

FIFTH POINT: I give five examples to show that *The Words* guide as they teach the truths, as follows:

First example: *The Words* and the "Lights" emanating from the Qur'an nourish my mind, inspire belief in my heart, and give the pleasure of belief to my soul. Moreover, as a wonder-working spiritual guide's disciples seek help for their needs, I often observe that my urgent needs are met through the miracle-working Qur'an in an unexpected way. To cite only two of many examples:

One: I am a poor man who lives economically. During the last Ramadan, I lived on three loaves of bread and two pounds of rice. I spent last summer

in the mountains of Barla, where I managed, despite visitors, with two pounds of butter and some bread.

Once I had a blessed guest, Süleyman, who wanted to accompany me to the mountain top on Friday night. While we were sitting up there, I told him to make some tea. While he was preparing it, I sat under a wild poplar tree and, looking into a deep valley, thought sadly: "Our one piece of stale, old bread will be enough only for tonight. How will we manage after tonight? How shall I explain this to that pure-hearted man?" And then, looking up at the tree, I saw a large loaf of bread! I told Süleyman: "Good tidings for us! God Almighty has sent us our food."

We took the bread, which had not been touched by birds or wild animals. No one had climbed there for the last 20 or 30 days. The bread lasted for 2 days, at the end of which Mustakim Süleyman, my faithful companion for 4 years, turned up unexpectedly with some bread.

Two: This very interesting incident took place recently. I had told a man something that might arouse his suspicions and desired to remove them. I also wished that I had my book that I had sent to Nis. As I was sitting after the morning prayer, that man came in holding something. When I asked what it was, he said: "Someone from Nis gave me this book at your door." "Glory be to God," I said, thinking. "This is no coincidence. He came with this book through the Qur'an's help. Praise be to God. The One Who is aware of my heart's hidden, most insignificant desire, pities and protects me. Therefore, I take no account of whatever help may come from worldly people."

Second example: My nephew 'Abd al-Rahman, whom God took into His mercy, thought very highly of me, although he left me 8 years ago to pursue worldly affairs. He expected me to meet his spiritual needs in a way that was beyond my capacity. However, the Qur'an helped him by causing The Tenth Word (about the Resurrection) to reach him 3 months before he died. It purified him of all his spiritual dirt, doubts, and heedlessness. In addition, he displayed three wonders in his last letter, as if he had attained the rank of sainthood.

Third example: I had a brother-in-religion from Burdur, called Hasan Effendi. He was a man of God. Due to his extremely high opinion of me, he used to expect extraordinary spiritual help from me. One day I happened to give The Thirty-second Word to someone from a village in Burdur. Recalling Hasan Effendi, I asked that person to pass it to him so that he could study it for 5 or 6 days, but only if he was going to Burdur.

That man went to Hasan Effendi and gave him the treatise. Hasan Effendi read it with the excitement and eagerness of a thirsty person seeing a spring of sweet water. He found so much pleasure and enlightenment in it, particularly in its third station (love of God) that it cured his ailments. Within 40 days of reading it, he went to the mosque and, although he had no obvious illness, died there after the prayer (may God's mercy be upon him).

Fourth example: Hulusi Bey admits that he finds more enlightenment, radiance, and spiritual pleasure in *The Words*, which explain the Qur'an's mysteries, than in the Naqshbandi way, one of the most influential and widespread spiritual ways.

Fifth example: My brother 'Abd al-Majid suffered greatly when my nephew 'Abd al-Rahman (may God's mercy be upon him) died and from other grievous circumstances. Although he expected me to help him in ways beyond my capacity, I had no contact with him. One day I sent him, with no particular purpose, a few significant treatises from *The Words*. After reading them carefully, he wrote to me: "Praise be to God, I have been relieved of my troubles. I was about to go crazy! Each treatise has become a guide for me. Although I parted with a guide, I have found several guides all at once and been relieved." I found out that 'Abd al-Majid had improved and attained a better state.

Many other examples show that knowledge related to belief and spiritual remedies, when taken directly from the Qur'an in case of need, meet the needs of those who apply them sincerely. Thus the identity of the herald announcing them or the druggist offering them is irrelevant. They can be ordinary or distinguished, rich or poor, or people of spiritual rank or of no rank at all.

In the presence of sunlight, there is no need for candles. If I show you the sun, why would you ask me for a candle, especially since I do not have one? Rather, help me by praying for me and with your spiritual power. I think I have a right to seek help from you. And be content with the enlightenment and spiritual satisfaction you get from the Treatises of Light, (all the books comprising the *Risale-i Nur* Collection).

Glory be to You, we have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

O God, bestow blessings upon our master Muhammad in a way that gains Your approval and gives him his due, and upon his Family and Companions, and also bestow upon them peace.

Fourth issue

In His Name.

There is nothing that does glorify Him with His praise.

(This answers a question about a small incident meant to warn.)

QUESTION: We heard that the local police invaded your mosque's privacy on Friday night because someone visited you. Why did they do this?

ANSWER: I will explain this in the words of Old Said, hoping that my followers will learn from it and that you will be satisfied.

FIRST POINT: This was done by hypocrites following a Satanic instigation on behalf of unbelievers. They sought to give us trouble, dishearten the congregation, and prevent me from having guests.

Curiously enough, the day before while returning from a walk, I saw a long black snake that looked as if it were two snakes joined together. It came up from my left and slithered between me and my companion. When I asked him if he had seen it, he replied that he had not. "Glory be to God," I responded. "How could you miss it?" I did not give it much thought. But later I considered it a warning, just like the snakes I see in dreams. Whenever an official comes with an evil intention, I see him in a dream as a snake. Once I told this to the district governor and warned him to be careful, for I frequently see him in the form of a snake, just as I saw his predecessor. So that snake was a clear warning that they would soon assault us somehow.

However insignificant they make it seem, that attack was a violation of the mosque's and the prayer's sanctity, and of my natural right to meet people and have guests. That official, instigated by an unscrupulous teacher, told the police to apprehend my visitors while we were glorifying God after the night prayer. He intended to anger me and thereby provoke me into sending the police back in indignation. But he did not know that Said carries "a diamond sword" in his tongue, one manufactured by the Qur'an, and so would not defend himself with "a broken piece of wood."³⁷⁷ The police, being sensible, knew that no government bothers people praying in a mosque and so waited until we finished. Angered by this delay, the official sent the field watchman.

I thank God that He does not oblige me to struggle with such snake-like people. So, my brothers, I advise you not to struggle with them unless

³⁷⁷ For example, in the wrong way (anger) and via the wrong means (hostility). (Tr.)

forced to do so. Do not lower yourselves to speak to them, for the best response to a stupid individual is to keep silent. But be prudent, for just as showing helplessness before a wild animal encourages it to attack, weakness prompts beastly people to assault those who flatter them [flattery being a form of weakness]. Our friends should always be alert so that their possible indifference or heedlessness is not exploited by unbelievers.

SECOND POINT: As declared in: *Do not incline to those who do wrong, lest the Fire touch you* (11:113), God severely threatens those who incline toward or support wrongdoing and those who show even a slight inclination toward it. Approval of unbelief is unbelief, and approval of wrongdoing is wrongdoing. A person of perfection interpreted one of that verse's many aspects in the following couplet:

One who helps wrongdoers in the world
is one of the people of meanness;
Only a dog takes pleasure in
serving an unjust hunter.

Both the informant, who reported my praying guest's supposed "crime," and the assault's arranger deserve to be its referents.

THIRD POINT: You ask: "You rely on the Qur'an's wisdom to reform and guide even the most stubborn unbelievers to the truth, and we see that you succeed. So why do you not invite and guide these aggressive people?"

Answer: It is a basic Sharia principle that those who willfully condone the harm coming to them do not deserve compassion.

Relying on the Qur'an's strength enables me to at least silence, if I cannot convince, the most stubborn unbeliever in a few hours. The only exceptions are the meanest kind of people, those who enjoy spitting poison, like a snake (harming people). I would be disrespecting the truth itself if I told it to such snake-like, unscrupulous, unjust, and mean people who willfully display such hypocrisy by selling Islam for worldly gain, by exchanging diamond-like truths for befouled pieces of old glass (material profit). This would be like adorning the necks of cattle with pearls. Such people have heard the truths from the *Risale-i Nur* many times, but still prefer heresy. Just like snakes, they enjoy spitting poison.

FOURTH POINT: Their treatment of me for 7 years has been totally arbitrary and illegal. The law allows, in certain cases, the exiled and even the imprisoned to meet their relatives and have some contact with society. All

countries, except communist ones, ensure the absolute freedom of prayer and worship. Other exiles live in cities with their relatives or loved ones, and interact with society, communicate, and travel. But I enjoy none of these rights.

What is more, they attack my house and interfere with my prayer. Although it is a Prophetic Tradition, according to the Shafi'i school, to repeat the declaration of God's Unity among other recitations of God's glorification, praise, and exaltation after every prescribed prayer, they try to prevent me from doing this. Further, they do not allow my fellow citizens to meet with me, even in the mosque. Shabab, an illiterate immigrant to Burdur, once came here with his mother-in-law for a change of air and visited me in the mosque. Three policemen took him to the official. Trying to excuse himself from such an illegal act, he released Shabab and said: "Excuse me, but I was just doing my job."

Considering all they have done to me, such as the incident on Friday night, people can see how arbitrarily and illegally they treat me. Although they let snake-like people assault me, I do not lower myself to struggle with them. Rather, I refer them to the All-Mighty to ward off their evil.

Those who brought about the event that caused my exile are now in their homes, and the powerful chieftains once again lead their clans. All have been allowed to return home. But although I have nothing to do with their world, they make an exception of me and two others. However, I recently heard that one of those two has been appointed somewhere as a mufti³⁷⁸ and can travel as he wishes (except to his hometown)—even to Ankara. The other one lives in Istanbul and can meet whomever he wishes.

Furthermore, both have relatives and support—I have neither. By God's grace, they are very influential and have many supporters. In contrast, I must live in a village surrounded by some of the most uncaring people. During these 6 years, they have allowed me to make only two visits to a neighboring village, and they continue to crush me under their increasing despotism.

A government should have the same laws and not discriminate between people or places of residence. Given this, their treatment of me is wholly illegal and arbitrary. These district officials use the government's power to satisfy their own grudges.

However they treat me, I thank the Most Compassionate of the Compassionate. I proclaim, in order to declare His blessings on me, that their despotic and increasingly aggressive treatment serves us, the *Risale-i Nur*'s

³⁷⁸ Mufti: A religious official who explains Islam's decree on a legal or religious matter. (Tr.)

students, as wood to make the fire of our zeal and our efforts to spread the Qur'an's lights flare up ever more brightly.

Those lights, which are always becoming brighter through increasing pressure each day and through the "wind" of incessant effort, have made Barla, this province, and even most of Turkey a school in which the Qur'an is studied with the help of the *Risale-i Nur*.

They think I am a prisoner in a village but, contrary to their will, Barla has become a chair of Qur'anic lessons. And many provinces, among them Isparta, have become schools.

All praise be to God, for this is from my Lord's bounty.

Fifth issue: The treatise of thanksgiving

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

There is nothing that does not glorify Him with His praise.

The Qur'an uses such reiterated phrases as: *Will they not be thankful? We will reward the thankful. If you are thankful, I will give you more. Nay, but God do you serve, so be among the thankful,* to show that the All-Merciful Creator's most important command is to give thanks. Proclaiming that not doing so means denying bounties, He reproaches them severely, in *Surat al-Rahman*, no less than 31 times: "Then which of your Lord's bounties do you deny?"

Like its microcosm the wise Qur'an, this universe (the macro-Qur'an) also demonstrates that creation's most important result is thanksgiving. We can see that the universe is arranged in a way to arouse thanksgiving, and that everything calls for it. It seems that thanksgiving is the Tree of Creation's most important fruit and the best product of this factory of the universe,³⁷⁹ for the universe is in the form of a circle, at the center of which is life. The design of creation is directed toward life, for everything serves life and works to provide its necessities. This means that the universe's Creator attaches special importance to life in the universe, created the worlds of living beings in circular forms, and put humanity in the center. The purposes for creating living beings are directed toward humanity, which all other beings serve. This means that the Majestic Creator chose humanity to rule over them.

³⁷⁹ Said Nursi considers humanity the fruit of creation. In this context, he uses fruit in the sense of duty and purpose, the first duty of humanity. (Tr.)

At the center of the circular human and animal worlds is provision or sustenance. The Creator inculcated love for provision in people and animals, and urges them to work for it. He made provision a vast and rich treasury of infinite bounties. So that people and animals can recognize each taste, He enabled the tongue to distinguish as many tastes as there are foods and drinks. Given this, provision is the universe's most manifest, comprehensive, curious, and pleasing reality.

As everything is concentrated around and directed toward provision, provision itself comes through, subsists on, and points to thanksgiving. This is because the need and desire for provision are a natural thanksgiving, and the pleasure and satisfaction coming from provision are an unconscious thanksgiving. Both of these are common to all animate beings. Those who change the nature of such thanksgiving through misguidance and unbelief drift into associating partners with God.

The beautiful forms of bounties, their tastes and smells, are invitations to thanksgiving. By arousing desire in living beings and thereby directing them to appreciate and respect provision, they urge animals to give thanks through their disposition, and people to do so with their tongues and actions. They also cause living beings to experience the greatest pleasure and satisfaction through thanksgiving itself.

In other words, showing the All-Merciful, All-Munificent Owner of the treasures of Compassion's most pleasurable and permanent grace and favor behind the temporary enjoyment of bounties enables humanity to experience a permanent pleasure of Paradise while in this world. Provision becomes an invaluable and rich treasury through thanksgiving, but is reduced to almost nothing in the absence of being thankful.

As explained in The Sixth Word, if the tongue's sense of taste is used for God's sake, for distinguishing the kinds of provision with the intention of giving thanks, it becomes a thankful examiner and a highly esteemed supervisor of the countless treasures of God's infinite Mercy. But if this sense is used for the carnal self and does not thank the Provider, it is only a watchman of the abdomen's factory, a doorman of the stomach's workshop. As not giving thanks lowers that servant of provision, the nature of provision itself and its other servants (e.g., air, light, and water) are likewise reduced to the lowest rank and assume a quality contrary and opposed to the Wisdom of the universe's Creator.

Thanksgiving is recognized by contentment and thrift, consent and gratitude; not giving thanks is recognized by greed and waste, ingratitude and consuming without regard for what is lawful and unlawful. Greed causes depravity and humiliation. It might even be said that the ant, that blessed animal having a social life, is trodden underfoot because its greed drives it to collect thousands of grains when a few might suffice. But the bee flies overhead due to its contentment, so to speak, and offers its honey to people.

The Divine Name the All-Merciful, the greatest Name of the Sacred Divine Essence coming after God (His proper Name and the greatest of the Greatest Names) relates to provision. The first and most manifest meaning of the All-Merciful is the All-Provider. One is connected to that Name through thanksgiving. Of the many kinds of thanksgiving, the most comprehensive is the daily prescribed prayers.

Thanksgiving contains a sincere belief and a genuine declaration of God's Unity. One who eats an apple and says: "All praise and thanks be to God," proclaims that the apple came from the hand of Power, is a gift from His Mercy's treasury, and thereby ascribes everything to God's Hand of Power and sees His Mercy manifested in everything.

I point out one aspect of the loss suffered by those who do not give thanks. When people thank God for something delicious, a light is produced and becomes a fruit of Paradise. In addition to material pleasure, it gives a greater and permanent spiritual enjoyment because it causes people to reflect on it as a favor of Divine Mercy. Thus any food given by God as a bounty sends its spiritual outcome to the higher, incorporeal worlds due to thankfulness.

After that, it is digested to nourish the body and excreted to become elements in the soil. Without thanksgiving, this material pleasure ultimately results in grief because it disappears and the food becomes waste matter. Consumable bounties produce permanent pleasure and yield permanent fruit through thanksgiving; without it, they become the lowest form of the worst nature, as heedless, unthankful people see them only as things to be eaten and then excreted.

Provision deserves love. While thanksgiving elevates this love to a sublime, permanent love (love of God), the love that heedless and misguided people feel for provision is animalistic in nature. Consider the great loss such people experience!

Humanity has the greatest need for provision. God Almighty created humanity as a mirror to reflect His Names, as a miracle of Power able to

weigh and recognize the contents of His Mercy's treasures, and as a vicegerent on Earth able to measure His Names' most subtle manifestations. Given this, humanity needs all kinds of material and spiritual provision. Having such a comprehensive nature, people can attain the highest rank (being creation's "best pattern") only through thanksgiving. Without it, they commit a most dire sin and fall to the lowest rank.

There are four pillars of the way of being a worshipping and (thereby) beloved servant of God, as stated in the following:

In the way of depending on awareness of one's impotence before God,
four things are essential;

They are, O beloved one, acknowledgement of
one's absolute impotence and poverty (before God),
and absolute thanksgiving and zeal (in God's cause).

Thus the most essential pillar is thanksgiving.

O God, through Your Mercy cause us to be among the thankful, O Most Compassionate of the Compassionate. Glory be to You. We have no knowledge save only what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. O God, bestow blessings and peace on our master Muhammad, the lord of the thankful and the praising, his Family and Companions. Amen. Their last call is: "All praise be to God."

Sixth issue

[It is not included in the book, since it was published elsewhere.]

Seventh issue

[Since this issue is concerned with certain personal matters, it is not included in the translation.]

Eighth issue

(This treatise consists of points in the form of answers to questions.)

FOURTH POINT: You ask: "How will the Place of Supreme Mustering be built? How will people be gathered there? Will they be naked? How will they meet friends and find God's Messenger to request his intercession? How will God's

Messenger meet countless people personally? How will the people of Paradise and Hell be clothed? Who will show us the way?"

ANSWER: As the answers are given in the books of Traditions, I mention only a few points relevant to our way:

First: The Tenth Letter explains that Earth draws a huge circle through its annual orbit and every year empties the immaterial outcome of what has happened on it into that circle's tablets. On the Day of Judgment, the total outcome of Earth's life will assume a form specific to the Hereafter. On the Last Day, Earth will submit the minor hell in its center into the Hell of the Hereafter, and empty its contents into the Place of Supreme Mustering, which will be built on Earth's annual orbit.

Second: *The Words*, mainly the Tenth and Twenty-ninth, prove that the dead will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment and assembled in the Place of Supreme Mustering.

Third: The Sixteenth, Thirty-first, and Thirty-second Words explain how God's Messenger will be able to meet everyone. Just as the sun's luminosity enables it to be everywhere at once, his nature's luminosity will allow him to be present in thousands of places and meet millions of people at the same time.

Fourth: God Almighty supplies a natural covering for all living creatures except humanity. So, as a requirement of His being All-Wise, He will provide humanity with a natural covering in the Place of Supreme Mustering, for no one will need artificial clothes. People use artificial clothes to shelter from cold and heat, as well as to cover their private parts and show their commanding position and control over other species. If this were not so, they would be clothed quite simply. Without this wisdom of requiring humanity to wear elaborate clothes, a person wearing rags would be ridiculed by other conscious beings. As this wisdom will not be sought in the Place of Supreme Mustering, artificial clothes will be unnecessary.

Fifth: The guide for those who sought shelter under the Qur'an's light will be the Qur'an itself. Look at the *suras* beginning with *Alif-Lam-Mim*, *Alif-Lam-Ra*, and *Ha-Mim* to see what an acceptable intercessor, a true guide, and a sacred light the Qur'an is.

Sixth: As for the clothes of the people of Paradise and Hell, the principle mentioned in the Twenty-eighth Word to explain the houris' 70-times-pleated garment is enough to understand this matter. People of Paradise desire to experience uninterrupted pleasure from every section of Paradise at

the same time. Paradise has innumerable kinds of beauties with which they interact continually. And so they cloth themselves and their houris in specimens of those beauties, transforming each into a miniature paradise.

Just as a gardener grows in his own garden a sample of each flower in his country, shopkeepers list the examples of their inventory, or people make their clothes or house material out of the things they use or dispose of, people of Paradise and their houris will be dressed by God's Mercy in a fashion to display Paradise's beauties so that these beauties may please each sense and feeling and satisfy each faculty. This is especially true for those who worshipped God with all their senses and faculties while in this world, for such people deserve all the pleasures of Paradise.

The Tradition: "Houris wear 70 celestial garments one over the other, but the marrow in their legs is still perceptible," shows that the garments worn by the people of Paradise are not of the same kind.³⁸⁰ Every garment, from the most outer to the most inner, is of a different level so that all senses and feelings will receive their specific pleasures through specific beauties. In accord with wisdom and justice, the people of Hell will be clothed in

³⁸⁰ Bukhari, *Bad' al-Khalq*, 8; Tirmidhi, *Qiyama*, 60. The greatest blessing in Paradise is obtaining God's approval and good pleasure and, as implied by some verses and explicitly stated in some Traditions, seeing God beyond all concepts of quality and quantity. However, since such purely spiritual blessings are concerned rather with the élite of the believers, the Qur'an usually mentions the blessings of Paradise as if they were purely bodily pleasures. Human beings are not composed of only the spirit, but are tripartite beings composed of a spirit, carnal soul, and flesh (the physical body). Since a believer's body and carnal soul serve him or her in the world, have to endure some hardships, and are deprived of some of the worldly pleasures to be disciplined and trained, each body will be rewarded with the pleasures particular to them as well. However, it must not be thought that those pleasures are purely corporeal. The spiritual contentment they will give is greater than the corporeal satisfaction. For example, every person needs a friend, a companion. What most satisfies a person's human needs is having an intimate life companion with whom to share love, joy, and grief. Since the kindest and most compassionate and generous of hearts is the heart of a woman, the Qur'an mentions women as being among the greatest blessings of Paradise for men, rather than vice versa. That is, in addition to the sensual pleasure she provides, the spiritual pleasure a woman can give to her spouse through such elevated feelings as compassion, love, and being a life-companion is greater than a man can give her. This does not mean that women in Paradise will be left without companions. The pleasure coming from mutual helping, sharing the joy and grief of one another and companionship, and that provided by love, affection, and intimacy, is much greater than the bodily pleasures men and women supply for each other. Those defeated by bodily pleasures and unaware of the spiritual pleasures included in them may see Paradise as a realm of sensual enjoyment. They are, however, mistaken. (Tr.)

garments that will cause each person to suffer a special torment, for they sinned with their bodily organs, intellects, and so on while alive. Each garment will be like a miniature hell.

FIFTH POINT: You ask: "Were the Messenger's ancestors devoted to a certain religion during the interregnum (when no Prophet came)?"

ANSWER: Some Traditions relate that they followed the remnants of Abraham's religion, which survived in some people despite the pervasive veils of heedlessness and spiritual darkness. Members of an illustrious lineage, beginning with Abraham and resulting in God's Messenger, must not have been indifferent to the true religion's light or overcome by unbelief's darkness. Those who lived during the interregnum will not be called to account for their faults in religion's secondary commands.

In addition, as stated in: *We do not punish unless We send a Messenger* (17:15), they will be exempt from Hellfire. Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ash'ari maintain that they will be saved from Hell's torment even if they did not believe and were unaware of the pillars of belief, for God holds His servants responsible for His Commands only after sending a Messenger. Moreover, people can be held responsible only if they are aware of belief and Divine commands. Since the passage of time covered the earlier Prophets' religions, those who lived during the interregnum cannot be punished for not following those religions. But those who carried out some of those religions' commandments, whether consciously or unconsciously, will be rewarded; those who did not will not be punished.

SIXTH POINT: You ask: "Did a Prophet appear among the Messenger's ancestors?"

ANSWER: There are no Traditions or verses to inform us if one appeared after Isma'il (Ishmael). Two Prophets, Khalid ibn Sinan and Hanzala, did appear, but they were not from the Messenger's lineage. Nevertheless, the couplet of Qa'b ibn Luayy, who was from that lineage,

Prophet Muhammad will appear in the time of heedlessness,
He will give tidings, in all of which he is truthful.

seems to be miraculous and therefore belonging to a Prophet. Imam Rabbani, based on evidence and spiritual discovery, said: "Many Prophets appeared in India, but, since no one or only a few followed most of them, they either did not become famous or were not recognized as Prophets." Based on this

illustrious Imam's viewpoint, we can say that such Prophets might have appeared in the Messenger's lineage.

SEVENTH POINT: You ask: "What is the truest and most acceptable opinion about the belief of the Messenger's parents and grandfather ('Abd al-Muttalib)?"

ANSWER: I have had only the Qur'an with me for 10 years, and do not have enough spare time to research the books of Tradition for such details. However, his parents are among the people of belief and Paradise, for God Almighty would not hurt His most noble beloved's feelings and affection for his parents.

If you ask why they did not live until his Prophethood so that they could believe in him, I reply: To please His most noble beloved's filial feelings, God Almighty may have willed not to make his parents indebted to him. Since His Compassion required, in order to please His noble beloved and his parents, that his parents not be reduced to being his children-in-religion and that they should be indebted only to His Lordship and not to any created being, God Almighty did not make the Messenger's grandfather and parents members of his community. However, He granted them the virtues, merits, and happiness shared by the community. For example, if a noble marshal's father is only a captain and enters his son's presence, the son will have paradoxical feelings. So the monarch excludes the captain from his honorable aide-de-camp's (the marshal) company out of compassion.

EIGHTH POINT: You ask about the most accurate opinion about his uncle Abu Talib's belief.

ANSWER: The Shi'ah say he believed, while most Sunnis say he did not. I maintain that Abu Talib sincerely loved God's Messenger for his person, not on account of his Messengership. This sincere and solemn love and affection will not be lost. Even if Abu Talib enters Hell because shame and tribal zeal, instead of willful denial and obstinacy, prevented his belief, God Almighty could create a particular paradise therein to reward him for loving, protecting, and supporting the Messenger. As He sometimes sends spring-like weather during mid-winter, creates spring in some places, or changes a dungeon into a palace through sleep, He may change his abodes in Hell into an abode paradis for him.

Only God has knowledge and knows the Unseen. Glory be to You.
We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

*The
Twenty-ninth Letter*

The Twenty-ninth Letter

The Qur'an • Ramadan • God is the Light of the heavens and Earth • Human and Satanic intrigues • Freedom of worship • Islam's public rituals cannot be changed • Tariqa

(The Twenty-ninth Letter consists of nine sections. This first section comprises nine points.)

In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

Everything glorifies Him with His praise.

MY DEAR, TRUTHFUL BROTHER AND EARNEST FRIEND IN THE QUR'AN'S service. In your last letter you requested an answer to an important matter. However, time and my current situation make it difficult for me to write answers.

Dear brother, praise God that more people are copying the Treatises this year. I spend the entire day, from morning to evening, editing them for a second time. This causes me to delay other important tasks, but I consider this more important. However, since the heart (rather than the reason) is more likely to receive Divine effulgence during Sha'ban and Ramadan,³⁸¹ and the soul is more active, I will try to write to you whenever something

³⁸¹ Two consecutive months in the Islamic lunar calendar. The latter is the month of prescribed fasting, while in the former fasting is recommendable. (Ed.)

occurs to me from God's Mercy. For the time being, I explain three points, as follows:³⁸²

First section: The Qur'an

FIRST POINT: Some people claim that the Qur'an's mysteries are unknown, and that its interpreters have not perceived its truths. This claim has two aspects, and those who make it fall into two groups. The first group comprises the people of truth and investigation. They say that the Qur'an is a boundless treasury and that all people, regardless of time, receive their share from its complementary, implicit truths (without interfering with the shares of others) after they acknowledge its principles and unchangeable commands.

The Qur'an becomes better understood over time and in more detail, and the dimensions of its meaning are clarified. However, this does not mean that we should doubt its literal, explicit truths expounded by our righteous predecessors, for belief in the certain and incontrovertible truths forming the fundamentals of the Qur'an and Islam is obligatory.

The Qur'an explicitly states that it was revealed in clear Arabic (in plain language) so that its meaning could be understood. The Divine address concentrates, reinforces, and elaborates on these meanings. Rejecting them means contradicting God Almighty and the Messenger's understanding. The explicit meanings forming the fundamental Qur'anic truths were derived from the source of Messengership and transmitted through established reliable channels. This cannot be doubted. An interpreter like Ibn Jarir al-Tabari³⁸³ related each verse's meaning to the source of Messengership through reliable chains of transmission, and wrote a most comprehensive interpretation of the Qur'an.

The second group comprises either single-minded friends who make matters worse while trying to help, or devilish enemies who oppose Islam's commands and the truths of belief. They want to make a way through the Qur'an's fortified *suras*, which you say are like a steel citadel around the Qur'anic truths. They spread their false claims to cast doubt upon the truths of belief and the Qur'an.

³⁸² Later enlarged to nine points. (Tr.)

³⁸³ Al-Tabari (c839-923): Scholar and author of enormous compendiums of early Islamic history and Qur'anic exegesis. He condensed the vast wealth of exegetical and historical erudition of earlier Muslim scholars, and is renowned as a historian, *faqih* (jurist), and interpreter of the Qur'an. (Ed.)

SECOND POINT: God Almighty swears by many things in the Qur'an. There are numerous mysteries and subtle points in these oaths. For example: *By the sun and his morning brightness* (91:1), points to the truth expressed in The Eleventh Word and presents the universe as a palace or a city. *Ya Sin.* *By the Wise Qur'an* (36:1-2) reminds us that the Qur'an's miraculousness is so sacred that it is worth swearing by.

By the star when it sets (53:1) and: *No! I swear by the locations and fallings of the stars, a mighty oath if you but knew!* (56:75-76), point out that falling stars signal the banning of jinn and devils from hearing news of the Unseen. This ends any doubt about the Revelation's authenticity.³⁸⁴ These oaths also remind us of the great power and perfect wisdom needed to establish the stars, those mighty heavenly objects, in their places in perfect order, and in turning the planets with an amazing speed.

In oaths by angels responsible for winds: *By the scattering and winnowing* (51:1) and: *By the emissaries sent* (77:1), our attention is drawn to the significant wisdom in whirling winds and air waves. We are reminded that such supposedly "randomly moving" elements are, in fact, used for important services and subtle purposes.

In short, Qur'anic oaths contain many subtleties. As I have no time to explain all of them, I only point out one point in: *By the fig and the olive* (95:1). Through this oath, God Almighty reminds humanity of His Power's greatness, His Mercy's perfection, and His important bounties. This oath also points out that people heading toward the lowest rank can use thanksgiving, contemplation, belief, and good deeds to begin a spiritual evolution that eventually will allow them to reach the highest rank.

The fig and the olive are mentioned for a specific reason: These useful fruits contain many noteworthy subtleties. Olives are important in social and commercial life and are nutritionally rich. Figs are wonderful miracles of Divine Power (God encapsulates a huge fig tree within its sand-particle-sized seeds) that display many aspects of Divine Providence by lasting longer than most other fruits consumed by people. They also have many other beneficial properties that should be studied by scientists.

THIRD POINT: The abbreviated letters at the beginning of several Qur'anic *suras* (*al-huruf al-muqatta'at*) are Divine ciphers through which God

³⁸⁴ In pre-Islamic times, mediums and seers tried to acquire limited news of the Unseen through jinn and devils. This door was closed when the Qur'an began to be revealed. (Ed.)

reveals some signs of the Unseen to His particular servant, the Prophet Muhammad. The key is in his hand and the hands of his true successors.

Since the Qur'an addresses every level of understanding in every age, all people, regardless of level and time, can comprehend it according to their level. The righteous predecessors had and disclosed the primary share. Saints and seekers of truth find therein many indications relevant to their spiritual journey toward the Unseen. In my *Isharat al-I'jaz* (Signs of the Qur'an's Miraculousness), I explain those letters from the viewpoint of their miraculous eloquence at the beginning of *Surat al-Baqara*.

FOURTH POINT: The Twenty-fifth Word proves that a true and exact translation of the Qur'an is impossible. Its sublime style, an element of its miraculous meaning, cannot be imitated. Even explaining the truth and pleasure derived from its sublime style is impossible. However, I cite a few points to present a glimpse to understand it, as follows:

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and Earth and the variety of your tongues and colors. (30:22)

And the heavens shall be rolled up in His Right Hand. (39:67)

He creates you in your mothers' wombs, creation after creation in threefold shadows. (39:6)

He created the heavens and Earth in 6 days. (7:54)

God comes between a person and his own heart. (34:3)

Not an atom's weight, or less than that or greater, escapes from Him in the heavens or in Earth. (8:24)

He makes night pass into day, and makes day pass into night. He knows all that is in the breasts (hearts). (57:6)

In these verses, the Qur'an sublimely and miraculously portrays the truth of God's creativity. It shows that the universe's Builder puts all particles in their places, even in the eye's pupil, with the same instrument and at the same time as He fixes the sun and moon in their places. He makes and places the eyes and removes their veils according to the same measure and using the same immaterial instrument as that with which He uses to arrange and unfold the heavens. The Majestic Maker puts a person's unique facial features and outer and inner senses in their places with the same immaterial hammer used to fix the stars in the sky.

A verse also indicates in one part of it how the Majestic Maker, in order to have the eyes see and the ears hear His acts while He is at work, strikes a particle and puts it in its place, and in the other part, how He strikes the sun at the same time. Such a sublime style shows His absolute Oneness (in that the One Who creates and controls a particle is also He Who creates and controls the sun and the whole universe); His infinite Majesty within His infinite Grace; His boundless Might in His infinite Subtlety; His universal, all-encompassing Care without neglecting even a single, tiniest thing; His infinite Grandeur within His infinite Compassion, and His creatures' endless distance from Him in His infinite nearness to each of them. He demonstrates all opposites' ultimate unity. Although regarded as impossible, such a unity's existence is absolutely necessary for the universe's existence and life, and absolutely easy for God. Before such sublimity, the greatest literary figures can only prostrate in admiration.

The sublime Qur'an demonstrates the majesty and grandeur of His Lordship's Sovereignty through: *And of His signs is that the heaven and Earth stand firm by His Command; then, when He calls you once and suddenly out of the ground, you shall come forth* (30:25). In other words, the heavens and Earth resemble the barracks or training grounds of magnificent armies. Lying behind the veils of non-existence and mortality, they appear in the Place of the Supreme Mustering with a perfect speed and in perfect obedience to a trumpet blast or the command: "Rise for the Last Judgment!"

This verse, which refers to the universe's final destruction and the Resurrection in a miraculously exalted style, contains the following convincing proof: Seeds covered by and rotted away in the ground, as well as water evaporated and concealed in the atmosphere, reappear in this world every spring with perfect order and speed. This mimics the Resurrection, for the dead will be resurrected in the same way after the universe's final destruction.

Compare the degree of eloquence in other verses to those quoted above, and decide whether or not the Qur'an can be translated accurately in all its fullness. All that can be done in the name of "translation" is to make either a brief or a relatively long verse-by-verse interpretation.

FIFTH POINT: For example: *Al-hamdu li-lلّah* (All praise be to God) is a Qur'anic sentence meaning, according to Arabic syntax and semantics, that every praise that has been or ever will be uttered by any being to anyone else is, in reality, for and deserved by the Necessarily Existent Being: God.

The meaning *every* derives from *al* (the). The meaning *by any being* derives from *hamd* (praise), for the original Arabic is in the infinitive form. Arabic

expresses a general meaning if the infinitive has no subject. Besides, as this sentence contains no object either, although it is addressed to someone (or something) who is either present or absent, its meaning is also general. Therefore, we derive *to anyone else* from this short sentence.

That has been or ever will be comes from the rule that transitioning from a verb clause to a noun clause indicates persistence and duration. *For and deserved by* are expressed in the preposition *li* (to or for God), which specifies and expresses deserving. Since *Allah* is the Divine Being's Greatest Name, and since existence is essential and indispensable to the Divine Being and is a tableau to help reflect on the Majestic Being, *Allah* necessarily connotes the Necessarily Existent Being. If this is the explicit, briefest meaning of such a short sentence, which is agreed upon by linguists of Arabic, how can it be translated to another language with the same strength and miraculousness?

Only one other language resembles Arabic in its syntax, but it cannot compete with Arabic in comprehensiveness. Given this, how can the Qur'an's sacred words, revealed in Arabic and therefore having a syntax and comprehensiveness displaying an All-Encompassing Knowledge penetrating everything at the same time, be translated into other languages with all of its subtle meanings, allusions, and miraculous style? In reality, each letter in the Qur'an is such a rich treasure of truths that its explanation could cover at least one page.

SIXTH POINT: To express this meaning better, I describe an event that enlightened me. Once I pondered over *we* in *You alone do we worship and You alone do we ask for help* (1:5), and tried to understand why *we* was preferred to *I*. The congregational prayer's merits suddenly dawned upon me, and I noticed that every member of the mosque's congregation was a kind of intercessor for me, a witness and supporter of the causes and truths I declare in my recitation. I felt encouraged to offer my faulty prayer to the Divine Court in the company of the congregation's comprehensive prayer. Another veil dropped, and I imagined all of Istanbul's mosques as one mosque, and their worshippers as one huge congregation. I felt included in their supplications and confirmations.

Afterwards, I imagined myself in the circular lines of worshippers around the Ka'ba, and said: *Al-hamdu li-lلّah, Rabb al-'Alamin* (All praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds)," seeing that I had so many intercessors repeating and confirming every word of my prayer. This thought led me to see the Ka'ba as the prayer niche (*mihrab*). Entrusting to the blessed Black Stone my

confession of faith: "I bear witness that there is no deity but God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is God's Messenger," which the whole congregation said, I noticed that the congregation comprised three circles, as follows:

The first circle was the mightiest congregation formed by all believers and monotheists. The second circle was composed of all creatures engaged in a most comprehensive prayer and glorification of God, each species supplicating and praising in its own ways. Their services, called the "functions or duties of things," are the form of their worship. Aware of this, I said: *Allahu akbar* (God is the All-Great) and bowed my head in wonder.

The third circle was my body, an amazing and yet seemingly slight and insignificant world, but in reality a very great and significant world due to the task it performs. Each part of it, from the cells to the outer senses, is busy with worshipping and giving thanks. In this circle, I felt the spiritual faculty in my heart reciting on that congregation's behalf: *You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for help*, as my tongue did on behalf of the other two congregations.

In sum, the *we* in *You alone do we worship* refers to those three congregations. Still in this state, I imagined that the spiritual personality of God's Messenger, the conveyor and transmitter of the Qur'an, assumed its grandest form in Medina, which could be regarded as his pulpit in this world, and was reciting: "O people, worship your Lord." I imagined the three congregations obeying him by reciting: *You alone do we worship*.

Then, according to the rule of "When something is established, it is established with all that is needed for it to be established," the following truth came to my mind: The Lord of the Worlds addresses all people and, through them, all creatures. God's Messenger then communicates that speech of honor to humanity, to all beings having spirit and consciousness, regardless of time. As the past and future thus can be regarded as the present, all people [regardless of time and place] listen to this address as a congregation composed of various lines.

This truth showed me that each verse has a miraculous radiance in its subtle style, eloquence, and fluency. All of these come from the Eternal Speaker of Infinite Grandeur and Majesty through the illustrious transmitter who has the greatest rank of being beloved by God, and from the variety and multitude of its listeners. This makes the entire Qur'an, even each of its words, miraculous. I said: "All praise be to God for the light of belief and the Qur'an" and, emerging from the imaginal world I had entered

through the letter *nun* (*n*),³⁸⁵ understood that in addition to the Qur'an's verses and words, even some of its letters, like the *n* in *na'budu*, are radiant keys to significant truths.

When my heart and imagination came out of this state, my reason said: "I want my share. I cannot fly like you. I walk on the feet of evidence and argument. You should show me the way to the Creator, the Worshipped One, Whose help is asked for, through *We worship* and *We ask for help* so that I can accompany you." In response, I told the heart to say to the bewildered reason:

See how all creatures, whether animate or inanimate, worship God by doing their duties in perfect order and obedience. Some of them, despite being unconscious or dumb or unfeeling, perform duties in perfect order as if they were conscious and worshipping God. This means that the One, Truly Worshipped and Absolutely Commanding, employs them to worship Him.

Look again, and see that all creatures, especially animate ones, have countless needs and demands that must be met if they are to exist and survive. They cannot meet even their most insignificant need on their own, and yet we see that their needs are met regularly, on time, and from an unexpected place.

Such infinite poverty and neediness, along with such an extraordinary satisfaction of their needs by the Unseen and the aid of Mercy, shows that they have an absolutely Rich, Munificent, and Powerful Protector and Provider to Whom all things turn for help, especially living beings. In other words, through the language of asking for help, they say: *You alone do we ask for help*.

Reason responded: "I also believe and affirm."

SEVENTH POINT: Then I said: *Guide us to the Straight Path, the path of those whom You have favored with true, perfect guidance* (1:6-7). Immediately among all the caravans of humanity, I saw the illustrious caravan of the Prophets, loyal and truthful ones, martyrs, saints, and pious people pass into eternity along a straight highway, removing all darkness from the future. This supplication guided me to join that caravan. I suddenly said: "Glory be to God!" Anyone should be able to see what a great loss and perdition it is not to join that illustrious caravan progressing in utmost security to illu-

³⁸⁵ *Nun* is prefixed and suffixed to a verb in different tenses to mean *we*, as in *na'budu* (*we worship*).

minate the future. Where can those who turn away by introducing un-Islamic innovations into Islam find light? What can they follow to salvation?

God's Messenger, who is our guide, declared: "Every innovation is a deviation, and every deviation leads to Fire."³⁸⁶ What benefit do such evil scholars who offer and attempt to change the nature of Islam's self-evident marks or public symbols or rituals hope to gain? On what principle can they base their opposition to those public rituals (e.g., *adhan* [call to prayer], recitation of the Qur'an and *adhan* in their original Arabic language, sacrificing animals on the Festive Day of Sacrifice, and *Jumu'a* and other congregational prayers)? How can they consider them changeable? They must be deluded by a transient, illusory light caused by an aspect of their meaning.

For example, a peeled fruit may show its delicacy more clearly but all too briefly, for it is soon bruised and begins to rot. In the same way, the Prophetic and Divine expressions and concepts in Islam's public symbols or rituals are like a living and protecting skin. When removed, such as reciting the *adhan* in another language, its blessed meaning may seem brighter or more understandable. But it soon loses its freshness and spirit, leaving its "carnass" in dark minds and souls. Its light is extinguished, and only smoke remains.

EIGHTH POINT: The law has two spheres: individual rights and public law. Both are found in the Sharia. This latter group, which is also regarded as the rights of God, contains Islam's "public symbols or rituals" or "banners." Since all Muslims are concerned with these symbols, any interference without their consent transgresses their rights. Even minor symbols, like the commended duties, are just as important as Islam's most fundamental matters. Those who try to change or abolish these symbols, as well as their supporters, should understand that such matters concern all Muslims, for they are the radiant links joining all Muslims to Islam and each other since the Age of Happiness. They should understand that they are committing a most grievous sin. Anyone with even a bit of consciousness should tremble at the inevitable dire consequences.

NINTH POINT: Some Sharia matters are related to worship. Being independent of human reason, the cause for their performance is God's command. Other Sharia matters are the result of preferring a purpose or a comprehensible benefit. Nevertheless, the real cause for their legislation is the Divine command.

Public symbols related to worship cannot rely on any imagined or fancied benefit, regardless of the supposed beneficial results. No one can interfere with

³⁸⁶ Muslim, *Jum'a*, 43; Abu Dawud, *Sunna*, 5.

them. In addition, the wisdom in or Divine purposes for their legislation or the resulting benefits are not restricted to their known benefits. For example, why does the *adhan* summon Muslims to prayer when firing a gun would achieve the same result? We should realize that the *adhan* has far more benefits than just this one. Firing a gun might achieve the same result, but how could it substitute for the *adhan*, which is also a means of declaring God's Unity on behalf of that area's people, the greatest purpose and result of creating humanity and the universe? It also expresses their servanthood and worship for Divine Lordship.

In short, there is a reason for Hell. Many things going on today make one want to say: "Long live Hell!" Paradise does not come cheap, but rather at a very high price. Remember: *The inhabitants of the Fire and the inhabitants of Paradise are not equal. The inhabitants of Paradise—they are the triumphant* (59:20).

Second section: The Holy Month of Ramadan

(A discussion of some Divine purposes for fasting Ramadan, as it is Islam's brightest and most splendid public symbol or ritual. This section consists of nine points explaining nine purposes.)

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

The month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was revealed, a guidance for humanity, clear signs of guidance and the criterion. (2:158)

FIRST POINT: Fasting Ramadan is one of Islam's foremost pillars and greatest symbols. Many of its purposes relate to God's Lordship and giving thanks for His bounties, as well as to humanity's individual and collective life, self-training, and self-discipline.

One purpose connected with His Lordship is that God displays His Lordship's perfection and His being the All-Merciful and All-Compassionate upon Earth's surface, which He designed as a table to hold His bounties in a way beyond human imagination. Nevertheless, people cannot perfectly discern this situation's reality due to heedlessness and causality's blinding veil. But during Ramadan, like an army waiting for its marching orders, believers display an attitude of worship toward the end of the day as if they expect to be told to help themselves to the banquet prepared by the Eternal Monarch. Thus they respond to that magnificent and universal manifestation of Divine

Mercifulness with a comprehensive and harmonious act of collective worship. I wonder if those who do not participate in such elevated worship or share in the honor of being so favored deserve to be called human.

SECOND POINT: From the viewpoint of its being related to gratitude to God, one of the instances of wisdom in fasting during Ramadan is this: As stated in The First Word, there is a price for the food brought by a servant from the king's kitchen. Obviously, it would be an incredible folly to tip the servant and not recognize the king, [for this would show] a clear disrespect for that gift. In the same way, God Almighty spreads His countless bounties on Earth and bestows them for a price: thanksgiving.

The apparent causes of those bounties or those who bring them to us are like the servant in the above example. We pay servants, feel indebted to and thank them, even though they are only causes or means. We sometimes show them a degree of respect they do not merit. The true Giver of Bounties is infinitely more deserving of thanks for these bounties. Such thanksgiving assumes the form of acknowledging one's need for the bounties, appreciating them fully, and ascribing them directly to Him.

Fasting Ramadan is the key to a true, sincere, comprehensive, and universal thanksgiving. Many people cannot appreciate most of the bounties they enjoy, for they do not experience hunger. For example, a piece of dry bread means nothing to those who are full, especially if they are rich. However, the believers' sense of taste testifies at the time of breaking fast that it is indeed a very valuable bounty of God. During Ramadan, everyone is favored with a heartfelt thanksgiving by understanding the value of Divine bounties.

While fasting, believers think: "These bounties do not originally belong to me, and so I cannot regard them as mere food or drink. Since the One owns and grants them to me, I should wait for His permission to eat them." By thus acknowledging food and drink as Divine gifts, believers tacitly thank God. This is why fasting is a key to thanksgiving, which is a fundamental human duty.

THIRD POINT: Fasting is related to humanity's collective life, for humans have been created differently in regard to livelihood. So God invites the rich to help the poor. Without fasting, many rich and self-indulgent people cannot perceive the pain of hunger and poverty or to what extent the poor need care. Care for one's fellow beings is a foundation of true thanksgiving. There is always someone poorer, so everyone must show care for such people. If peo-

ple do not experience hunger, it is nearly impossible for them to do good or to help others. Even if they do, they can do so only imperfectly because they do not feel the hungry one's condition to the same extent.

FOURTH POINT: Fasting Ramadan contains many Divine purposes related to self-training and self-discipline, such as: The carnal self desires—and considers itself—to be free and unrestricted. It even wishes, by its very nature, for an imagined lordship and free, arbitrary action. Not liking to think that it is being trained and tested through God's countless bounties, it swallows up such bounties like an animal and in the manner of a thief or robber, especially if its wealth and power is accompanied by heedlessness.

During Ramadan, everyone's selfhood understands that it is owned by One Other, not by itself; that it is a servant, not a free agent. Unless ordered or permitted, it cannot do even the most common things, like eating and drinking. This inability shatters its illusory lordship and enables it to admit its servanthood and perform its real duty of thanksgiving.

FIFTH POINT: Fasting Ramadan prevents the carnal self from rebelling and adorns it with good morals.

A person's carnal self forgets itself through heedlessness. It neither sees nor wants to see its inherent infinite impotence, poverty, and defects. It does not reflect on how it is exposed to misfortune and subject to decay, and that it consists of flesh and bones that disintegrate and decompose rapidly. It rushes upon the world with a violent greed and attachment, as if it had a steel body and would live forever, and clings to whatever is profitable and pleasurable. In this state it forgets its Creator, Who trains it with perfect care. Being immersed in the swamp of immorality, it does not think about the consequences of its life here or its afterlife.

But fasting the month of Ramadan causes even the most heedless and stubborn to feel their weakness and innate poverty. Hunger becomes an important consideration and reminds them of how fragile their bodies really are. They perceive their need for compassion and care and, giving up haughtiness, want to take refuge in the Divine Court in complete helplessness and destitution, rising to knock at the door of Mercy with the hand of tacit thanksgiving—provided, of course, that heedlessness has not yet corrupted them completely.

SIXTH POINT: God began revealing the Qur'an during Ramadan. This has many implications, such as: To welcome the month when the Qur'an, that Divine address, was revealed, believers should try to be like angels by abandoning eating and drinking. They also should seek to divest themselves of the

carnal self's vain preoccupations and gross needs. During Ramadan, they should recite or listen to the Qur'an as if it were being revealed for the first time. If possible, they should listen to it as if they were hearing Prophet Muhammad recite it, or Archangel Gabriel reciting it to Muhammad, or God revealing it to Muhammad through Gabriel. They should respect the Qur'an in their daily actions and, by conveying its message to others, demonstrate the Divine purpose for its revelation.

Ramadan transforms the Muslim world into a huge mosque in which millions recite the Qur'an to Earth's inhabitants. Displaying the reality of: *The month of Ramadan, in which the Qur'an was revealed* (2:185), Ramadan proves itself to be the month of the Qur'an. While some in the vast congregation in the great mosque of the Muslim world listen to its recitation with solemn reverence, others prefer reciting it individually. It is most disagreeable to forsake that heavenly spiritual state by obeying the carnal self, and thus eating and drinking in the sacred "mosque," for this provokes the whole congregation's hatred. It is also most disagreeable, and must provoke the Muslim world's dislike and contempt, to counter and defy those Muslims who fast Ramadan.

SEVENTH POINT: Fasting Ramadan has many purposes related to a person's spiritual rewards, as everyone is sent here to sow this world with the seeds of the next life. The following paragraphs explain one such purpose, as follows:

The rewards for good deeds done during Ramadan are multiplied by a thousand. One Tradition states that 10 rewards are given for each letter of the Qur'an. Reciting one letter means 10 good deeds and brings forth 10 fruits of Paradise. But during Ramadan, this reward is multiplied by 1,000 and even more for such verses as the "Verse of the Throne."³⁸⁷ The reward is even greater on Ramadan's Friday nights. Furthermore, each letter is multiplied 30,000 times if recited during the Night of Power and Destiny.

During Ramadan the Qur'an, each letter of which yields 30,000 permanent fruits of Paradise, becomes like a huge blessed tree producing millions of

³⁸⁷ Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, Self-Subsisting, Supporter of all. Slumber and sleep do not seize him. Everything in the heavens and on Earth belongs to Him. Who can intercede in His presence unless He permits it? He knows what (appears) before and after and behind His creatures, and they can only acquire as much of His knowledge as he permits. His Throne extends over the heavens and Earth. He feels no fatigue while guarding and preserving them, for He is the Most High, the Supreme. (2:255)

permanent fruits of Paradise. Consider how holy and profitable this trade is, and how great a loss for those who do not appreciate the Qur'an's letters.

So Ramadan is the most proper time for such a profitable trade in the afterlife's name. It is like a most fertile field to cultivate for the afterlife's harvest. Its multiplication of rewards for good deeds make it like April in spring. It is a sacred and illustrious festival for the parade of those who worship His Lordship's Sovereignty.

This is why fasting Ramadan is obligatory, why believers are not allowed to gratify the carnal self's animal appetites and indulge in its useless fancies. Since they become like angels while fasting or engaging in such a trade, each believer is a mirror reflecting God's Self-Sufficiency. They move toward becoming a pure spirit manifested in corporeal dress by abandoning the world for a fixed period. In fact, Ramadan contains and causes believers to gain, through fasting, a permanent life after a short period in this world.

One Ramadan may enable believers to gain 80 years' worth of reward, for the Qur'an declares the Night of Power and Destiny to be more profitable than 80 years having no such night (97:3). A king may announce a few holidays to mark a special occasion, like his enthronement, and then honor his faithful subjects on those days with special favors. Likewise, the Eternal and Majestic King of the 18,000 worlds revealed the Qur'an, His exalted decree to each world, during Ramadan. Thus wisdom requires that Ramadan be a special Divine festival during which God's Lordship pours out bounties and spirit beings come together. Given that Ramadan is a Divinely ordained festival, fasting is commanded so that people withdraw from their bodily preoccupations to some extent.

Fasting also enables people to abandon sins committed by their bodily senses or members and use them in the acts of worship particular to each. For example, those who fast should stop their tongue from lying, backbiting, and swearing by busying it with reciting the Qur'an, glorifying God, seeking His forgiveness, and calling His blessing upon Prophet Muhammad. They should prevent their eyes from looking at, and their ears from listening to, forbidden things; rather, they should look at things that give a spiritual lesson or moral warning and listen to the Qur'an and truths. When the factory-like stomach is stopped from working, other members (small workshops) can be made to follow it easily.

EIGHTH POINT: One purpose of fasting is to put people on a physical and spiritual diet. If the carnal self acts, eats, and drinks as it wishes, people's physical health is harmed. But, and more importantly, their spiritual life is harmed because they do not discriminate between the allowed and the forbidden. Such a carnal self finds it very difficult to obey the heart and spirit. Recognizing no principles, it takes the person's reins and drives him or her as it pleases.

Fasting Ramadan accustoms it to dieting, and self-discipline trains it to obey. The stomach is not harmed from overeating before the previous meal has been digested properly and, learning to forsake what is allowed, can follow the decree of reason and religion to refrain from what is forbidden. Thus the carnal self tries not to corrupt its owner's spiritual life.

Also, most people suffer hunger to various degrees. To endure a long-lasting hunger patiently, people should train themselves in self-discipline and austerity. Fasting Ramadan provides this patience-based training by causing people to feel hungry for 15 hours, or even for 24 hours if the predawn meal is missed. Thus fasting cures impatience and the lack of endurance, which double humanity's misfortune.

Many bodily members somehow serve the stomach. If that "factory" does not stop its daytime routines during a certain month, it keeps those members busy with itself and forgetful of their own worship and sublime duties. This is why saints always prefer austerity as a way to spiritual and human perfection. Fasting Ramadan reminds us that our bodily members were created for more than just serving the stomach. During Ramadan, many bodily members take and experience angelic and spiritual—as opposed to material—pleasures. As a result, fasting believers receive degrees of spiritual pleasure and enlightenment according to their level of spiritual perfection. Fasting Ramadan refines the person's heart, spirit, reason, and innermost senses. Even if the stomach complains, these senses rejoice.

NINTH POINT: Observing the fast of Ramadan breaks the carnal self's illusory lordship and, reminding it that it is innately helpless, convinces it that it is a servant. As the carnal self does not like to recognize its Lord, it obstinately claims lordship even while suffering. Only hunger alters such a temperament.

God's Messenger relates that God Almighty asked the carnal self: "Who am I, and who are you?" It replied: "You are Yourself, and I am myself." However

much God punished it and repeated His question, He received the same answer. But when He subjected it to hunger, it replied: "You are my All-Compassionate Lord; I am Your helpless servant."

O God, grant peace and blessings to our master Muhammad in a way to please You and to give him his due, to the number of the rewards for reciting the Qur'an's letters during Ramadan, and to his Family and Companions. Glorified be your Lord, the Lord of Honor and Power; exalted above what they falsely ascribe to Him. Peace be upon the Messengers, and all praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds. Amen.

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Third section

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

God is the Light of the heavens and Earth. (24:35)

During Ramadan, I experienced one of the numerous radiances of mystery of the light-diffusing verse: *God is the Light of the heavens and Earth*. My heart was convinced that all living creatures make the same supplication to God, such as that of Uways al-Qarani:

O God, You are my Lord and I am Your servant;
 You are the Creator and I am the one created;
 You are the All-Provider and I am the one provided...

and I felt that each of the 18,000 worlds receives its light from one Divine Name.

The world may be likened to a multipetaled rose-bud consisting of many kinds of worlds wrapped up within each other. I saw a new one behind or under each one's veil. Each world manifested itself to me in darkness and frightening gloom, as depicted by:

Or like the veils of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed by a great wave topped by a great wave, topped by dark clouds, one darkness over another, such that if a man stretches out his hand he can hardly see it. For whomsoever God has not appointed light, for him there is no light. (24:40)

In my vision, a Divine Name suddenly manifested and enlightened each world appearing to me in darkness because of heedlessness. This journey of the heart or the imagination lasted for a long time. What follows is a summary:

The animal world appeared very gloomy, for animals are impotent and weak, have innumerable needs, and suffer severe hunger. But the Divine Name the All-Merciful suddenly appeared like a shining sun above the tower of the All-Provider and thoroughly illuminated that world with the light of Mercy.

After that, I saw within that world another pitiful one in which the young desperately struggle in impotent need. Suddenly the Name the All-Compassionate rose above the tower of the All-Caring and so beautifully illuminated that world that it changed tears of sorrow into tears of joy, happiness, and the pleasure of thanksgiving.

Then the human world manifested itself, as if on a screen. It was so dark, gloomy, and terrifying that I was filled with panic and exclaimed: "How pitiful!" I saw that people have infinite desires and ambitions, universal ideas and imaginations, and grand inclinations and dispositions to eternity and eternal happiness in Paradise. Nevertheless, in addition to their infinite weakness, impotence, and need, they are exposed to innumerable misfortunes and hostile attacks. They flow, either singly or in groups, through a short tumultuous life, a miserable livelihood, and under the tragic blows of continual decay and separation. When they finally reach the grave, which (to the heedless) appears as a gate opening onto eternal darkness, they are hurled into a dark pit. I almost collapsed in tears, with all my senses and my intellect, heart, and soul, at the sight of such a pitifully dark and gloomy world.

But then the Divine Name the All-Just was manifested in the meaning of the All-Wise, along with the Name the All-Merciful in the meaning of the All-Munificent, the Name the All-Compassionate in the meaning of the All-Forgiver, the Name the Raiser of the Dead in the meaning of the Heir-to-All, the Name the Reviver in the meaning of the All-Beneficent, and the Name the Lord in the meaning of the Master. Those Names illuminated many spheres within that dark human world and, opening windows on them from the luminous World of the Hereafter, diffused light upon it.

Afterwards, another huge screen displayed Earth and its contents. The obscure laws of science and the principles of corrupt philosophy showed it as terrifying and gloomy. The miserable condition of humanity, floating in infinite space on the old Earth in a state of continuous volcanic eruption inside

and apt to disintegration, moving at such a great speed as to revolve around the sun in a year, seemed frighteningly gloomy. I was dazed and felt dizzy.

But all at once, the Names the Creator of the universe and Earth, the All-Powerful, All-Knowing, Lord, God, Lord of the heavens and Earth, and Subduer of the sun and the moon appeared in the manifestation of Mercy, Grandeur, and Lordship. They so illumined that world that I saw it as a safe, perfect, and beautiful ship subjected to humanity so that people could travel for pleasure or business.

In sum, I saw that each of the 1,001 Divine Names is like a sun illuminating one of those worlds. Each one contains many spheres, and all other Names manifest themselves in some degree of ordered relation to that Name's full manifestation due to God's Oneness.

Discerning a different light behind each veil of darkness, my heart wanted to mount on the imagination and make a journey upward to the world of the heavens. I saw that those radiant planets, which appear to be smiling, are bigger than Earth and revolve faster than it. If even one of them became confused, it would collide with another and destroy the universe. So I saw the heavens as a dark, boundless, and frightening space, with the moving or fixed stars radiating fire and light. I regretted coming here.

But then the Divine Beautiful Names the Lord of the heavens and Earth and the Lord of the angels and the spirit manifested themselves and disclosed the meaning of: *We have adorned the nearest heaven with lamps* (67:5) and: *He has subdued the sun and the moon* (13:2). Each star, located in darkness, received a gleam from those Names' mighty light, and the heavens were illuminated as if as many lamps as the stars had been lit. That space, formerly imagined to be dark and empty, was thronged and animated and brightened by angels and spirit beings. The suns and stars, serving as a host of the King of eternity, seemed to demonstrate, as if performing an exalted maneuver, the Majestic King's magnificence and His Lordship's splendor. If I had had enough strength, if my bodily particles would have obeyed me, and if I could have done so in all creatures' languages, I would have recited:

God is the light of the heavens and Earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp, the lamp enclosed in glass, the glass as it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost

glow forth of itself though no fire touched it. Light upon light! God guides to His Light whom He wills. (24:35)

However, I recited that verse on behalf of all creatures and, awakening, returned to Earth saying: “All praise be to God for the light of belief and the Qur'an.”

Fourth section: Human and Satanic intrigues

(A warning to the Qur'an's students and servants against delusions.)

In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

Do not incline toward those who do wrong lest the Fire should touch you. (11:113)

This fourth section negates the six human and Satanic intrigues and blocks six routes of assault.

FIRST INTRIGUE: Having learned their lessons from Satan, human devils seek to delude the Qur'an's self-sacrificing servants through love of fame, post and position, hoping that this will cause them to abandon that exalted service and spiritual holy struggle.

Everyone has some ambition for fame, love of position, desire to acquire status. They may even sacrifice their lives if they can gain some fame thereby. This desire is dangerous for the people of the afterlife and destructive for the people of this world. It engenders many bad morals and is the weakest point in the human character. By exciting this desire for public recognition, human devils can subdue people and attach them to themselves. What I fear most for my followers is that the unbelievers will attack that weak spot. This troubles me greatly, for already they have deceived some of my insincere friends and put them in danger.³⁸⁸

O fellow servants of the Qur'an, tell such intriguing worldly agents, heralds of misguidance, and disciples of Satan: “God's approval, the All-Merciful's compliments, and the Lord's acceptance is so great a station or position that, in comparison, people's favor and commendation mean almost

³⁸⁸ Mistakenly believing that they can be with their teacher in heart, they think they are not at risk. However, people carried along by unbelievers, open to being used as unwitting spies, and who even support such people are like those who, when praying, cannot help passing wind and say: “How can I be ritually impure, for my soul is purified!”

nothing. If God likes and approves us, people's approval or commendation may be accepted—provided it reflects God's approval. Otherwise it should not be desired, for it will not benefit us at the grave's gate."

If you still cannot overcome these desires, try to direct them toward a spiritual reward or use them to earn other people's prayers (by helping them) and so that our service for the Qur'an and belief may have a good effect on others. The following comparison clarifies this, as follows:

Imagine the Hagia Sophia mosque full of pious worshippers, some idle children and vagabonds standing at the gate or the ante-chamber, and some foreigners, seeking amusement, looking through the windows. If someone enters and beautifully recites a page of the Qur'an, all pious, truth-loving worshippers in the mosque will welcome, approve, and commend that person, who will gain spiritual reward by their calling God's blessing upon him. Only those on the outside would disapprove of this person. But if he or she chants obscenities or dances violently in the mosque, idle children will be amused, vagabonds delighted (and incited to more indecencies), and foreigners pleased to witness the misery of Islam and Muslims. But each member of that huge blessed congregation will dislike and condemn such a person and consider him or her to be of the lowest rank.

The mosque corresponds to the whole Muslim world in Asia and Africa (and even in Europe). The believers and people of truth are the congregation. The idle children represent foolish people, the immoral vagabonds stand for the irreligious and heretical imitators of the West, and the foreigners are journalists who spread foreign [un-Islamic] ideas.

Every Muslim, especially those of piety and perfection, has a place in the mosque and a position in the eyes of Muslims according to how well he or she observes Islam. If such people sincerely adhere to Islam's sacred truths and the Qur'an's commands for God's good pleasure, the basis of Islamic life, and display the meaning of Qur'anic verses through their conduct, they are included in the supplication: "O God, forgive all believers," always said by all Muslims. This establishes brotherly and sisterly relations with all of them. Only some people of misguidance far below the rank of humanity, or simple-minded people who may be regarded as bearded children (adults in appearance but children in mind and character), disapprove of them.

But if people break with their (righteous Muslim) ancestors (the means of honor and pride) and from the illustrious way of righteous precedents (a

spiritual source of support) to follow whims and fancies, and pursue irreligious novelties for show and fame, people of belief and truth view them as the lowest of the low. All believers, regardless of their ignorance and ordinariness, unconsciously turn away in disgust from such vainglorious people due to: "Fear the believer's insight, for he [or she] looks with the light of God."³⁸⁹

Those who try to please worldly people and unbelievers for such reasons fall to the lowest level in the eyes of most Muslims. Their transient and inauspicious position is limited to a very small minority of deluded and ridiculed people. According to: *Friends on that day will be foes one to another, except the pious who refrain from disobedience to God* (43:67), they find false friends who will harm them here, cause them torment in the Intermediate World of the grave, and be their foes in the Hereafter.

If those who desire public recognition prefer to recite the Qur'an in the mosque, they achieve a considerable and beneficial spiritual position that gratifies this desire—but only if they act sincerely and for God's good pleasure, and do not see the resulting fame and position as their main aim. Compared to what they win, what they lose is insignificant. They may lose a few snake-like people, but will find so many blessed friends supplicating for them that Divine blessings will flow to their souls, like the water of life, from all over the Muslim world. Such blessings are added to their record of deeds.

Once a public figure assumed a very important worldly post and became a laughing-stock in the eyes of Muslims because of the grave errors he committed in his quest for fame. I preached this lesson to him most forcefully. It shook him, but since I could not rid myself of the love of position, my warning was ineffective.

SECOND INTRIGUE: Fear is a most basic human emotion. Intriguing wrongdoers, agents of the worldly, and heralds of misguidance play upon it to inculcate fear and anxiety within ordinary people and particularly religious scholars. Suppose such a person goads an anxious, fearful person on the roof, through groundless suspicions and anxieties, until he falls and breaks his neck. Similarly, worldly people cause Muslims to sacrifice many important things by arousing groundless fears and anxieties.

An important man (may God's mercy be upon him) was afraid to travel by boat. One evening, we went to Galata bridge to take the ferry to Eyup. He did not want to get on, saying that he feared he would drown. When I

³⁸⁹ Tirmidhi, *Tafsir Sura* 15:6.

asked him how many boats were in the Golden Horn, he replied that there might be as many as one thousand. When I asked him how many boats sank each year, he replied usually one or two, and sometimes none.

I made this analogy: "Since a year has 365 days, your chance of drowning is 1:365,000. Why does such a small chance scare you?" I asked: "How much longer do you expect to live?" He answered: "Maybe 10 years; I am old already." I continued: "As there are 3,650 days in 10 years, your chance of dying today is 1:3,650. But since we do not know when we will die, you could die at any time. So repent and weep! Write your last will and testament!"

Seeing the truth in my words, he got on the boat even though trembling. On the boat, I told him: "God Almighty placed fear in our nature so that we might preserve our life, not ruin it. He did not give us fear to make life an unbearable burden full of pain and torment. If there is a risk of 1:2 or 1:3 or 1:4, or at most 1:5 or 6, it may be permissible and tolerable to fear and avoid the risk. But to fear a chance of 1:20, 1:30, or 1:40 is groundless suspicion, a sort of paranoia that changes life into a torment."

Therefore, dear brothers [and sisters]! If sycophants and unbelievers use fear to tempt you into abandoning your struggle in His cause, say: "We are people of the Qur'an, and, according to God's declaration: *We sent down the Qur'an and We will guard it* (15:9), we are within its stronghold. *God is sufficient for us. How good a Being He is to trust in and rely on*, and our trust is a strong citadel around us. Your urging us to fear a danger, even though there is only a 1:1,000 chance that it will affect us during this short transient life cannot lead us to follow a way that is 100 percent harmful to our eternal life in the Hereafter."

Also tell them: "Has Said Nursi ever harmed anyone belonging to the people of truth? He is our companion in serving the Qur'an, our teacher in carrying out this sacred service. Has one of his sincere disciples ever suffered such a misfortune that we should worry about ourselves? He has thousands of brothers [sisters] and friends in religion. Before, when he spent more than 20 years in active public life, we never heard of any of his friends suffering harm. They claim that his participation in the March 31 [1925] revolt led to some of his friends being crushed.³⁹⁰

³⁹⁰ This was a revolt against Sultan Abdulhamid. Although some historians disagree, it was most probably instigated by the British and Germans, who supported the opposing Unity and Progress Party, although those who revolted voiced slogans in favor of Sharia. (Tr.)

But this soon was proven false, for he had nothing to do with the revolt. His friends were harmed only because of what they had done by themselves. In fact, he saved many of them from misfortune. At that time he held the "mace" of politics, which he threw away a long time ago in order to hold the light of the truth. Thus such human devils like you should not think that you can deprive us of an eternal treasury for fear of a danger that has only a 1:1,000 chance of happening."

Talk like this to those who fawn on the people of misguidance, and tell them: "We do not fear a misfortune that has almost no chance of happening. Even if this way held a danger, we would never desert him, for misfortune happens first to those who betray their master in a time of danger. Such people are pitilessly punished, condemned as base people, and some suffer physical as well as spiritual death. Their punishers feel no compassion for them, for they think: "Since they betrayed their faithful and affectionate master, they must be of the basest character and so deserve this."

When a cruel, unjust person throws someone to the ground to trample him or her to death, the victim first will die spiritually by kissing the tyrant's foot and then, after losing all honor and dignity, will die a degrading death. Displaying helplessness in such a situation encourages a tyrant to crush the person to death. But if the victim spits in the tyrant's face, he or she dies as a martyr and remains spiritually alive in honor and dignity.

When British forces invaded Istanbul and destroyed the cannons at the Bosphorus, one of their religious representatives asked six questions of the office of the Shaykh al-Islam, then Turkey's highest religious office. As I was a member of the House of Islamic Wisdom (Dar al-Hikma al-Islamiyya), they asked me to reply. This person wanted the questions answered in 600 words. I replied: "Not with 600, nor with 6, nor with even one word. I will answer them with a boo. For you see how, when a nation's government puts its foot on our neck, its religious officer gets up to ask us some questions in a boastful way. Thus his due is a boo!"

Now I say: "Dear brothers [sisters], even though it was 100 percent dangerous to respond in that way to the tyrannical invaders of Istanbul, the Qur'an was enough to protect me. It will be enough to protect you against any danger that has only a slight chance of happening at the hands of those insignificant wrongdoers."

Also, dear brothers, most of you have completed your military service. Those who have not joined the army must have heard—if they have not, let them hear it from me—that those who flee the battlefield receive many more wounds than those who persevere. The verse: *The death from which you flee will meet you* (62:8), hints that those who flee actually hasten to meet death.

THIRD INTRIGUE: Greed deceives many people. Based on decisive proofs from the Qur'an's verses and clear explanations, I have written that lawful provision comes according to one's poverty and impotence, not one's capacity and willpower. I present only a few of this truth's countless signs and evidences, as follows:

Trees are living creatures that need provision. As they are stationary, their needed provision comes to them. Animals are not provided with food in such a perfect manner, because they seek their food impatiently. Fish are fed perfectly and usually become fat, although they are the least intelligent animals, whereas such clever and strong animals as apes and foxes are mostly weak due to insufficient nutrition. This also shows that provision is based on need or destitution, not power or ability.

Animal and human infants are fed very well and extraordinarily via their mother's breast milk, the best food and sweetest gift of Mercy's treasury. It is bestowed on them in an unexpected way out of His concern for their weakness and incapability. In contrast, wild animals usually have to be content with the scarce food they obtain through tiring effort. This also illustrates how lawful provision is based on impotence and poverty, not intelligence and capability.

Among all people, the Jews are generally the most passionate pursuers of worldly provision and, as a result, are famous for their greed. No other people has suffered such privation, poverty, and humiliation. Even rich Jews live in misery and under stress. Their wealth does not refute this general argument, for they obtain it through such unlawful means as usury.

The poverty of many literary figures and scholars and the richness of many ignorant people also shows that weakness and need, and not intelligence and ability, attract provision. Other ways of attracting provision are relying upon God and petitioning Him verbally and through one's disposition and lawful effort. The verse: *God is the All-Provider, the Possessor of Strength, the Steadfast* (51:58) is so strong and firm a proof that all vegeta-

tion, animals, and babies announce it. Every living species needing provision recites it through the tongue of their disposition.

Since God Almighty, the All-Compassionate and All-Munificent, predetermines and supplies all provision, it is extreme folly to humble oneself in a way that derides His Mercy and belittles His Munificence or to offer one's conscience and sacred things in return for some wealth.

Worldly people, especially the misguided, loan money to get a high return. In exchange for some wealth that might contribute to a year's livelihood, they may cause people to lose the Hereafter's eternal life. Unfortunately, there are always some who attract Divine wrath through their disgusting greed and by trying to please the misguided.

Dear followers! If those who fawn on misguided worldly people and hypocrites seek to capture you through greed, consider my words and follow my example. Only thrift and contentment—not wages or salaries—allow you to preserve your life. If they lend you unlawful money, they will demand a high rate of return. Your involvement in their world may hinder your serving the Qur'an, each hour of which can open the gates of an eternal treasury. Being deterred from this service is so great a loss that no salary or wage can ever be a sufficient compensation.

NOTE: People of misguidance and hypocrites cannot present viable alternative ideas and arguments or defend themselves against the Qur'an's truths and their dissemination. Thus they try to deceive my friends through love of position, greed, and fear. They also conjure up false imputations to present me as unreliable. Although we always act positively in our service, we occasionally have to act negatively to remove obstacles put in the way of our service. And so I warn my followers against these three mentioned above, and try to repel the attacks made on them.

They also attack me personally, saying: "Said is a Kurd. How can you hold him in such high esteem and follow him so warmly?" To silence them, I feel compelled to add a fourth Satanic intrigue in the language of Old Said.

FOURTH INTRIGUE: Instigated by Satan and inspired by the people of misguidance, some high-level unbelievers accuse me falsely and, trying to deceive and arouse my followers' national zeal, say: "You are Turkish. The Turks, God bless them, have many scholars in every field and people of perfection. Said is a Kurd. How can you reconcile cooperating with a non-Turk with your national zeal?"

ANSWER: O unfortunate heretics! Praise be to God, I am a Muslim and belong to the holy nation of Islam, which has hundreds of millions of members. I take refuge in God from sacrificing those brothers and sisters, among whom are most Kurds, for the sake of racism and negative nationalism. There is an eternal bond between all of them and me, and they help me through their prayers. I seek refuge in God from securing the support of a few Kurdish atheists or heretics at the expense of those countless blessed Muslim brothers and sisters.

O unfortunate unbelievers, your corrupt logic dictates that the eternal bonds of a huge, illustrious community composed of hundreds of millions of true brothers and sisters should be sacrificed for the sake of a temporary, useless friendship with a few apostates who are considered as belonging to the Turkish race.

I refer the reader to The Twenty-sixth Letter for my discussion of the nature and injuries of negative nationalism. Here, I elaborate upon a truth briefly discussed therein, as follows:

To those unbelievers who, although enemies of the Turks, hide behind Turkish nationalism. I have a deep and true connection with this country's believers through a genuine bond and belonging to the same Muslim nation. In the name of Islam I support, love, and take pride in the children of this country who carried the flag of the Qur'an victoriously for nearly 1,000 years.

As for you, O hypocrites who falsely claim Turkish nationalism! Your ulterior motives involve displaying a short-lived bond with the Turkish people to make them forget their true national honors! Is the Turkish nation made up of only fanciful and heedless young people between 20 and 40 years old? Does their interest lie in, and the service to be given to them in the name of nationalism require, a system of education which will increase their heedlessness, habituate them to immorality, and encourage them to commit sinful acts? Does serving them mean amusing them so that later in life they will wail and suffer?

If your version of nationalism, progress, and happiness require such things, and if you call yourselves Turkish nationalists of this sort, know that I have nothing in common with you and do not desire your company. If you have a trace of conscience left, some true national zeal, and even a little fair-mindedness, consider the following discussion and then answer me:

The Turkish nation comprises six groups of people: the people of piety and righteousness, the afflicted and the ill, the elderly, the children, the poor and weak, and the youth. Are the first five groups somehow undeserving of your brand of national zeal? Would true nationalism wound their feelings and deprive them of their means of consolation to amuse the sixth group? According to the principle of "The majority is considered when rendering a judgment," one who harms the majority is an enemy to them, not a friend.

I ask you: Where does the interest of the people of piety and righteousness lie? In blindly imitating the corruptions of civilization, or in finding true consolation through the way of the truth, to which they are attached passionately because of their belief in eternal happiness? Your misguided and false claim of national zeal would extinguish their light, deprive them of their consolation, and present death as absolute annihilation and the grave as a gate to infinite separation.

Will the interests of the afflicted, the ill, and the hopeless be served by imitating the irreligious and immoral aspects of the modern civilization? Rather, they hope for consolation and desire some return for their suffering. They seek vengeance upon those who wronged them and wish to enter the grave happily. Nevertheless, your false nationalism wounds the feelings of those in dire need of care, hope, and consolation. You restrain them and drive them without pity to absolute despair. Is this what national zeal really requires?

The elderly are one-third of the nation's population. Every day they move away from this world and toward death. They prepare for it by gradually breaking with this life. Does their interest or consolation lie in listening to the dreadful adventures of certain supposedly Turkish tyrants and your movement's self-proclaimed progress, which is no more than your neglect of the Hereafter, attachment to this world, and inevitable spiritual decay? Can people at the movies find a light with which to illuminate their other world, or find true consolation at the theater?

I seek refuge in God from your type of national zeal, for you use it to deceive the elderly (who expect due respect from national zeal) into believing that death is absolute annihilation and the grave (which they consider a gate to mercy) resembles a dragon's mouth into which they will be thrown. Is this true national zeal?

Children expect mercy and care from national zeal. Being feeble and impotent, they can become spirited and develop their potential only by rec-

ognizing an All-Merciful and Powerful Creator. They can look at life lovingly and hopefully only if inspired with belief in, reliance on, and submission to God. Only this way helps them resist the future's awful circumstances and calamities.

Given this, does their interest and happiness lie in attaching themselves to a material progress in which they have only a superficial interest, and to the principles of materialistic philosophy that will demoralize and dispirit them? If we were only biological entities like animals, beings without intellect, that education you call a "national education for civilization" might meet some of their worldly interests and temporarily amuse them as a new toy amuses a child. But since these innocents are human beings, and since they will experience tumults while alive, they will cherish long-term desires and have great objectives.

To compensate for their weakness and impotence, we must care for them by establishing in their souls a strong belief in God and the Hereafter as a point of support and an inexhaustible source of help. This is what true mercy and care demands. Otherwise, like an insane mother slaughtering her child with a knife, we will kill them spiritually by intoxicating them with national zeal. Or we will commit a monstrous crime like feeding them their own brains and hearts.

National zeal cannot ignore the poor, whom poverty crushes under life's heavy burdens, or the weak, who are affected by life's terrible convulsions. Does their share in national zeal lie in your degenerative movements which you institute in the name of civilization but which only increase those poor ones in suffering and hopelessness, and serve some dissolute wealthy people to satisfy their lusts and fancies, and some powerful, tyrannical ones to gain notoriety and commit more crimes? Poor people's poverty cannot be solved by racism, but only by the medicine in Islam's sacred "medicine store." Islamic zeal and sacred Islamic nationalism, not materialistic philosophy that attributes everything to coincidence and chance, give the poor and weak the resistance and strength they need to survive.

The sixth group is the young. If youth were permanent, your "wine" of negative nationalism might be of some temporary use for them. But when they recover in old age from the drunkenness of youth, when they awake in the morning of old age to life's pains and realities, the wine-induced troubles will make them weep bitterly. The pain coming from that sweet dream's end

will drive them to regret, saying: "Alas! Youth has gone, life is almost ended, and I approach the grave without good deeds. If only I had been sensible and prepared for this event!"

Given this, does national zeal require that the youth should experience lengthy regret for a transient merriment? Or do happiness and pleasure lie in spending their youth on the Straight Path, thanking God for the blessing of youth, using their transient youth to gain permanence through worship, and securing eternal youth in the World of Happiness by spending their youth in belief and good deeds?

In short, if the Turkish nation were composed of only the young, and if youth were permanent and there was no other world, your imitation of the modern civilization in its dissipated aspects under the guise of Turkish nationalism might be considered true national zeal. You might have a right to say of me, a man who gives little importance to worldly life and gross nationalism, who tries to prevent the young from indulging in sins and who was born in another province: "He is Kurdish, so do not follow him!"

But since the people of this Turkish nation consist of six groups, it is sheer enmity for the nation to harm five groups in order to amuse the sixth for a limited period, intoxicating its members now so that their old age will be full of regret and despair.

They do not consider me a Turk, although I have spent my life working, with deep affection and brotherly feelings, for the benefit of righteous Turks, the old and afflicted, the poor and weak, and children. I have tried to direct the youth away from sinful acts that poison their worldly life and ruin their next life, that cause one to weep for a year in exchange for an hour's pleasure. My publications, published over the last 20 years and all in Turkish, are all in the open. All praise be to God that, through these works derived from the source of the Qur'anic lights, the old are offered the light of which they are in such dire need.

The most useful remedy for the afflicted and the ill is shown to be found in the Qur'an. The grave is shown to be a gate opening onto infinite mercy, not eternal annihilation. The Qur'an offers children a strong point of support against life's misfortunes and satisfies their desires and ambitions. In addition, the Qur'anic truths of belief relieve the weak and the poor of life's crushing burdens.

I feel a heartfelt unity with righteous youth. However, I do not recognize as Turks those who embrace heresy and want to break with the Muslim nationality, the real source of Turkish national pride. I consider them hostile foreigners disguised as Turks. They cannot deceive the people of truth even if they claim repeatedly that they are Turks and Turkish nationalists, for their acts and attitudes contradict them.

Now, O you who try to make my true brothers [sisters] chilly in their relations with me! How do you benefit this nation? You extinguish the light of the people of piety and righteousness. You deepen the injuries of the ill and afflicted, who deserve compassion and attention. You deprive the elderly of their means of consolation and drive them to despair. You demoralize the children, who so need such care, and extinguish their humanity. By destroying the hopes of the poor and weak, who are in such need of help and consolation, and by drying up their source of help, you make them see life as more dreadful than death.

Lastly, you intoxicate the youth, who should be warned and awakened from the sleep of youth, with such a “wine” that the resulting drunkenness is extremely painful and dreadful. Thus your national zeal sacrifices many of this nation’s sacred things! Does your Turkish nationalism benefit the Turks in the ways mentioned? I seek refuge in God from your Turkism or Turkish nationalism!

Gentlemen! I know you resort to force when you are defeated on a point of truth. According to the principle that “right is might” and not “might is right,” I will never bow my head before you, for I am ready to sacrifice it for the Qur'an's truths. Also, I inform you that even if thousands of such people like you, all of whom the people dislike, were to antagonize me, I would not care about them or give them any more importance than I do to harmful creatures.

What can you do to me? You can kill me or impede my service. I have relations only with my life and my service of the belief and the Qur'an. The appointed hour of death never changes. So if I am martyred by your hands, this is what I have been expecting eagerly. As I am already old and probably will not live more than another year, it is the most exalted objective and aim of those like me to exchange one year of life for eternal life through martyrdom.

As for my service, all praise be to God Almighty, He has provided me with such friends and followers in this task, now done in only one center, that they will carry it out in many other centers after my death. If death silences me, many others will speak—and speak louder—on my behalf and continue this service. A seed dying underground grows into an elaborate tree yielding thousands of seeds in exchange for one. I hope that the same will be true of my death, much more so than of my life.

FIFTH INTRIGUE: Supporters of the misguided desire to use human egotism to separate my brothers [sisters] from me. A person's most dangerous temperament and weakest spot is egotism. By exciting this sentiment, they urge people to do very bad things.

Dear brothers [sisters], do not let them captivate you through egotism. Know that the people of misguidance, carried by their ego, have gone astray. The people of truth must forsake their ego to serve the truth, even if sometimes they are justified in using it, for using their ego will make them resemble the people of misguidance. Serving the Qur'an, which is our purpose, has no room for egotism; rather, it demands cooperation in sincere unity.

You must have been convinced that I did not come forward to satisfy my ego or to invite you to serve it; rather, I presented myself to you as an egoless servant of the Qur'an. I have chosen self-denial and altruism, and have proven to you that the works put forward for the people's benefit are derived from the Qur'an and belong to everyone. No one can claim to own them or attribute them to himself or herself.

Imagine the inconceivable—that they belong to me. Then, as one of my followers said, once this gate of Qur'anic service is opened, the people of perfection and knowledge should not hesitate to follow these works, giving no consideration to my defects and shortcomings.

The works of righteous precedents and scholars of truth are a great treasury that benefit everyone and cure every intellectual or spiritual disease. But regardless of such greatness, sometimes one key can open several treasures. Those who have a forceful ego based on knowledge understand that each treatise of *The Words* is a key to the Qur'an's truths and a "diamond sword" with which to strike those who deny these truths. Those people of knowledge and perfection who boast of their knowledge should know that following my works will make them disciples of the Qur'an, not of me, and that I am their fellow student.

Suppose the impossible—that I claim mastership. Since the *Risale-i Nur* removes all believers' doubts about the truths of belief, those scholars either should find a better way to remove doubt or instruct people in the truths expounded by the *Risale-i Nur*. Many sound Traditions warn scholars who use knowledge or conceal the truths they know for selfish or worldly interests, so let them be careful.

Suppose that my enemies, who claim that I do this service to satisfy my egotism, are correct. Even so, at a time when many people forsake egotism to pursue worldly aims around a Pharaoh-like person with total loyalty and close cooperation, would I have the right to ask you to forsake egotism and form a strong unity around the Qur'an's truths, instead of around me? Are even your greatest scholars correct in rejecting this request?

Dear brothers [sisters], envy is egotism's most harmful aspect. If our service is not purely for God's sake, envy intervenes and adulterates it. Just as your hands are not envious of each other, and your eyes do not envy your ears and your heart does not compete with your intellect, each of us is like a member or a sense of our collective body. Thus we should take pride and spiritual pleasure in each other's merits, instead of entering into rivalry with each other.

Something else must be mentioned here, something that is most harmful to our service. Some of you or your friends might feel envious of me. Among you are some important scholars. Some scholars may boast of their knowledge. Even if they are humble, they find it hard to get rid of the egotism caused by being knowledgeable. However devout and faithful they are in heart and intellect, their carnal selves want others to know that they are knowledgeable and to be aware of their merits. Moreover, they might want to compete with the *Risales* (Treatises). Although they consciously like and approve of them, their carnal selves want to see them devalued so that their own works might become as widely read, or even more so, than the *Risales*.

I feel compelled to inform you that the *Risale-i Nur* comes directly from the Qur'an, and that we, the students of the *Risale-i Nur*, are duty-bound to find out and pronounce the truth in matters of belief. Thus we should assume, according to the principle of the division of labor, that each person has a different duty. So, those following this way of learning from the Qur'an through the *Risales*, even if they may be scholars or jurists of the highest degree, should

endeavor to offer these “drops of the water of life” to those in need by explaining and expounding, as well as by designing and arranging, the *Risale-i Nur*.

SIXTH INTRIGUE: This involves using laziness, exploiting each person’s fondness for comfort and ease, and giving new duties to the most active. Devilish people and jinn attack from every direction. When they see our friends who are steadfast, faithful, sincere, zealous, and persevering in service, they adapt a new strategy. To interrupt our service and abate our zeal, they exploit our laziness and natural desire for an easy life. They find jobs for some of us that will leave us no time for service, or give us extra work. They show some of us the world’s attractions to stir up our worldly desires and aspirations, hoping to make us lazy when it comes to the service. As it would take a long time to explain all of their methods, I refer the rest to your insight and understanding.

Dear brothers [sisters]! Be alert! Your duty is sacred, and the service is exalted. Each hour spent in the service is as valuable as a whole day’s worship. Be aware of this so that you do not miss this opportunity.

O you who believe! Be patient and vie and help each other in patience. Be steadfast and try to gain piety in awe of God so that you may prosper. (3:200)

Do not sell My revelations for a trifling price. (2:41)

Glorified be Your Lord, the Lord of Glory, above that they describe. Peace be upon the Messengers, and all the praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds. Glory be to You. We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

O God, bestow blessings and peace upon our master Muhammad, the unlettered Prophet, Your beloved, most esteemed and noble, and of the highest rank, and on his Family and Companions. Amen!

Addendum: Six questions

(This addendum was written to prevent any future hostility and insult aimed at us, or any reproaches of: “Shame on the lazy fellows of that age,” and so that we can justify ourselves against such reproaches. Let the ears of certain pitiless European leaders, disguised under the mask of humanism, hear it! Let it be thrust under the blind eyes of tyrants who pester us with such cruel, unjust people! This addendum discloses one of the many troubles they give me in order to please those leaders of that “civilization of barbarity,” one which gives us countless reasons to shout: “Long live Hell!”).

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

Why should we not trust in God, seeing that He has guided us? We will endure patiently regardless of how you hurt us. Those who trust should trust in God. (14:12)

Along with their recent increasing and diverse attacks, such as their cruel assaults upon the poor people of belief, the heretics raided the little mosque that I personally repaired so that I could pray therein. They also interfered during the *adhan* and *iqama* while I was praying with a few brothers.³⁹¹ They asked why we were reciting the *adhan* and the *iqama* secretly in Arabic (their original language).

My patience has been exhausted. So I now address not the unfair, unscrupulous, and vile fellows who can understand nothing, but rather the heads of the tyrannical committee that continues its arbitrary and despotic rule. O people of heresy and irreligious innovations! I demand answers to the following six questions:

FIRST QUESTION: Every people has its own style and constitution of government. Upon which law do you make such assaults? If you have one, show it! Or do you accept as a law the arbitrary acts of some officers, for no statutes or laws have been legislated in regard to prayer.

SECOND QUESTION: On what power do you base your breaking and disregarding the principles of freedom of religion and thought, which almost all nations have adopted in this century of freedoms? What power allows you to despise humanity and its general consensus? What power do you have that, although you follow secularism and claim not to interfere with religion or atheism, you dare to assault religion and believers in a way indicating that your own religion is fanatical irreligiousness? Such attacks will not remain secret. What will you say when questioned? How can you forcibly violate religious freedom in a manner that disregards the united objection of European states when you are afraid even to resist a single objection of the least of these states on any other matter?

THIRD QUESTION: On the basis of what principle do you try, following the wrong judgments of some so-called Hanafi scholars who have sold themselves and thereby destroyed their school's purity and sublimity, to impose

³⁹¹ The formal Arabic words recited to call Muslims to prayer and to announce the prayer's beginning, respectively. (Ed.)

your unlawful decisions upon members of the Shafi'i school? If you compel me to obey your decisions only after you formally outlaw the Shafi'i school and force its members to become Hanafis, then your action might make some sense—albeit the sense of the irreligious. If not, what you are doing is vile and despicable. We will never submit to it.

FOURTH QUESTION: According to what principle do you compel members of a different nationality [Kurds] to use Turkish to announce the prayer's beginning? Why do you follow a false judgment, one that is essentially opposed to religion and in the name of your sort of Turkish nationalism, which is absolutely contrary to the essential nature of the Turkish peoples, who are sincerely devoted to and deeply integrated with Islam? I have very friendly and close relations with true Turks, but have nothing to do with the Turkism who (show hostility to the religion of Islam) in blind imitation of the West.

If you forced your decisions on us after abolishing the other nationalities who have the same citizenship as Turks in this country, who number in the millions, who have never forgotten their language and original nationality, and who have fought for Islam side by side with Turks, this could be considered following government policy—albeit one of great barbarity.

FIFTH QUESTION: A government applies its laws to those whom it considers its subjects, but cannot do so to those whom it does not allow to be its subjects. Such people oppose that government, saying: "Since we are not your subjects, you are not our government." Also, a government does not use two types of punishment concurrently. It punishes a murderer either by hanging or imprisonment, not both. No country's legal system combines these two punishments.

Although I have never harmed this nation, for 8 years you have placed me under a surveillance that is so strict that no one could justify subjecting even the most hardened and wild criminal to it. You pardon proven criminals, yet deprive me of freedom and withhold my civil rights. Seeing that you do not accept me as a member of this nation, according to what law or principle do you subject me—a person foreign to you in every respect—to such despotic treatment against my consent?

You consider my personal sacrifices and my fighting for our country's sake, as witnessed by the army's commanders during WWI, as crimes. You consider my efforts to preserve our poor nation's morals and secure the people's happiness in both worlds as treason. You sentence me because I reject the un-Islamic lifestyle and dress on the grounds that it is harmful, indulgent,

and dangerous as it leads to unbelief. In addition, you have placed me under surveillance and sometimes in prison for a total of 28 years, and have forced me to endure all of them despite my objections. Now, according to what law or principle do you double this (unjust) punishment by interfering in my prayer?

SIXTH QUESTION: Since we are on opposite sides, as your treatment of me shows, and since you sacrifice your religion and afterlife for the sake of this world, know that we are ready to sacrifice this world for the sake of our religion and afterlife. For us, sacrificing a few years of a life of subjection under your unjust and barbarous rule to attain a sacred martyrdom will be like drinking the water of Kawthar.³⁹² But to make you tremble with fear, I say to you, basing myself on the Qur'an's enlightenment:

If you kill me, you will not survive me for long. Removed from this world, which is your beloved and paradise, by an overwhelming hand, you will be thrown into an eternal abode of darkness. Following my martyrdom, your Nimrod-like chiefs will soon be killed and sent near me. Should they not consider that we will settle this matter in God's Presence and that Divine Justice will cast them into Hell's lowest pit?

O unfortunate ones who exchange the afterlife for this world. If you want to live, do not bother me! But if you do so, know and tremble with fear that I will be avenged in a far more dreadful way. I hope, through Divine Mercy, that my death will serve Islam better than my life, and that my martyrdom will explode like a bomb and eradicate you. If you have enough courage, molest me! Do your worst, then see what I will do! In the face of your threats, I recite: *Those to whom the people said: "A great army has gathered against you, so fear them." But this only increased their belief. They said: "God is enough for us, and He is the best Guardian."* (3:173)

Seventh section: The seven signs

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

Believe in God and His Messenger, the Prophet who neither reads nor writes, who believes in God and His Words, and follow him so that you may be guided. (7:158)

³⁹² Kawthar: A fountain in Paradise. (Ed.)

They want to extinguish God's Light with their mouths, but God wills to perfect His Light even if the unbelievers be averse. (9:32)

(This part consists of seven signs as answers to three questions. The first question contains four signs.)

FIRST SIGN: Those who seek to change Islam's public symbols and rituals base their attempt, as they base all of their evil actions, on blind imitation of the West. This is their argument: Converts to Islam in London or other parts of Europe recite the *adhan* and *iqama* in their own languages, and the Muslim world does not object. Does not this silence imply tacit approval, which must be based on Islamic law?

ANSWER: This is a most misleading analogy. It is inconceivable that any intelligent person would seek to imitate Westerners on this point. For the land of the unbelievers differs in the implementation of some religious rules from the land of Muslims. Many things that are permissible in such a place are not permissible in a Muslim society.

In addition, Christianity is dominant in the West. Since the West is not an environment that normally inspires and inculcates the meaning of Islamic terms and the content of its sacred words or phrases, Western Muslims may feel compelled to sacrifice the original wording for the sacred meanings, and so prefer what is less harmful. But the Muslim world's entire environment teaches Muslims the meaning of those sacred words and phrases. All discourses about Islam's traditions, history, and above all its symbols, signs, and pillars, continually import those sacred phrases' meaning to believers. Mosques and institutions of religious learning, even gravestones and their epitaphs, are like teachers reminding believers of the sacred meaning of Islamic symbols.

Thus I wonder whether those who call themselves Muslims, who can learn 50 foreign words a day, are really Muslims if they cannot learn within 50 years such sacred phrases as *subhan Allah* (Glory be to God), *al-hamdu li-lallah* (All praise be to God), *la ilaha illa'llah* (there is no deity but God), and *Allahu akbar* (God is the All-Great), phrases that they daily repeat at least 50 times. For such heedless and indifferent persons, these sacred phrases are not distorted by translation and stripped of their original sacred wording. To change and distort them would even mean erasing the epitaphs cut on tombstones, and invite even the curse of the dead who would tremble with indignation at such an insult.

Influenced by unbelievers, evil scholars try to deceive with the following argument: Abu Hanifa, opposing other Imams, rules that those living far from Islam's centers can recite, based on the degree of necessity, a translation of *Surat al-Fatiha* during the prayer.³⁹³ Therefore, we can recite it in Turkish because we need to.

ANSWER: Abu Hanifa is one of the greatest Imams of Islamic jurisprudence. However, other greatest Imams and 12 other Imams authorized to deduce verdicts on legal matters from the Qur'an and Sunna do not share this opinion. The highway followed by the Muslim world for centuries is founded on the precedents of these Imams. As the mighty Muslim congregation can follow only this broad highway, those who try to direct them elsewhere seek their misguidance. Abu Hanifa is alone in this opinion. Moreover, his opinion has a specific character due to the following five points:

- It relates to those living far from Islam's centers.
- It is valid only in the case of absolute necessity.
- It relates only to the Persian language that, according to a Prophetic Tradition, is considered a language of the people of Paradise.
- It relates only to *Surat al-Fatiha*, and is intended for those who have not memorized it so that they can perform the prescribed prayers.
- It is based on his Islamic idealism, commitment, and strong belief so that ordinary people can understand that *sura*'s sacred meaning.

In contrast, those who want to allow a (Turkish) translation seek to destroy Islam through weak belief, negative nationalism, and hatred of Arabic. In sum, they want to draw people away from Islam.

SECOND SIGN: After altering Islam's public symbols and rituals, the heretics first demanded a *fatwa* from evil scholars and then published it.³⁹⁴ We analyzed its oddness above. Second, they borrowed this ominous argument from Western "revolutionaries." Europe's philosophers and revolutionary intellectuals rejected Catholicism and adopted Protestantism, which the Catholics regard as a sect of religious innovation and deviation, followed by many Christians. As a result, those accustomed to blind imitation of the West assert: Since Christianity was thus reformed to give birth to

³⁹³ The Qur'an's opening *sura*, which must be recited before any other *sura* in the prayer. All prayers are in Arabic. (Ed.)

³⁹⁴ *Fatwa*: A conclusive legal verdict made by a qualified religious scholar. (Ed.)

Protestantism, and the reformers were branded as apostates at first and then later accepted as Christians, Islam may be reformed in the same way.

ANSWER: This analogy is far more misleading than the one in the First Sign. Christianity attributes to Jesus only its doctrinal pillars, for most legal, social, economic, and political principles were laid down by his followers and other spiritual leaders or borrowed from earlier Divine Books. Since Jesus was not a worldly ruler and is considered that he legislated no social laws, Christianity's legal system is like a borrowed garment fitted on its religious fundamentals. If this garment is altered or changed, Christianity remains and Jesus' position is not denied.

But Prophet Muhammad (the pride of the world) was a religious leader and ruler whose dominion extends from Spain to the Philippines. Therefore he received all of Islam's pillars, principal commands, and social, economic and political principles directly from God through Revelation. As a result, Islam's secondary principles cannot be altered or changed, for they are like the body or at least the skin of Islam's essentials —they are organically molded to each other in such a way that they cannot be separated. Changing them amounts to denying the Prophet.

Differences among Islamic schools or sects originated in the understanding of some theoretical principles concerning secondary matters laid down by the Prophet. Islam's fundamentals and incontrovertible principles are not subject to dispute or alteration. Whoever tries to do so is an apostate and is included in the meaning of the Prophetic tradition: "They break with Islam in the same way as an arrow leaves the bow."³⁹⁵

Trying to find a pretext, the unbelievers argue: During the great French Revolution, which caused successive convulsions in the world, priests, spiritual leaders, and Catholicism were attacked. These attacks were later approved. This is one reason for Europe's progress.

ANSWER: This analogy is just as misleading as the ones given earlier. Europe, especially France, had to deal with a Catholic Church that for centuries had been used by the elite and ruling classes as a tool of oppression and despotism; as a means to secure and sustain their dominion and the *status quo*; and as a way to crush nationalists, intellectuals, and lovers of freedom who opposed their despotism. Also, many saw the Church as the cause of the revolts that destroyed Europe's social life and internal peace for 400

³⁹⁵ Bukhari, *Anbiya'*, 6; Muslim, *Zakah*, 142-44; Tirmidhi, *Fitan*, 24.

years. Thus they attacked it in the name of Christianity. The masses and philosophers were indignant and resented the Catholic Church, and therefore the French Revolution went the way it did.

Such arguments do not work with Islam, for Islam protects the people, as proven by its long history. Islam, with very few exceptions, brought no internal wars of religion, which were a common feature of Christian Europe for 400 years. Further, Islam has been a shelter and stronghold for the masses. Through the obligation of almsgiving (*zakat*) and prohibiting interest, Islam puts the elite at the masses' service. Islam established that a people's master is the one who serves them, and that the best people are those who benefit others.³⁹⁶

The Qur'an constantly urges people to reason and investigate, as seen in such verses as: *Will you not use your reason? Will they not ponder? Will they not reflect?* It gives people of reasoning and knowledge a very high and important position. Unlike Catholicism, it does not reject reasoning, nor silences intellectuals, nor demands blind faith.

There is an essential difference between Islam and Christianity in its present form—not the original religion of Jesus. Islam is a pure monotheistic religion that rejects means and intermediaries, breaks egotism and establishes sincere worship, and denounces and rejects all false lordships from the carnal self to nature. Thus a pious member of the elite must give up egotism. Without abandoning egotism and self-conceit, Muslims will lose their strong religious devotion and may even break, to some degree, with Islam.

The present version of Christianity, which accepts Divine sonship and begetting, inevitably ascribes creative power to causes and means. Rather than breaking egotism in the name of religion, it sacralizes the egotism of intermediaries by regarding them as holy representatives of Jesus. And so members of the Christian elite who occupy high worldly positions can be perfectly pious. For example, former American president Woodrow Wilson and former British prime minister Lloyd George were as bigoted as any priest. But members of the Muslim elite who attain such high worldly positions must break their egotism to be pious Muslims perfectly conscious of God. This is why the Muslim elite could never use Islam to oppress and despise the masses. In Islam, one joins either the elite or the masses through knowledge, God-consciousness, and piety.

³⁹⁶ Al-Ajluni, *Kashf al-Khafa'*, 2:463, and al-Munawi, *Fayd al-Qadir*, 3:481, respectively.

Even philosophers reflect this difference. Christian philosophers are usually indifferent or even hostile to Christianity, whereas most Muslim philosophers or theosophists base themselves on Islam's essentials. Moreover, the afflicted or oppressed Christian masses do not seek help from religion, for most of them are irreligious. The famous revolutionaries who brought about the French Revolution and were described as "irreligious tramps" belonged to the disaffected middle classes. But in the Muslim world, the afflicted and oppressed usually apply to religion for help and consolation, and so become religious.

THIRD SIGN: Heretics argue: Religious fanaticism has made us backward. A progressive life in this century is possible only after abandoning it. This is how Europe developed and progressed.

ANSWER: You are mistaken and deceived, or misleading on purpose. (First, fanaticism is defined as violent and unreasoning devotion. It is therefore incompatible with Islam, for a Muslim's devotion, no matter how deep, depends on knowledge and reasoning. Even if it is not so based, it cannot be described as fanaticism. Muslims are never fanatics. Regardless of their degree of belief and devotion to Islam or whether they base their belief on knowledge or reasoning, they follow the middle way of peace and balance, and justice and moderation, for Islam is the middle way between all extremes.)

Second, Europe is strongly attached to its religion. If you told an ordinary Bulgarian person, English private, or French individual: "Wear a turban (which Muslim men wear) or else you will be thrown into jail," their fanaticism would cause them to respond: "Even if you kill me, I will not despise my religion and nation by doing so."

Third, history shows that whenever Muslims firmly adhered to Islam, they made great progress and declined only when they neglected their devotion. In the Christian world, however, this is reversed. This is due to another significant, essential difference between the two religions.

Fourth, Islam cannot be compared with other religions. Muslims who abandon Islam cannot believe in another Prophet, admit God's Existence even, or recognize anything sacred. Since they find no point in their souls that can be a means for human perfection, they become corrupt, evil, and anarchic. Christians who abandon their religion still can benefit from its collective life. They may still recognize some sacred things, believe in some of the Prophets, and somehow confirm God's Existence. This is why Islam gives non-Muslim enemies the right to live. If their countries are at peace with the Muslims, if they live in the Muslim world and pay their *jizya* (pro-

tection tax), the Muslim state guarantees their lives. However, the conscience of those who abandon Islam is corrupted and therefore can poison Islam's collective life.

What benefit do heretics expect to receive by denying religion? If they consider government and public security, dealing with 10 irreligious tramps is far harder than dealing with 1,000 religious people. If they desire progress, irreligious people both harm the government and block progress by destroying the public order and security essential to trade and progress. Since they follow a socially destructive way, how can anyone expect progress and happiness in life from them? Unfortunately, one high-level person has displayed his own ignorance by saying: "Our belief in and reliance on God caused us to decline. Europe developed through technology and weaponry."

According to the principle of "the best answer to a foolish question is silence," I should keep silent in the face of such absurdities. But since reasonable people should be warned against such absurdities, let me say the following:

O poor fellows! This world is a guest-house. All who die confirm and testify that death is a reality. Since you cannot destroy it and contradict those testimonies, death calls you to believe in and rely on God. In place of God, what technology or weaponry can illuminate the eternal darkness before those who are dying and change their despair into hope? Since death is inevitable and the grave awaits us, and since this transient life gives way to the permanent life, we should mention God 1,000 times and mention technology and weaponry only once. Besides, technology and weaponry lead to God when used in the cause of God, and operate and cease in His name.

FOURTH SIGN: Destructive heretics are of two groups. The first group pretend to support religion and faithfulness to Islam. On the pretext of reinforcing religion with nationalism, they say: "We want to implant in the soil of nationalism the illustrious tree of religion, which has been weakened, and thereby strengthen it." The second group introduces religious innovations on the pretext of "grafting nationalism onto Islam" in order to promote racism in the name of nationalism.

As for the first group: The illustrious tree of Islam, which is deeply established in creation's truth and has sent out roots through the universe's truths, is not to be implanted in racism's dark, barren, arid, unstable, and easily scattered dust-like soil. It is heretical, destructive, and unreasonable to try to do so.

As for the second group: O insensible ones pretending to nationalism! The previous [nineteenth] century was perhaps the century of nationalism. But in this [twentieth] century, nations and countries are coming together to form strong blocks, and feel the need to form unions. Bolshevism and socialism invalidate racial separatism. Besides, such trends as nationalism and racism are temporary, for they sweep over Earth like a strong wind and disappear. Islam's enduring and eternal nationality cannot be grafted onto racism. If you attempt to do so, you will corrupt Islam but cannot maintain racism. Although at first it may give a temporary pleasure, it will endure too briefly and end in catastrophe.

In this country, separatist movements may lead to internal conflicts almost impossible to heal, for each side will break the other's power and thereby exhaust the nation's overall strength. As a result, any foreign power will be able to manipulate this nation easily, for the force of a small stone can manipulate two mountains of the same weight when put on the scales.

FIFTH SIGN: This is a brief answer to an important question.

QUESTION: Some authentic traditions relate that the Mahdi will come toward the end of time and reform the corrupted world. As this is the time of communities, individuals, no matter how capable and intelligent, can be defeated by the opposing community's collective body if they do not have the support or representation of their own community's collective body. How can an individual, no matter how strong his or her sainthood, reform such a corrupted world? If every act of such a person were miraculous, Divine Wisdom and the laws operating in the world would be contradicted. So, what is the truth about the Mahdi?

ANSWER: Each time the Muslim community becomes corrupt, God Almighty sends, out of His perfect Compassion and as a sign of His eternal protection of the Sharia, a person to remove the corruption and preserve Islam. Such a person may be a reformer, a reviver, a noble caliph, a great saint, or a perfect spiritual guide. Since this is God's way, He can reform the world at the time of its greatest corruption through an illustrious person combining the functions of the greatest jurist, reviver, ruler, and spiritual and intellectual guide. This person will be a descendant of the Prophet's Family.

As God Almighty fills the space between the heaven and Earth with clouds in a minute and then removes them, calms a raging sea in a moment, or shows an hour of summer weather during spring and an hour of a winter

storm during summer, He can use the Mahdi to remove the darkness covering the Muslim world. This is very easy from the viewpoint of Divine Power. When considered from the viewpoint of causality and Divine Wisdom, it is so inevitable that even if the Prophet had not related it, it would—and will—happen in just that way.

This is what the people of reflection are certain to judge, because all Muslims supplicate five times a day in the prescribed prayers: "O God, bestow blessing on our master Muhammad and on his Family, as you bestowed it on Abraham and his Family among the whole creation! You are Most Praiseworthy, Most Glorious." This supplication has been accepted.

Muhammad's Family has become like Abraham's Family, leads all blessed chains of saints, presides over all assemblies of spiritual commanders, and carries out the duty of guiding people.³⁹⁷ They are numerous enough to form a mighty army. If they form a unit through solidarity and make Islam, in the form of a sacred nationality, a means of awakening and a bond of unity, no army can beat them. This mighty and irresistible army, formed of the descendants of the Prophet's Family, is the core of the Mahdi's army.

Only the lineage of the descendants of the Prophet's Family is continuously linked to each other through uninterrupted descent, and distinguished with personal merits and ancestral nobility. No other lineage is stronger or more important. It includes, since the beginning, all groups of the people of truth and perfection. At present, with millions of members, they are a blessed awake and aware people whose hearts are full of belief and love for the Prophet, and are elevated and ennobled by the priceless honor of attachment to him. Events are taking place to excite and stir up the sacred force in this mighty community. This force will burst forth with a sublime zeal, and the Mahdi will direct it to the true way of serving Islam. This is our expectation from Divine Laws and Mercy, just as we expect spring to follow winter. And we are right in this expectation.

SIXTH SIGN: The Mahdi's illustrious community will reform the Sufyan's³⁹⁸ destructive and heretical regime and revive the Prophetic (Islamic)

³⁹⁷ Among them, Sayyid Ahmad Sanusi commands millions of disciples. Sayyid Idris and Sayyid Yahya each has hundreds of thousands of followers. There are many such heroes among the descendants of the Prophet's Family, and still greater ones like Sayyid 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Sayyid Abu al-Hasan al-Shazali, and Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi.

³⁹⁸ Sufyan: The Dajjal, the personification of all opposition to Islam, who will appear in the Muslim world toward the end of time as a human being. (Ed.)

way of belief, life, and government. Those who appear in the Muslim world to destroy the Islamic way of life by denying Prophet Muhammad's Messengership and leadership will be defeated and eradicated by the miraculous, spiritual sword of the Mahdi's community.

Another devoted, self-sacrificing community of Jesus' followers, who can be considered as the Muslim representatives of Jesus' mission, will try to unite the original religion of Jesus with the truth of Islam, and thereby defeat and eradicate the Anti-Christ (Dajjal) and his followers. These corrupters of human civilization, violators of all sacred things, and deniers of God will be defeated, and humanity will be delivered from atheism.

SEVENTH SIGN: They ask me: "Your defense of Islam, or your struggle for its sake, has changed. In addition, you do not follow those thinkers who defend Islam against Europe. Why did you change the way of Old Said, and why do you not follow the other defenders of Islam?"

ANSWER: Such thinkers accept, as did Old Said, the principles of human philosophy and the Western way of thinking to a certain degree, and depend upon them in their struggle against Europe. Since they admit some of those principles beforehand, as if they were established scientific principles, they fail to show Islam's true value. They think that they can strengthen Islam by grafting philosophy's supposedly deep-rooted shoots onto its trunk.

I left this way because it is a very difficult and improbable way to overcome anti-Islamic trends, and because it degrades Islam. Islam's essentials cannot be reached by philosophy's principles, as proven in the Twenty-ninth and Thirtieth Words and The Twenty-fourth Letter.

However, thinkers following the same way as Old Said consider human philosophy to be deep and Islam's pillars to be shallow, and thus think that the pillars can be strengthened by grafting them onto the principles of philosophy. But those principles cannot reach the level of either Islam's fundamental or even secondary principles.

Glory be to You. We have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. All praise be to God, Who guided us to this. If God had not guided us, we would never have been guided. Our Lord's Messengers came with the truth. O God, bestow blessings upon our master Muhammad and upon his Family, as You bestowed blessings upon our master Abraham and upon his Family among creation. You are Most Praiseworthy, most Glorious.

Eighth section: Eight representations

[The eighth section discusses some predictions and mysteries of the Qur'an. It is not included in the original book.]

Ninth section: Nine clarifications

In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

Behold, God's friends—there shall be no fear on them, nor will they grieve. (10:62)

(This section comprises nine clarifications about attaining the rank of being God's friend or sainthood.)

FIRST CLARIFICATION: Sufism is a lovely, light-giving, and spiritual truth known under various terms: *tariqa* (spiritual order or way), sainthood (being God's friend), initiation, and following a spiritual order or way. Truth-seeking scholars among the people of spiritual pleasure and discovery have written thousands of volumes on this sacred truth, and have taught it to Muslims. May God reward them! I show, in accordance with the present context, a few drops from that ocean of information.

QUESTION: What is Sufism?

ANSWER: Sufism is the name of the spiritual way by which initiates seek knowledge of God and attain full perception of the truths of belief and the Qur'an. This way elevates initiates, at the end of the spiritual journeying and under the auspices of the Prophet's Ascension, to the rank of the perfect person (*al-insan al-kamil*).

Since each person is an all-comprehensive index of the universe, each person's heart is like an immaterial map of thousands of worlds. Science shows that each person's mind is like a telecommunications center, an immaterial center of the universe, and thus each person's heart, as explained by countless saints, receives innumerable universal truths and is also their seed.

Given this and the fact that, like a seed, the human heart and mind contain the members of a "huge tree," the wheels and other parts of an eternal and splendid machine, the Creator of this heart willed that it should operate and flourish by putting its potentials into practice. As a result the heart, like the intellect, will work. The most practical and important means to make it work is repeating God's Names while journeying toward sainthood and seeking to attain the truths of belief.

SECOND CLARIFICATION: The two means of this spiritual journeying are repeating God's Names and reflection, both of which result in countless benefits in both worlds. Apart from these benefits, everyone seeks consolation or relief amidst life's turbulence and burdensome responsibilities, as well as intimacy to relieve the surrounding solitude and gloom. Modern social gatherings satisfy these needs for very few people, but only in a heedless and intoxicating way.

Eighty percent of people lack true consolation and relief. They receive no relief from such social gatherings, for modern attitudes and lifestyles, the struggle to make a living, illness, affliction, old age, and many other factors lead them to turn their thoughts more to the other world. They find true consolation, contentment, and friendship by making their hearts work through reflection, remembering God, and repeating His Names. By turning to their inner selves for intimacy and understanding that God's creatures are everywhere, they are never alone. Belief in and remembrance of God lead them to make friends with every creature and to live a pleasant, contented life. The feeling of always being in the company of God, their Creator and Provider, gives them the greatest pleasure, removes all gloom and solitude, and so causes them to thank God.

THIRD CLARIFICATION: Sainthood proves Divine Messengership, and the way or spiritual order (*tariqa*) testifies to the Sharia. Saints experience the truths of belief communicated by the Messenger with the certainty of seeing, and confirm them through the witnessing of their hearts and the spiritual pleasure they derive. Such confirmation proves the truth of Divine Messengership.

Sufis are convinced, through the pleasure and enlightenment received and the ability of spiritual discovery acquired, that the Sharia's commands and principles are of Divine origin and true. As sainthood and Sufism prove the truth of Messengership and the Sharia, they also express Islam's perfections, are among the sources of its light, means for humanity's spiritual progress, and sources of enlightenment due to their connection with Islam.

Despite this great truth, some deviant sects deny it. Being deprived of Sufism's lights, they want to deprive others of them. Unfortunately, certain superficial or literalist scholars among the Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a, as well as some heedless politicians, are trying to close down and destroy this

great treasury, and dry up this pure source of the water of life, due to some Sufis' abuses and mistakes.

But every order or system has its faults! If incompetent and unqualified people are admitted, some abuse will occur. But God Almighty will show His Lordship's justice in the Hereafter by judging what people have done. If one's good (evil) deeds weigh more, God Almighty will reward (punish) him or her. Further, He judges good and evil deeds according to quality, not quantity. Thus one good deed could outweigh 1,000 evil ones and cause them to be forgiven.

Since this is the way of Divine Justice, Sufism should not be condemned because a few of its members abuse it. Also, following a *tariqa* or a spiritual way according to the Sunna is always greater than its evils. A most decisive proof of this is that Sufis preserve their belief at the most critical times when the people of misguidance attack all religious values.

Even ordinary, sincere Sufis, due to the spiritual pleasure they receive in *tariqa* and their love for saints, preserve their belief more than those with superficial scientific knowledge of Islam. They may commit some major sins, but they never enter disbelief or join heretics. Nothing can make them refute a chain of spiritual guides whom they accept with strong love and firm conviction as the spiritual poles of the world. Thus they always maintain their trust in them and never become unbelievers. But in the present circumstances, it is hard for anyone, even if they are great truth-seeking scholars, to protect themselves against the intrigues of present-day unbelievers if they have no connection with a spiritual way and their hearts are not working.

Furthermore, Sufism must not be condemned because of the evils of some self-proclaimed orders or some schools that have broken with the sphere of piety and even of Islam. Apart from its very significant religious, spiritual, and Hereafter-related fruits, Sufism always has exerted a strong influence on developing and then causing the flourishing sacred bond of Muslim unity.

It also is one of the three most important and firmest strongholds of Islam against the attacks of disbelief and Christian politics. The power that protected Istanbul, the Caliphate's center, for 500 years against a large world of Christianity lies in the lights of monotheism diffused from 500 places in Istanbul and, as a point of support for believers, in the strength of belief of those invoking God in the dervish lodges behind mosques, and their going into rapture with the spiritual pleasure coming from knowledge of God.

So, O senseless ones claiming national zeal and pretenders to Turkish nationalism, what evils does Sufism have that you can ignore its benefits to the nation's social life!

FOURTH CLARIFICATION: The way of sainthood is paradoxical: easy and difficult, short and long, precious and desirable yet risky, broad and narrow. Such paradoxes sometimes cause adherents to drown or lose their way. Sometimes people turn back and cause others to deviate.

Sufis can follow either of two ways: travelling in the inner world or in the outer world. Members of the first group begin from the carnal self and, without moving toward the outer world, head straight for the heart. They pierce and smash egotism and self-conceit and, by making a way through the heart, reach the truth. Then they set off in the outer world, where they finish their travel quickly. They witness the truth that they have seen in the inner world in the outer world as well. Most spiritual orders that invoke God's Names silently follow this way. Such travelers must break their egotism and self-conceit, abandon whims and fancies, and destroy the carnal self.

The other travelers start from the outer world and, after observing the manifestations of God's Names and Attributes in all objects, enter the inner world. In their hearts, they witness to some extent the same lights that they observed in the outer world and follow the quickest way into the heart. They attain their goal only after perceiving that the heart is the mirror of God, the Eternally-Besought-of-All.

If followers of the first way cannot destroy their carnal selves, abandon whim and fancy, and break egotism and self-conceit, they abandon thanksgiving for self-pride and then vanity. If they are in a state of ecstatic love or spiritually intoxicated because of feeling attracted by God, they make exaggerated claims, such as disregarding God's threats and chastisement, belittling Paradise, or seeing their own rank as above everybody else's. And so they harm themselves and others.

For example, boastful lieutenants enraptured with the pleasure of their rank may see themselves as marshals and thereby confuse the two spheres of command. Likewise, the sun's reflection in a small mirror may sometimes be regarded as the same as the sun's magnificent reflection on the sea's surface. Just so, many saints regard and even see themselves as superior to those who are, in reality, far superior to them, just like flies who consider themselves superior to peacocks.

I once saw an initiate who, awakened to some truths and feeling some slight degree of sainthood's mystery within him, considered himself to be and assumed the attitude of the greatest Spiritual Pole of the world. I told him:

Brother! The office of kingdom has relations with and authority over all offices of the state, from that of the prime minister down to that of a district governor. Thus every officer feels connected to him. The rank of a spiritual pole has different manifestations or reflections in countless ranks of sainthood. Each rank also has many forms of manifestation. You see a Spiritual Pole's greatest rank reflected in your rank and are deceived. What you see may be true, but your judgment is wrong. For a fly, a bowl of water is like a small sea.

By God's Will, he came to his senses and escaped a great danger.

I also have met several people who consider themselves a kind of Mahdi, even the greatest Mahdi promised for the Last Days. They are not liars or deceivers, just deluded insofar as they regard their vision as the ultimate truth. There are as many degrees of the Divine Names' manifestation as the number of objects in the universe, from God's Greatest Throne down to a minute particle on Earth. The objects receiving this manifestation have as many different degrees as their number. This is also the case with sainthood's ranks.

What causes deception or confusion is this: Some ranks of sainthood are connected with the Mahdi's function and are related to the greatest Spiritual Pole and even to Khadr. Likewise, there are ranks related to famous saints and thereby called after them, such as the rank of Khadr, the rank of Uways, and the rank of the Mahdi.

Thus some who receive a few manifestations of such ranks think that they own that rank, that they are Khadr, the Mahdi, or the greatest Spiritual Pole of the time. If they break their egotism and do not pursue any spiritual position, they cannot be condemned for such assertions, and their excessive claims are to be counted as ecstatic utterances (*shathiyat*). But if they seek a spiritual position to satisfy their self-conceit and so turn from thanking God to self-pride, ultimately they will lapse into vanity and deviation because they will begin to consider themselves equal to the greater saints. And since a soul, however self-conceited it may be, is aware of its faults, their good opinion of those saints causes them to imagine them to be faulty like themselves. Even their respect for the Prophets may diminish.

Those captivated by such a state should judge according to the Sharia. They should follow the guiding principles laid down by the scholars of religious methodology, as well as the instructions of such saints of meticulous research and truth-seeking as Imam Ghazzali and Imam Rabbani. Also, they should reproach their carnal selves continually, ascribing to them nothing but defect, helplessness, and poverty. The excessive and exaggerated claims of those in such a state originate from self-love, for love prevents the lover from discerning the beloved's defects. Thus their self-love causes them to imagine their carnal souls or selfhood as precious and brilliant as a diamond, while they really are as valueless and insignificant as glass.

A most grievous yet common mistake while in this state is to imagine that the meanings inspired in them are "words of God," and therefore revealed verses. This causes them to belittle the Divine Revelation's most sacred and exalted rank, for all inspiration from that coming to honeybees to that coming to believers and angels is some sort of God's words. But since God's Speech comes through 70,000 veils according to the receiver's capacity, it has innumerable manifestations and degrees of reception. Thus such inspirations cannot be called "revealed verses," for that description is only for the Qur'an's light-diffusing sentences, the clearest and most illustrious embodiment and proper name of the Divine Word and Revelation.

As explained and proved in the Twelfth, Twenty-fifth, and Thirty-first Words, what occurs to such people's hearts is, when compared to the sun of the Qur'an (God's direct Word), like the sun's shadowy and obscure reflections in a colored mirror when compared to the sun. Although the reflections in each mirror are rightly attributed to the sun and have some relation with it, Earth will never gravitate to or revolve around those mirrors.

FIFTH CLARIFICATION: One important Sufi school is that of the Unity of Being. This doctrine almost denies the universe's essential existence in the name of the Necessarily Existent Being, and even regards apparently existing creatures as imagined mirrors reflecting the Divine Names' manifestations. This school is based on an important truth: In the eyes of saints of very high ranks and ecstasies, and due to their strong belief in and firm conviction of the Necessarily Existent Being's existence, the existence of contingent beings is so insignificant that they deny the existence of all creatures, which seem no more than mere illusions, in the name of God.

This doctrine has certain risks, the foremost being: There are six fundamentals of belief: Belief in God, the Day of Judgment, angels, Prophets, Divine

Scriptures, and Divine Destiny. Each of these requires the existence of contingencies. As these fundamentals are substantial, they cannot be based on illusion or imagination. Thus saints belonging to this school should not act according to its requirements when returning to the world of realities from a state of spiritual intoxication. Being based on the experiences of the heart, and on spiritual pleasure and ecstasy, this school should not be regarded as rational or scientific.

In addition, such experiences and pleasures should not be mentioned in this world of realities, for this school is not in accordance with the intellectual principles, scientific laws, and theological rules coming from the Qur'an and the Sunna. As the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, and the greatest jurists and righteous scholars of Islam's early centuries, did not mention or suggest it, it cannot be the most exalted school of Sufism. Although it is considerably exalted, it has defects. It is important but risky, difficult but very pleasant. Those who enter it for its pleasures do not like to leave it and, if they are haughty, suppose it to have the highest rank.

One important risk is as follows: The way envisioned by the Unity of Being is a sound way based on direct experience of some elite among exalted saints who, in a state of absolute spiritual intoxication, transcend causality, renounce everything except God, and have nothing to do with contingency. But to offer it as a way to those immersed in causality and fond of this world, who want to cling to material and natural philosophy, would cause them to drown in the swamp of materialism and naturalism. In other words, it would make them deviate from the truth. Those who love this world and are enveloped within causality wish to give a kind of permanence to this transient world. Unwilling to renounce the beloved (the world), they use this doctrine to imagine an unimagined eternity for this world, even going so far as to deny God in the world's name.

Materialism is now so widespread that some people ascribe everything to matter. Even if some distinguished believers may assert the Unity of Being on the grounds of the insignificance of material existence, it is highly probable that materialists may adopt this concept on matter's behalf, in the form of monism, naturalism, or pantheism, although the Unity of Being is the school furthest removed from such things. Its adherents are so deeply absorbed in Divine Existence through their strong belief that they deny the universe's existence on its behalf, whereas materialists attribute existence exclusively to matter and deny God in the universe's name. How far are the latter from the former!

SIXTH CLARIFICATION: There are three points to be made here, as follows:

FIRST POINT: The most beautiful, straightest, and brightest way of sainthood is following the Sunna and obeying the Sharia as closely as possible. Such adherence transforms one's ordinary deeds, actions, and natural movements into a form of worship. It reminds people of the Sunna and the Sharia, and causes them thereby to think of the Prophet, which in turn calls God Almighty to mind. This remembrance gives a kind of peace and contentment. Thus one's whole life can be counted as spent in continuous worship. In addition to being the broadest highway, it is the way of the Companions and their righteous followers, who truly represented the succession to the Prophetic mission (the greatest sainthood).

SECOND POINT: The most important basis of sainthood and Sufism is sincerity (purity of intention), for this saves one from any implicit form of associating partners with God. Whoever has not acquired sincerity cannot travel in those ways. And the most direct means, the most effective and penetrating power in those ways, is love. Lovers do not try to find fault with their beloveds and become blind to their beloveds' defects, for they consider even weak indications of their beloveds' perfection as decisive proofs. They always side with their beloveds.

Those who direct themselves to knowledge of God through love ignore all objections and doubts. Even if thousands of devils come together, they cannot invalidate even the least indication of their True Beloved's (God) perfection. Without love, they would have to struggle against the objections coming from their own carnal selves and satanic and human devils. To save themselves, they must have heroic resistance and firmness, strong belief, and careful vision and discernment.

Due to this, love of God originating in knowledge of God is the most important "ferment" in all steps to sainthood, for it changes initiates, elevates them to higher ranks, and cures all spiritual illnesses. This way does have a risk, however: Lovers may turn from complete modesty and supplicating God to assuming airs and graces and behaving in a way to show themselves as valued and worthy of God's love.

In short, they may not preserve equity. When they love someone other than God, they may love them for their personal perfections and spiritual grace, not on account of God or their function as His Names' mirrors. For lovers, such love becomes a poison and increases their spiritual illness. However

perfect and great those other people may be, any love that is not in the name of God and His Prophet conceals the love of God. But if such a love is cherished on account of or in the name of God, it leads lovers to the love of God, which then becomes a manifestation of Divine love.

THIRD POINT: This world is the abode of wisdom and service, not of wages and reward. Everything happens in accordance with God's Wisdom, and people will be rewarded in the Hereafter for their good deeds and services. Thus the fruits of good deeds done for God's good pleasure should not be sought here. If they are given, they should be accepted with sorrow, for it is unreasonable to use up here the fruits that will be replaced in Paradise right after they are eaten. It is like exchanging a lamp giving permanent light for one that is extinguished in a minute.

Saints welcome hardship, misfortune, trouble, and service by saying: "Praise be to God in all circumstances and conditions." If they make spiritual discoveries, work wonders, and receive spiritual pleasures and lights, they accept them as Divine favors and try to hide them. Staying humble, they increase their thanksgiving and worship in return. Many saints even ask God to take those favors back so that their sincerity and pure intention will not be adulterated. Indeed, a most significant Divine kindness or favor for a person approved by God is that He does not make them feel His favors. This prevents them from abandoning supplication and thankfulness for self-pride, putting on airs and graces, and behaving affectedly.

If those who seek sainthood through Sufism pursue and welcome spiritual pleasure and wonders, which are among sainthood's insignificant fruits, they eventually reduce their permanent fruits in Paradise and lose their purity of intention and sainthood.

SEVENTH CLARIFICATION: Four subtleties are reflected upon here, as follows:

FIRST SUBTLETY: The Sharia, that collection of Divine religious principles, commands, and prohibitions, is the result of the direct Divine address to humanity through the Prophet and from the point of His absolute Oneness and Lordship. Therefore, all *tariqa* rules and ranks, including the greatest, are parts of the Sharia. All *tariqas* are means to reach the Sharia's truths, and all results are included in the Sharia's confirmations.

Unlike the misconceptions of some Sufis, the Sharia is not a mere outer covering with Sufism being the inner part and *haqiqa* (the truth) the ker-

nel or essence. The Sharia flourishes according to the person's level, for it contains all levels suitable to those who understand and practice it. People increase their levels by understanding, practicing, and tasting it more perfectly. So do not think that the ordinary people's understanding and practice of Islam is the Sharia, and consider the saints' practice of the Sharia as Sufism and *haqiqah*. In essence, Sufism is a discipline or technique that allows people to practice the Sharia in a better way. It has numerous degrees of understanding and practice.

The most advanced Sufis are the most devoted, attached, and obedient to the Sharia. They regard even the Prophet's slightest command as something to be obeyed absolutely and perform it with great care. This is because to whatever degree Revelation is higher than inspiration, the Sharia's rules for good manners (fruits of Divine Revelation) is that much higher and more important than the *tariqa*'s good manners (products of inspiration). Thus a *tariqa*'s most important fundamental is following the Sunna.

SECOND SUBTLETY: Sufism is only a means. If it is taken as the aim or end, the Sharia's commands and the Sunna's principles are reduced to mere ceremonies for outward performance, and the heart is turned directly toward Sufism. Such people attach more importance to reciting God's Names in dervish circles than to performing the daily prescribed prayers, concentrate more on daily supererogatory recitations than on religious obligations, and are more careful to avoid opposing Sufism's good manners than to the major sins.

Since all religious obligations are among the Sharia's established commands, not all of the *tariqa*'s daily supererogatory recitations can compensate for a single one of them even. The *tariqa*'s recitations and good manners are only a means of consolation for being unable to derive true pleasure from religious obligations, not the real source of that pleasure. Thus recitations and manners in the Sufi lodge are means for the pleasure and exact performance of prescribed prayers in the mosque. Those who perform the prescribed prayer in the mosque as if it were a formality and then run to the lodge to get true pleasure and attain spiritual perfection are in loss and deviance.

THIRD SUBTLETY: Is Sufism possible outside the Sunna and the Sharia?

Answer: Yes and no. It is possible, for some perfect saints have been executed with the sword of the Sharia. It is impossible, for truth-seeking scholars of sainthood agree with Sa'di al-Shirazi: "Sa'di, it is inconceivable for one who does not follow the way of the Messenger to find the truth's lights." As

the Messenger is the Seal of the Prophets and the addressee of God on humanity's behalf, humanity must follow his broad highway and remain under his flag.

On the other hand, people in trance, ecstasy, or spiritual absorption are not considered responsible for disobeying the Sharia. People are not asked to account for their opposition to religious commands when under the influence of senses or faculties that their willpower and reason cannot control. Thus ecstatic saints do not lose their sainthood while in such states. However, they should not openly deny, condemn, or debase Islam or the Sharia in any way. Rather, they should admit the prescribed acts' truth, even if they ignore them. If they deny or contradict the established truths of belief and the Sharia even while in such a state, they have gone astray.

In short, Sufis outside the Sharia's sphere fall into two categories. The first consists of those overcome by trance or ecstasy, spiritual absorption and intoxication, or under the influence of senses or faculties that cannot be controlled by reason and willpower. Such people leave the Sharia unintentionally. Truth-seeking scholars of sainthood have judged that there can be some great saints as temporarily outside of the Sharia and even of Islam. But they are still saints, for they do not intentionally deny or contradict any commandment conveyed by the Prophet, and because any neglect comes from their ignorance or spiritual intoxication, trance and ecstasy.

The second comprises those who, fascinated by Sufism's splendid pleasures, consider the Sharia's truths tasteless and mere ceremonies, and so become indifferent to them. Considering the Sharia a superficial covering and being content with what they find in Sufism, they consider the latter as the real object and so abandon the Sharia. The "sober" ones among those are held responsible for their un-Islamic actions, and may fall to the lowest level and are ridiculed even by Satan.

FOURTH SUBTLETY: The Muslim community approves of some members of deviant sects, and yet rejects others who seem to have the same standing. For example, the meticulous scholars of the Ahl al-Sunna do not consider the radical Mu'tazili Zamakhshari a heretic or unbeliever, and yet reject such Mu'tazili leaders as Abu 'Ali Jubba'i despite their less severe opposition to the Ahl al-Sunna. This perplexed me for a long time.

Finally, God's grace allowed me to understand that Zamakhshari's objections were due to his love of and devotion to truth. That is, he sided with the Mu'tazilis because he thought that God could be held free from defect by attributing to animate beings themselves the function of creating or giving

external existence to their acts. Based on the importance he attached to affirming God's lack of defect, he rejected the Ahl al-Sunna's principle on creating the acts of animate beings. But the Ahl al-Sunna rejected those Mu'tazili leaders who became Mu'tazili not because of attachment to the truth but because they could not perceive the Ahl al-Sunna's exalted principles and were too narrow-minded to understand the comprehensive rules they follow to establishing those principles.

Thus, Sufis outside the Sunna and opposed to various secondary Sharia commands can be divided into two groups. The first group is indifferent to the Sharia's secondary commands, whose taste they cannot perceive, because just as Zamakhshari is attached to truth, they are attached to their way with a pure intention and are overcome by its resulting pleasures. The other group considers such commands inferior to Sufism's principles, because they can neither comprehend them nor experience their profound pleasure.

EIGHTH CLARIFICATION: I now explain eight dangers that a Sufi initiate may face, as follows:

First danger: Some initiates who do not follow the Prophet's Sunna strictly may prefer sainthood to Prophethood. The Twenty-fourth and Thirty-first Words prove that Prophethood is far higher than and superior to sainthood.

Second danger: They might regard some saints of excessive views as superior to the Companions and even as equal to the Prophets. The Twelfth and Twenty-seventh Words, and The Twenty-seventh Word's Addendum, prove the Companions' extremely high rank, which comes from companionship with the Prophet. Also, a saint can never attain the rank of a Prophet.

Third danger: Some fanatical Sufis prefer the *tariqa*'s daily recitations and secondary principles over those of the Sunna, and even abandon the Sunna in favor of the *tariqa*'s recitations. As proved in several treatises of *The Words* and proclaimed by such truth-seeking scholars of sainthood as Imam Ghazzali and Imam Rabbani, the reward or degree acquired by observing one religious obligation is higher than 1,000 Sunna commands. Thus, one practice of the Sunna is preferable to 1,000 practices of *tariqa*.

Fourth danger: Some excessive followers consider inspiration and Divine Revelation as equal. Some treatises, mainly the Twelfth and Twenty-fifth Words, prove that Divine Revelation is incomparably higher and more comprehensive and sacred than inspiration.

Fifth danger: Some self-proclaimed Sufis, unaware of Sufism's truth, become engrossed in the spiritual pleasure, enlightenment, and wonder-work-

ing granted (without being desired) to followers to reinforce the weak, encourage those lacking in zeal, and lighten the tedium and troubles that may come from acts of worship. They gradually prefer those over acts of worship, daily recitations, and service. However, as stated above and proved in several treatises of *The Words*, this world is the realm of serving and not of receiving wages. Those who demand their wages here reduce the everlasting fruits of Paradise to the dying, transient fruits of this life. They like permanence in this limited and transient world, and cannot look forward to death and what is beyond it. They love the life of this world in one respect, for they find in it a manifestation of the Hereafter.

Sixth danger: Some initiates who are not people of verification and truth confuse sainthood's real and universal ranks with their particular examples and shadows. The Twenty-fourth and other Words prove that the sun is multiplied through its reflections, which, despite having light and heat like the sun itself, are very faint in comparison with their origin. The ranks of Prophets and great saints also have shadows and reflections. When initiates enter or receive some of these, they see themselves as greater than the greatest saints and even the Prophets. To avoid this, one must always use the essentials of belief and the Sharia's fundamentals as guiding principles and condemn any visions or experiences that oppose them.

Seventh danger: Some people of enthusiasm and spiritual pleasure prefer vanity, airs, and graces, and desire to gain people's love and become a resort for them. They prefer all of this to giving thanks, entreating and supplicating God, and being indifferent to people's love and attention. Whereas, the greatest spiritual rank is servanthood, and Prophet Muhammad is the most beloved in God's sight because he was the most advanced in servanthood to God. Such servanthood is founded upon thankfulness, entreaty, supplication, pious reverence, perception of human poverty and helplessness, and indifference to people's belongings, love, and attention. Although some great saints sometimes displayed the defects mentioned before God, but unintentionally and for a temporary period, they are not to be followed intentionally in this matter. They are not guides in this respect, even though, in general terms, they were guided.

Eighth danger: Some selfish and impatient initiates want to enjoy sainthood's fruits here, even though these are for the Hereafter. And this despite, as proclaimed in verses like, *The life of this world is but a transient enjoyment of delusion* (3:185), and proved decisively in several parts of *The Words*, one

fruit of the Permanent World is preferable to 1,000 orchards of this temporary one. Those blessed fruits should not be eaten here. If they are granted without our desiring them, we should thank God and consider them a Divine grace to encourage us, not a reward.

Ninth clarification: I briefly cite nine of Sufism's many fruits and benefits, as follows:

First benefit: By following the Sufi path correctly, one attains certain degree of perception of the truths of belief and is favored with their manifestations to the degree of certainty of seeing. Such perception is a key to and a means of obtaining eternal treasures in the eternal world of happiness.

Second benefit: Sufism allows the heart, our center and spring, to work and thereby directs the other human faculties to their creative functions. This enables one to attain true humanity.

Third benefit: Sufism enables believers to join a *tariqa* and become friends of the saints following it on their way to the Intermediate World and the Hereafter. This relieves believers of solitude and lets them benefit from the saints' company in this world and the intermediate worlds. Believers also regard each spiritual master as a support and strong proof against doubt and, by relying on the saints' agreement on the principles of belief, avoid misguidance.

Fourth benefit: By experiencing the pleasure of knowing God via belief, and love of God coming from the knowledge of Him, believers are relieved of solitude and loneliness. As explained in *The Words*, happiness in both worlds, pleasure without sorrow, and communion without loneliness lie in the truth of beliefs and the Islamic way of life. As stated in The Second Word, belief bears the seed of a Tuba tree of Paradise, and that seed germinates and grows through the *tariqa*'s training.

Fifth benefit: Sufism enables believers to feel inwardly the truths contained in religious duties. The resulting spiritual alertness and remembrance of God causes them to perform those duties willingly and enthusiastically, instead of like slaves forced to do so.

Sixth benefit: Sufism enables believers to attain the station of reliance on and absolute submission to God, and the rank of being approved and loved by Him. These are the means for true pleasure and consolation without grief, and familiarity and communion without loneliness and separation.

Seventh benefit: Sufism enables people to achieve a sincere and pure intention, which protects them from disguised association of partners with God and such degrading attitudes as show and pretence. Through the *tariqa*'s unique

spiritual operations, believers purify themselves from the dangers caused by egotism and the carnal self.

Eighth benefit: Through the reflective thought of the mind and remembrance of God by the heart, *tariqa* serves believers to acquire spiritual peace, awareness of God's ever presence, and sound intentions. This helps them to transform everyday acts into acts of worship, and ordinary dealings and transactions into deeds related to the Hereafter. Thus believers use the capital of their present life to produce innumerable seeds for their eternal life.

Ninth benefit: Through this journey of the heart and the constant struggle against Satan and the carnal self, and via the resulting spiritual progress attained, believers strive for perfection. By becoming true believers and perfect Muslims (attaining the truth or essence of belief and Islam), they become true servants of God, His addressees and friends, and mirrors reflecting His Names and Attributes. Showing that they are the best pattern of creation, they prove humanity's superiority to the angels. By flying through the highest ranks of humanity with the Islamic wings of belief and practice, they gain or even experience eternal happiness while in this world.

Glory be to You, we have no knowledge save what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

O God, bestow blessings and peace on our master Muhammad, the Greatest Saint of Helping for all ages and the Mightiest Pole of Sainthood for all times, the magnificence of whose sainthood and the degree of whose being beloved by God were manifested in his Ascension, and in the shadow of whose Ascension are contained all forms and degrees of sainthood, and on his Family and Companions. Amen. All praise be to God, Lord of all the Worlds.

* * *

Addendum

In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

[This addendum is important and beneficial to everyone.]

There are many ways leading to Almighty God. All true ways are derived from the Qur'an, but some are safer, and more comprehensive, and direct than others. My way I have derived from the Qur'an depends upon people's perception and confession of helplessness and poverty before His Might and Riches, and upon affection and reflection.

Perception and confession of one's helplessness is as sure a way as that of love of God. It might even be safer, for through sincere devotion and worship of God, it can elevate its followers to be loved by God. Perception and confession of poverty or inadequacy leads to the Divine Name the All-Merciful. Affection is more effective than love and leads to the Name the All-Compassionate. Reflection is brighter and more comprehensive than love and leads to the Name the All-Wise.

Our way is not like the ways of some Sufi orders that have developed ten steps to purify and sharpen ten outer and inner senses or faculties, and whose members prefer to recite God's Names silently. It also differs from those that adopt public recitation and seek to purify their adherents from all defects contained in the seven stations of the carnal self.

Our way consists of four steps and, rather than being a *tariqa*, is the Sharia or truth itself. Its fundamental principles consist of following the Sunna, performing the religious obligations, avoiding the major sins, performing the five prescribed prayers properly, and saying the words of glorification, praise, and exaltation of God after every prayer. These steps are as follows:

- The first step finds its expression in: *Do not justify and hold yourselves as sinless* (53:32).
- The second step is indicated by: *Be not like those who forget God, and He therefore makes them forget their own selves* (59:19).
- The third step is pointed to in: *Whatever good visits you is from God, but whatever evil befalls you is from yourself* (4:79).
- The fourth step is shown by: *All things are perishable except His Face and His good pleasure* (28:88).

The following is a brief explanation of these steps:

FIRST STEP: As *Do not justify and hold yourselves as sinless* suggests, people must not regard themselves as infallible and sinless. By nature and innate disposition, people love their self first and are willing to sacrifice everything to satisfy it. They praise themselves in a manner befitting God, the True Object of Worship, and hold themselves free of defect in the same manner. They desire to see themselves free of guilt, and defend themselves passionately as though worshipping themselves. Moreover, they appropriate for their own self the God-given faculties with which they are to praise and glorify God, the True Object of Worship. Thus *who takes as his god his own*

desires and fancies (25:43) applies to them. Their purification at this step is not to purify themselves and not to hold themselves as free of guilt.

SECOND STEP: As *Be not like those who forget God, and He therefore makes them forget their own selves* teaches, people are oblivious and unaware of themselves. They consider death as happening to others, thinking that it cannot touch them. They hold back during hardship and while rendering service, but believe that they should be rewarded first when it is time to receive the reward and enjoy the benefits. Here, people train and purify themselves by discharging their responsibilities, preparing themselves for death, and forgetting whatever reward they may obtain.

THIRD STEP: As *Whatever good visits you is from God, but whatever evil befalls you is from yourself* teaches, the carnal self always ascribes good to itself and feels conceited. But in reality, people should perceive their defects and insufficiency and thank and praise God for whatever good they do and whatever perfection they have. According to: *Prosperous is he who purifies it* (91:19), they are purified by knowing that their perfection lies in confessing their imperfection, their power in perceiving their helplessness, and their wealth in accepting their essential poverty and inadequacy.

FOURTH STEP: As *All things are perishable except His Face and good pleasure* teaches, those influenced by their carnal self consider themselves free, independent, and self-existent. As a result, they claim some sort of Lordship and rebel against their Creator, Who alone deserves to be worshipped. They can save themselves only if they perceive the following truth: According to what each thing signifies by itself, and on account of its very nature, every thing is essentially non-existent, contingent, ephemeral, and mortal. However, according to what it signifies with respect to something other than itself and its being a part of a whole, and on account of its being a mirror reflecting the Majestic Maker's Names and charged with various duties, each thing has existence, is a witness to the existence of others and is witnessed by them.

Here, people purify themselves by perceiving that their existence lies in confessing their essential non-existence. They must know that considering themselves to be self-existent leads to a darkness of non-existence as great as the universe. If they rely upon their individual existence and ignore the Real Giver of Existence, their individual light of existence resembles that of a firefly and is drowned in the infinite darkness of non-existence and separation.

But if they abandon pride and egotism and see that they are no more than a mirror in which the Real Giver of Existence manifests Himself, they

establish a relation with all other beings and gain an infinite existence. Those who find the Necessarily Existent Being, the manifestations of Whose Names cause all things to come into existence, find everything.

Conclusion

These four steps on the way of recognition of one's helplessness and poverty, and affection and reflection are explained in *The Words*, which focuses on knowing the truth, the Sharia's truth, and the Qur'an's wisdom.

This path is shorter because it has only four steps. Recognizing their helplessness or impotence leads people to rely on God, for they are no longer influenced by their carnal self. Love, the sharpest way, can lead to the True Beloved only after people perceive the falsity of their current beloved by freeing themselves from the carnal self and seeing that beloved as ephemeral. This way is safer, for it does not lead its followers to utter boastful words and make such false claims as being of a highest spiritual rank. For it obliges them to recognize their innate impotence, poverty, and essential imperfection.

Also, this way is a main highway, much broader and universal, for its followers do not have to deny or ignore the universe's actual existence, as demanded by those who assert the Unity of Being (*Wahdat al-Wujud*) or the Unity of the Witnessed (*Wahdat al-Shuhud*), to attain a constant awareness of God's presence. Rather, it admits the universe's existence, as proclaimed in the Qur'an, by ascribing it directly to the Majestic Creator.

Considering that everything in creation points to its Creator, those who follow this highway avoid the error of considering them as self-existent and working on their own behalf. By using them on the Majestic Creator's behalf, and manifesting His Beautiful Names and serving as mirrors to reflect them, this way saves people from heedlessness, enables them always to be aware of Almighty God's presence, and opens up a way to Him through everything.

In short, according to this way, beings function as signs showing, first of all, their Creator.

Thirtieth Letter

[Published as a separate book under the title of *The Signs of (The Qur'an's) Miraculousness*.]

Thirty-first Letter

[This letter consists of the 31 Gleams, which were published as *The Gleams*.]

Thirty-second Letter

[This letter consists of *The Treatise of the Gleams* added to *The Words*.]

Thirty-third Letter

[This letter was added to *The Words* as the Thirty-third Word.]

Epigrams

Seeds of truths

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

All praise be to God, and all blessing and peace be upon our master Muhammad, his Family, and Companions.

- The prescription for a diseased age, an ailing nation, and a disabled member is to follow the Qur'an.
- The prescription for a glorious though unfortunate continent,³⁹⁹ once so illustrious yet now a humbled and wretched state, once so invaluable yet now an undefended people, is unity under Islam's guidance.
- One who cannot turn Earth, planets, and stars as easily as turning a rosary's beads cannot claim any part in creation, for everything is intertwined.
- The resurrection of all the dead on Judgment Day is as easy for God's Power as to rouse a fly in spring from its winter sleep. For the Divine Power is essential to the Divine Being, cannot change, decay, diminish, or be impeded. Being absolute, It admits no degrees, and everything is equal in relation to It.
- The One Who created the gnat's eye is He Who created the sun.
- The One Who arranged the flea's stomach is He Who arranged the solar system.

³⁹⁹ Said Nursi means Asia, the Ottoman State and Turkey, and especially Turkish people. (Tr.)

- Seeing the universe's miraculous order and harmony, all "natural" causes (supposing they have independent agency) bow and say: "Glory be to You. We have no power. You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."
- As befits God's Oneness and Majesty, causes have no real and creative effect in creation and the universe's functioning. But in the outward (corporeal) dimension of existence, causes function to veil Divine Power's operation so that certain seemingly disagreeable or banal entities and events might not be attributed directly to It.
- The inner dimension of everything, where Divine Power operates directly, is absolutely pure and transparent.
- This visible, corporeal world is a lace curtain before the unseen worlds.
- Creating a dot in the right place requires an infinite power which can create the whole universe. Every letter of this great Book of the Universe, especially every "living" letter, has a face turned toward and an eye gazing at every one of its sentences.
- At the end of one Ramadan, people were trying to site the new crescent moon indicating '*Id* (the religious festival). But only an old man claimed to see it. However, he didn't know that what he saw was the curve of one of his own white eyelashes. How can an eyelash be equivalent to the crescent? How can the motion of minute particles be taken in place of the One Who forms whole species?
- Nature is a print or a model composed of unseen laws, but not a printer and composer. It is a design, not the designer; a recipient, not the agent; an order, not the one who puts in order. It is a law, not a power. It is a collection of laws established by Divine Will—the laws [that our minds can grasp but] that in themselves have no power or material reality.
- The feeling of attraction and being attracted felt in one's (innate) human conscience is due to a truth's attractive power.
- A thing's innate drive or its God-given nature does not lie: For example, a seed's urge to grow says: "I will grow into such-and-such a plant and produce fruit," and then does so. An egg's urge to life says: "I will be a chick," and then becomes a chick. Water's urge to freeze says: "I will take up more space," and then does so. Hard and solid iron cannot contradict it; rather, when frozen, water splits it. Such drives and urges are manifestations of the Divine commands of creation issuing from the Divine Will.

- The Eternal Power, Which does not leave ants without a leader and bees without a queen, does not certainly deprive humanity of a Prophet's leadership. Splitting the moon was one of his miracles shown in the visible, corporeal world. His Ascension (to God's Presence) was his greatest miracle shown to the angels and spirit beings in the World of Inner Dimensions, one that proved and showed his Prophethood's sainthood. Through that miracle, that most illustrious being extended and diffused his radiance, like a flash of lightning or a bright moon, in the World of Inner Dimensions.
- The two parts of the affirmation of belief—I bear witness that there is no deity except God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger—attest to each other's truth. The first is the *a priori* argument for the second, and the second is the *a posteriori* argument for the first.
- As life is a manifestation of unity in the sphere of multiplic-ity, it leads to unity, which enables one thing to own everything.
- The spirit is a law with consciousness and a real, sensible existence. Like enduring laws of creation, it also issues from the World of Divine Commands and Attribute of Will. Divine Power clothes it in an energetic envelope within a body of sensory organs. This spirit, which exists in each human being, is a counterpart of the laws of nature, which have only theoretical existence. Both are unchanging and permanent, and come from the World of Divine Commands. If Eternal Power had clothed laws with external existence, each would have been a spirit; if the human spirit were stripped of consciousness, it would become an immaterial law.
- Existents are visible by the agency of light, and their existence is known through life. Light and life are each discoverers and revealers.
- Christianity either will vanish or be purified [of its pagan elements] and abandon its struggle against Islam. It split several times and produced Protestantism which, in turn, split [into diverse sects and groupings] and [some] drew near to monotheism. Christianity will split further, after which it will disappear or, finding the truths of Islam, which include the essentials of Jesus' original religion, will submit to Islam. This truth is indicated in a Prophetic Tradition: "Prophet Jesus will return to this world, join my community, and follow my Sharia."⁴⁰⁰
- The majority of common people (the masses) are drawn by the sacredness of the authority, rather than [the strength of] proofs.

⁴⁰⁰ Bukhari, *Mazalim*, 31; Muslim, *Iman*, 242; Ibn Maja, *Fitan*, 33.

- Ninety percent of the Sharia consists of the essentials and incontestable rules of Islam, and may be likened to diamond pillars. The remaining 10 percent, which is open to interpretation and to be determined by Islam's legal authorities, may be likened to gold pieces. Ninety diamond pillars cannot be protected by 10 gold pieces. Rather, the jurisprudents' books, arguments, and judgments should help us to see the Qur'an better. They should serve as binoculars to see and as mirrors to reflect its meanings, not veil or replace it.
- Individuals qualified to practice *ijtihad* can proclaim a new law for themselves, but not for others or the Muslim community.⁴⁰¹
- Before an idea related to the Religion can be extended to others, it must be accepted by the majority of scholars. If it is not, it will be regarded and then rejected as an innovation contrary to Islam's jurisprudential principles.
- Human beings, created with an inherently noble disposition, pursue truth. But sometimes they find and embrace falsehood. While searching for the truth, they sometimes are unintentionally captured by misguidance and, thinking it to be the truth, mistake it for the truth.
- Many mirrors, each one more subtle than the other, reflect Divine Power. They range from water to air, from air to ether, and thence to the world of ideal forms, and higher still to the world of spirits and even to time and ideas. A word multiplies a million times in the mirror of air. The Pen of Divine Power accomplishes this in an amazing way. Things are reflected in those mirrors either with their apparent identities or both identities and characters (nature). Each reflection of a solid entity is a moving lifeless form; each reflection of a luminous spiritual entity is a living form connected to the original. Even if the reflection (of a luminous entity) is not identical to the original, it is not something different.
- Since the sun is shaken through its movement on its axis, its fruits (planets) do not fall. If it stopped shaking, its fruits would scatter.
- An idea is dark and spreads darkness unless illumined with the heart's light. The eye's cornea [white portion], which can be likened to day, cannot engender sight until combined with the eye's iris and pupil [dark portion], which can be likened to night. In the same way, an idea's "cornea" cannot engender sight of the truth unless combined with the heart's "iris and pupil."

⁴⁰¹ *Ijtihad*: The process of deriving legal judgments from the established principles of the Qur'an and Sunna to meet new circumstances. (Ed.)

- Knowledge without conviction is little better than ignorance. Siding with or adopting something is quite different from conviction.
- A fanciful, elaborate account of something bad can cause immature minds to stray.
- A scholar giving guidance should be like an ewe, not like a female bird. An ewe feeds her lambs with her milk, a fully digested and processed substance, whereas a female bird feeds her chicks with what she has half-chewed and regurgitated.
- A thing's existence depends upon the existence of all its parts. Since a thing's non-existence is possible through the non-existence of some of its parts, people of weak character tend to be destructive and act negatively when "proving" their power.
- Principles of wisdom and laws of truth have no effect upon ordinary people unless the former are combined with the state's laws and the latter with power.
- (In today's world) injustice wears the hat of justice, treason wears the cloak of patriotic zeal, jihad is called aggression and a violation of human rights, and enslavement is presented as freedom.⁴⁰² In short, opposites have exchanged forms.
- Politics based on personal interest is bestial.
- Showing love for a hungry wild animal only excites its appetite. Moreover, after it has fed upon you, it demands a further payment for feeding upon you.
- Time demonstrates that Paradise is not cheap and that Hell is not futile.
- The merits of those considered "the elite" lead them to haughtiness and oppression, whereas those merits should inspire them to modesty and self-effacement. Instead of arousing compassion and benevolence, poor people's destitution causes their deeper captivity and subjection.
- Honors and fineries are given as presents to the elite, while ordinary people receive shortages, defects, and evil consequences.
- The absence or the forgetting of an ideal (in life) causes people to concentrate upon themselves and their own self-interest.

⁴⁰² *Jihad*: Struggle in God's way and for humanity's good. (Ed.)

- All revolutions, social corruption, and moral failings are caused by: “I don’t care if others die of hunger so long as my own stomach is full,” and: “You must bear the costs of my ease by working so that I can eat.” The first attitude is cured through *Zakat*; the second by prohibiting usury and interest. Qur’anic justice stands at the door of humanity and turns away usury and interest, proclaiming: “You have no right to enter!” Yet humanity ignored this prohibition and received a great blow.⁴⁰³ It must heed it now to avoid receiving a greater one.
- Wars between nations and states are being replaced by class war, for people do not want to be either wage-earners or slaves.
- Those who take an unlawful route [in Islam] to a lawful objective often are punished by acquiring the exact opposite of what they sought. The reward for an un-Islamic love, like Europe’s, is the Beloved’s pitiless enmity.
- The past and misfortune should be considered in the light of Destiny. The future and the sins committed should be referred to human free will and responsibility. This reconciles the extremes of fatalism and denying Destiny’s role in our actions.
- You should not seek solace in showing impotence in what you can do or find a solution for, nor should you lament over what you cannot do and find a solution for.
- Wounds related to one’s life can be healed, but wounds struck against Islam’s dignity and the nation’s honor are too deep to heal.
- Sometimes a single utterance drives an army to defeat, as a bullet may lead to the deaths of 30 million people.⁴⁰⁴ Under the right conditions and circumstances, a [seemingly] insignificant act may cause its doer to be elevated to the highest rank or reduced to the lowest rank.
- A single truth can bring down a heap of lies. A single reality is preferable to a heap of fancies.
- You must always speak the truth, but it is not right to speak every truth.
- Those who attend to the good side of everything contemplate the good. Those who contemplate the good enjoy life.

⁴⁰³ Said Nursi is referring to the First World War.

⁴⁰⁴ This refers to Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian private who assassinated Austro-Hungarian Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife on June 28, 1914. This was the pretext for WWI, which resulted in 30 million deaths. (Ed.)

- People are energized by ambition and hope, and demoralized by hope's absence.
- The exalted Ottoman State collapsed after centuries of self-sacrifice and the collective duty of holy struggle related to carrying the banner and burden of the caliphate, protecting and securing Islam and the Muslims' independence, and exalting the Name of God. Its collapse will be compensated for with the Muslim world's happiness and independence at some future time, for its collapse is a calamity that urges us to develop brotherhood and sisterhood, which are the essence of our lives as Muslims.
- A demonstration of how the wheel of time rotates in the opposite direction: Civilization's beauties are ascribed to Christianity (which has no share in them), and Islam is accused of encouraging backwardness (which it fights).
- A fine but tarnished diamond is always preferable to a piece of glass, no matter how polished.
- Those who attribute everything's existence to matter limit their intellectual capacity to what they can see. However, eyes cannot see what is spiritual.
- When the ignorant adopt a metaphor, they take it literally and thus open a door to superstition.
- Representing any entity as having more virtues than those given to them by God does them no favor. Rather, it is much better to describe everything as it really is.
- Fame brings to the famous what they do not truly own.
- The Prophet's sayings are the authority and source for Islamic life and the inspiration of truths.
- Islam's revival means the nation's revival. Islam is the light of life.
- The Qur'an is a mercy for humanity, and so urges a civilization that secures the greatest happiness for the most people.

Western civilization, in its present phase, is founded upon five negative principles: It is based upon power, and power causes or leads to oppression; it seeks to realize individual self-interest, and pursuing self-interest causes people to rush madly upon things to possess them; it considers life as struggle, which causes internal and external conflict; it unifies through national and/or racial separatism, which "feeds" by swallowing the resources and territories of others, and this separatism engenders

terrible conflict; and it strives to arouse and multiply animal desires and passions and satisfy carnal appetites, which brutalize people.

Islamic civilization rests upon right (not power), which requires justice and balance; encourages virtue, which spurs mutual affection and love; considers life as mutual help, which leads to unity and solidarity; unifies people through a common religion in a common state, which leads to internal peace, brotherhood [sisterhood], and a willing self-defense against external enemies; and guides people to the truth. Therefore it encourages scientific progress and elevates people, through moral perfection, to higher ranks of humanity. Never break with Islam, for it guarantees our survival. Stick to it, heart and soul, or we shall perish utterly.

- A general misfortune is the consequence of most people's general failing. Every misfortune is the consequence of a failing, but also a door opening to a means of reward.
- Martyrs know they are alive. Since they do not experience dying as death, they see that their lives, sacrificed for God's sake, are permanent, continual, and more refined.
- The Qur'an's perfect justice forbids killing an innocent person, even if the rest of humanity would benefit thereby. In the sight of Divine Power and Justice, an individual's life is equal to humanity's life. Yet some people are so selfish that they would destroy everything and humanity itself to realize their own ambitions.
- Timidity and weakness encourage external pressure and interference.
- A sure benefit should not be renounced for fear of a potential harm.
- Politics now is a disease like Spanish flu.
- Lunatics sometimes are cured by repeatedly telling them that they are sane. Some good people become bad after hearing repeatedly that they are bad.
- A persistent enemy's enemy is a friend; a persistent enemy's friend is an enemy as long as he or she remains a friend.
- Obstinacy can lead one to regard devilish people who assist and support the same cause as angelic and so call God's mercy upon them. Equally, it can lead one to regard angelic people who oppose that cause as devilish and so call God's curse upon them.
- What cures one condition may harm another. Excessive doses of any medicine can create new illnesses.

- A united community gives movement to those who lack it, while a jealous community stops those who are moving.
- A superficial unity without substance, depth, and sincerity shatters a community and makes it slighter and weaker, just as a fraction multiplied by a fraction makes the resulting sum smaller.⁴⁰⁵ (Thus a community devoid of a sound and sincere unity will weaken as its numbers increase through mere population growth.)
- Not affirming something's existence is often confused with affirming that it does not exist. The absence of evidence that a thing exists may justify people's not affirming its existence if they are not inclined to accept its existence. But affirming something's non-existence requires clear evidence proving its non-existence, for not-affirming its existence is doubt, while affirming its non-existence is denial.
- Even if doubt about one point of belief invalidates 100 proofs for it, its truth remains intact because thousands of other proofs prove it.
- Follow the consensus of the majority of the believers. The Umayyads did so and finally joined the Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a, though at first they neglected Islam's principles. But the Shi'ah, strict followers of Islam's principles at the beginning, eventually became Rafizites in part since they preferred to remain a small minority.
- When pursuing what is better or truer leads to dissension, seek consensus on what is good and true. Such consensus is always preferable to dissension. What is good and true sometimes turns out to be better and truer than what, in the abstract, appears to be better and truer. So say: "My way is good and true," but never: "My way is the only way, the truest and best."
- Without Paradise, Hell's torment could not be perceived or known as such.
- As time grows older, the Qur'an grows younger, and its secrets and signs become clearer and better understood. As light may be mistaken for fire, forceful eloquence may sometimes be mistaken for exaggeration.
- Degrees of heat can be measured only because there are degrees of cold. Degrees of beauty are known by degrees of ugliness. God's Eternal Power is an essential attribute of Divine Being and indispensable to His

⁴⁰⁵ Multiplying two whole numbers leads to a greater number, whereas multiplying two fractions leads to a smaller fraction.

Essence. This Power has no degrees, since impotence cannot dilute it. And so everything is equal before It.

- Consider: The sun's reflection in the sea and in its smallest wave or bubble has the same identity.
- Life, a manifestation of God's Oneness, brings unity to multiplicity.
- People do not know who the saints are among people, when prayer is most acceptable during Friday, the date of the Night of Power during Ramadan, the Greatest Name of all God's Beautiful Names, or when they will die. Such uncertainty makes the rest esteemed and important [for the most important might be included within the apparently insignificant]. A life of 20 years with an unknown end is preferable to one of 1,000 years with a known end.
- The outcome of evil done in this world demonstrates that punishment will come in the Hereafter.
- In the sight of Divine Power, provision is as important as life. Provision is produced by Power, apportioned by Destiny, and nurtured by Grace (Favor). As life is the sure, certain outcome of particular circumstances and events, it is witnessed. But provision is not sure and certain, for it is not something obtained within a certain time. Rather, it comes by uncertain degrees and leads people to contemplation. Those who appear to die of hunger before the sustenance stored in their bodies (as fat, for example) is wholly consumed die from diseases caused by altering or abandoning routine nourishment.
- Animal carcasses are lawful for many wild carnivores. By eating them, these carnivores feed themselves and cleanse Earth's surface.
- Imagine that you have two pieces of food of equal nutritional value. One costs 10 cents and the other costs 10 dollars. If you prefer the latter solely for the few seconds of pleasure it may give your sense of taste, is this not the meanest form of waste?
- When a pleasure attracts you, say that you have enjoyed it already. One person who followed this principle saved enough money to build a mosque, now known as *Sanki Yedim* (as if I've eaten) Mosque.
- An easy life may be appealing when most Muslims are not hungry. But when most Muslims are hungry, no Muslim can choose such a life.
- Rather than welcoming transient pleasures with a smile, welcome transient ailments. Past pleasures lead one to regret, for "Alas!" indicates a

hidden ailment. Past ailments lead one to sigh with relief, the news of a hidden joy and a favor that has come.

- Forgetting is a blessing, for it allows one to suffer present hardships and forget past hardships.
- Every misfortune contains degrees of Divine Favor. Be mindful of the greater misfortune, thereby being thankful for the favor of the lesser misfortune. Concentrating on and exaggerating the latter increases it, and this exaggerated reflection in the heart or imagination makes it real and troublesome.
- In social life, everyone has a window—status—through which they look to see others and be seen. If it is built higher than their real stature, they use vanity and assume airs to appear taller. If it is set lower than their real stature, they must bow in humility to look out, to see and be seen. Humility shows one's greatness, just as vanity or conceit show low character.
- Weak people's self-respect in the presence of powerful people becomes self-conceit when assumed by the latter. Powerful people's modesty before weak people becomes self-abasement when assumed by the latter. In their office, administrators' solemnity is dignity while their humility in the same place is self-abasement. In their home, administrators' solemnity is self-conceit while their humility in the same place is humility. Forbearance and sacrifice (of their own rights) on their own account is good and virtuous, but is bad and treasonous when done on behalf of others. People may bear patiently what is done to them personally, but cannot, on behalf of the nation, bear patiently what is done to the nation. Pride and indignation on the nation's behalf are commendable, but are reprehensible on people's own behalf.
- Entrusting the accomplishment of an affair to God before taking all necessary precautions and making all necessary arrangements is laziness. Leaving the desired outcome's realization to God, after doing all that can be done, is to trust in Him. Contentment with the result after exerting one's efforts is a laudable virtue that encourages further effort and reinvigorates one's energy and industry. Contentment with what one already has destroys endeavor.
- People are free to obey or disobey the Sharia, just as they are free to obey or disobey the Divine Laws of creation and life. Results for the former

usually are deferred to the Hereafter, while returns for the latter usually come in this life. For example, the reward for patience is success, while the punishment for indolence is privation. Industry brings wealth, and steadfastness brings victory. Any claim to justice that is not based on giving everyone his or her due is a false claim.

- The same age and status cause rivalry and conflict. Complementarity and congruity are the basis of solidarity. An inferiority complex provokes arrogance. Weak character provokes haughtiness. Impotence gives rise to opposition. Curiosity about something leads one to learn about it.
- The Power that created every thing with its own disposition has restrained humanity and animals through their need (especially hunger) and put them in a certain order. It has also prevented disorder and confusion in the world and, by making need a motive for civilization, secured progress in every field.
- Boredom leads people to (fantasies of) indulgence, despair leads them to intellectual deviation, and spiritual ignorance and aridity (the heart's darkness) leads them to distress and depression.
- When men become womanish through focusing on worldly whims and fancies, women become mannish through crudity and authoritarianism.
- If an attractive woman joins a group of men, their sentiments of display, rivalry, and envy are aroused. Unveiling women and allowing them to mix freely with men to whom they are not related encourages bad morals.
- Pictures and statues, especially obscene ones, have a significant part in people's present sinfulness and ill-temper.
- Statues, prohibited by Islam, are injustices fixed in stone, fantasies personified, or ostentatious pride monumentally exaggerated.
- If people follow Islam's injunctions strictly, and with firm belief and complete sincerity, their desire and effort to find Islamic solutions to new problems lead them toward perfection. Such a desire or effort by those indifferent to Islamic injunctions, and therefore outside Islam, lead them toward ruin. The right course of action during these troubled times is not to use farfetched efforts to derive "new" laws from the Qur'an and Sunna. Rather, it is to close the doors and even shutter the windows against innovation. Those indifferent to religious duties, free and easy about whether they do them or not, must not be rewarded with special dispensations to release them from those duties. Rather, others should

warn them to reform themselves by carrying out even the most difficult and secondary duties.

- Unprotected and misrepresented truths lose their value in valueless hands.
- Our earth bears some resemblance to a living organism, displaying signs of life. If it were compressed to the size of an egg, would it be a kind of animal? Or if a microbe were enlarged to the dimensions of our earth, would one be like the other? If the earth is living, then it must have a “soul.” If the universe were compressed to the size of a human being, with its stars forming the elements of that person’s constitution, would it not be a conscious, animate being? God has created so many kinds of living entities like this.
- There are two kinds of Divine Laws: those issuing from the Divine Attribute of Speech and regulating humanity’s (a normo-universe) deeds and states, and those (more in number) issuing from the Divine Attribute of Will and regulating the universe’s (a macro-human) creation and operation. This second group is wrongly called nature. Angels constitute a mighty community. They convey, represent, and embody Divine Commands of creation and order issuing from Divine Will and are called the Laws of Creation and Order.
- When you compare a microscopic creature’s senses with those of a human being, you confront an astounding, mysterious truth: Each person is like *Surat Ya Sin*, in whom *Surat Ya Sin* is inscribed.⁴⁰⁶
- Materialism is a Divine punishment, a spiritual plague infecting humanity with a terrible fever. It will spread as long as false propaganda, cynicism, and destructive criticism continue to spread.
- The unhappiest people, those who suffer the greatest distress, are those with nothing to do. Doing nothing is a close relative of non-existence, whereas working hard is the body’s vigor and life’s awakening.
- Unbelievers, especially the most unjust and dissolute, benefit the most from banks, those houses of interest that open the doors for interest. The harm they inflict upon the Muslim world cannot be denied. They cannot be left alone just because they happen to benefit some people. Unbelievers, especially those who are aggressive and fight Muslims, do not deserve to be respected or defended.

⁴⁰⁶ *Surat Ya Sin* is a chapter of the Qur'an (Ed.).

- Friday sermons are to remind people of Islam's essentials, not to expound upon its abstract theoretical points. Given this, the Arabic phrases expressing those essentials are the best suited for this reminding. When Qur'anic verses are compared even with the Prophet's sayings, it will be noticed that even the most eloquent one of humankind cannot compete with the Qur'an's eloquence.

Said Nursi

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