

القرآن الكريم

THE  
QUR'ĀN

*with*  
Annotated Interpretation  
in Modern English

*by*  
Ali Ünal



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Annotated Interpretation in Modern English

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## TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

Arabic symbol	Transliteration symbol	English sound	Example
ا	a	<u>e</u> legy	abad
ب	b	<u>b</u> ible	ta'abbud
ت	t	<u>t</u> est	tayammum
ث	th	te <u>th</u>	bi'thah
ج	j	<u>j</u> ust	jamīl
ح	ḥ	-	ḥaqq
خ	kh	-	khāliq
د	d	<u>d</u> ad	durr
ذ	dh	wor <u>th</u> y	madhhab
ر	r	<u>r</u> eception	rabb
ز	z	<u>z</u> ip	zamzam
س	s	<u>s</u> ervice	salsabīl
ش	sh	<u>sh</u> ape	shahādah
ص	ṣ	-	ṣādiq
ض	ḍ	-	ḍuḥā
ط	ṭ	-	ṭāriq
ظ	ẓ	-	ẓuhr
ع	'a	-	'abd
غ	gh	-	ghayrah
ف	f	<u>f</u> irst	firdaws
ق	q	-	qaryah
ك	k	<u>k</u> inetic	mālik
ل	l	<u>l</u> ily	layl
م	m	<u>m</u> emory	mutammim
ن	n	<u>n</u> ickname	dhunnūn
ه	h	<u>h</u> eed	hurriyah
و	w	<u>w</u> ait	wudd
ي	y	<u>y</u> ear	yumn
ة	t if followed	h otherwise	ṭahārah
ء	'	-	Qur'ān- ta'sīs
آ	ā	qādir	qādir
ى	ī	<u>s</u> ee <u>m</u>	na'īm
و	ū	<u>f</u> ood	quddūs



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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



## FOREWORD

All praise is for God, the Lord of the worlds, may His Majesty be exalted, and peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muḥammad, his household, Companions and the righteous servants among the inhabitants of the heaven and earth.

The movement of returning to the Qur’ān which began in the Muslim world around a century ago, is continuing with its ups and downs, and right and wrong aspects. As is known, the Qur’ān was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, over 23 years, 14 centuries ago, mostly on different occasions. This last “version” of the Divine Word which was planted in the Last Prophet as a seed and, growing swiftly, “raised on its stem, put out its shoots” (*Qur’ān*, 48: 29) came to leaf, blossomed, and yielded fruit in all aspects of life. Almost one third of the world having lived a peaceful life under its calm, serene shade for many centuries, the Qur’ān was veiled by the neglect and unfaithfulness of its “friends” and the hostility of its “enemies.” However, after a few centuries of misery, the Muslims all over the Muslim world felt the dire need of returning to the Qur’ān and found that this Word of God is as fresh as when it was first revealed and “growing younger as time gets older.”

The very essence of their being deeply injured by the poison injected by materialistic trends, humans are in quest of an immediate cure. It is the Word of God which has this cure. However, it is in anticipation of “doctors” who will present it. The future of humanity is dependent on the efforts of these doctors to present this cure. If the Qur’ān had been fully and accurately understood and practiced effectively in life, the poisons produced in modern times would not have been able to find Muslim customers in considerable numbers, no matter if they had been presented in golden cups. However, unfortunately, in addition to these poisons being easily injected in many believing bodies, some so-called Muslim “doctors” who should have defied them with the Qur’ān, have taken them as if they were an antidote. They even have gone so far as to identify the cure of the Qur’ān with them and, further, have ventured to test it in the tubes of the laboratories where the poisons are produced.

### WHAT IS THE QUR’ĀN; HOW CAN IT BE DEFINED?

According to the majority of scholars, the word Qur’ān is an infinitive form of the verb *QaRaA* meaning reading or reciting. Therefore it literally means a thing recited by adding letters and words to one another.

The verb *QaRaA* has another infinitive form *qar’u* which means to collect. So, some are of the opinion that *qur’ān* means “the thing which collects.” It is narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās that the word *qur’ān* in the verse, *Surely it is for Us to collect it (in your heart) and enable you to recite it (by heart) (75: 17)*, means being collected and established in the heart. For this reason, some assert that since the Qur’ān collects

and contains in it the “fruit” of the previous Scriptures and the whole of knowledge, it is called the *Qur’ān*.

Some other scholars affirm that the word *qur’ān* was not derived from any word. It is the proper name given to the Book which God, may His Majesty be exalted, sent to His Last Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Imam Shāfi’ī held this opinion (Abu’l-Baqā, 287; Rāghib al-Isfahānī, 402; as-Ṣāliḥ [translated], 15-18).

The Qur’ān is the Word of God and, therefore, eternal, and it was not created. But as a book conveyed to the Prophet by the Archangel Gabriel and composed of letters and words, recited, touched, and listened to, it is not eternal (Çetin, 30-32).

The general definition of the Qur’ān is as follows:

The Qur’ān is the miraculous Word of God which was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, written down on sheets, and transmitted to the succeeding generations by numerous reliable channels, and whose recitation is an act of worship and obligatory in daily Prayers. (Karaman, 63)

The Qur’ān describes some of its features as follows:

*The month of Ramaḍān (is the month), in which the Qur’ān was sent down as guidance for people, and as clear signs of guidance and the Criterion (between truth and falsehood). (2: 185)*

*And this Qur’ān is not such that it could possibly be fabricated by one in attribution to God, but it is a (Divine Book) confirming (the Divine origin of and the truths that are still contained by) the Revelations prior to it, and an explanation of the essence of all Divine Books – wherein there is no doubt, from the Lord of the worlds. (10: 37)*

*We send it down as a Qur’ān (discourse) in Arabic so that (using your reason to reflect) you may understand. (12: 2)*

*This Qur’ān surely guides (in all matters) to that which is most just and right and gives the believers who do good, righteous deeds the glad tidings that for them is a great reward. (17: 9)*

*And indeed (by revealing it through human language) We have made the Qur’ān easy for remembrance (of God and for taking heed), then is there any that remembers and takes heed? (54: 17)*

*Most certainly it is a Qur’ān most honorable, in a Book well-guarded. (56: 77-78)*

The Qur’ān has other titles each of which describes it in one of its aspects and, therefore, can be regarded as one of its attributes. Some of them are the Book, the Criterion, the Remembrance, the Advice, the Light, the Guidance, the Healer, the Noble, the Mother of the Book, the Truth, the Admonishment, the Good Tiding, the Book Gradually Revealed, the Knowledge, and the Clear (Çetin, 32-36).

The Qur’ān aims to guide all people to truth and has four main purposes: demonstrating God’s Existence and Unity; establishing Prophethood; proving and elucidating

afterlife, with all its aspects and dimensions; and promulgating the worship of God and the essentials of justice. The verses of the Qur'ān mainly dwell on these purposes. There are, based on these main purposes, the principles of creed, rules to govern human life, detailed information on the Resurrection and afterlife, prescript for the worship of God, moral standards, direct or indirect information on some scientific facts, principles for the formation and decay of civilizations, outlines of the histories of many previous peoples, and so on. The Qur'ān is also a source of healing; its application in life provides a cure for almost all psychological and social illnesses. It is also a cosmology, epistemology, ontology, sociology, psychology, and law. It was revealed to regulate human life in the world. It is not limited to any time, place, or people. It is for all times and for all peoples.

The Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, declares:

The Qur'ān is more lovable to God than the heavens and earth and those in them. The superiority of the Qur'ān over all other words and speeches is like God's superiority over His creatures. (at-Tirmidhī, "Faḍāil al-Qur'ān," 25)

The Qur'ān is a definite decree distinguishing between the truth and falsehood. It is not for pastime. Whoever rejects it because of his or her despotism, God humiliates him or her. It contains the history of previous peoples, the tiding of those to come after you, and the judgment on the disagreements among you. Whoever searches for guidance in something other than it, God leads him or her astray. It is God's strong rope. It is the wise instruction. It is the Straight Path. It is a book which desires cannot deviate and tongues cannot confuse, and which scholars are not fed up with, never worn-out by repetition, and has uncountable admirable aspects. It is such a book that they could not help but say: "We have indeed heard a wonderful Qur'ān, guiding to what is right in belief and action and so we have believed in it." Whoever speaks based on it speaks truth; whoever judges by it judges justly and whoever calls to it calls to truth. (at-Tirmidhī, "Thawāb al-Qur'ān," 14)

We close this topic with the definition of the Qur'ān by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, an illustrious Muslim scholar who started an Islamic revival movement in Turkey during the first half of the twentieth century:

The Qur'ān is an eternal translation of the great Book of the Universe and the everlasting translator of the "languages" in which the Divine laws of the universe's creation and operation are "inscribed;" the interpreter of the books of the visible, material world and the World of the Unseen; the discloser of the immaterial treasures of the Divine Names hidden on the earth and in the heavens; the key to the truths lying beneath the lines of events; the World of the Unseen's tongue in the visible, material one; the treasury of the All-Merciful's favors and the All-Glorified's eternal addresses coming from the World of the Unseen beyond the veil of this visible world; the sun of Islam's spiritual and intellectual worlds, as well as its foundation and plan; the sacred map of the Hereafter's worlds; the expounder, lucid interpreter, articulate proof, and clear translator of the Divine Essence, Attributes, Names and acts; the educator and trainer of humanity's world and the water and light of Islam, the true and greatest humanity; and the true wisdom of humanity and the true guide leading them to happiness.



For humanity, it is a book of law, prayer, wisdom, worship and servanthood to God, commands and invitation, invocation and reflection. It is a holy book containing books for all of our spiritual needs; a heavenly book that, like a sacred library, contains numerous booklets from which all saints, eminently truthful people, all purified and discerning scholars, and those well-versed in knowledge of God have derived their own specific ways, and which illuminate each way and answer their followers' needs.

Having come from God's Supreme Throne, originated in His Greatest Name, and issued from each Name's most comprehensive rank, the Qur'ān is God's word (as regards His being the Lord of the worlds) and His decree (in respect of His having the title of Deity of all creatures). It is a discourse in the name of the Creator of the heavens and the earth, a speech from the view of absolute Divine Lordship, and an eternal sermon on behalf of the All-Glorified One's universal Sovereignty. It is also a register of the All-Merciful's favors from the viewpoint of all-embracing Mercy; a collection of messages, some of which begin with a cipher; and a holy book that, having descended from the Greatest Divine Name's surrounding circle, looks over and surveys the circle surrounded by His Supreme Throne.

This is why the title "the Word of God" has been (and will always be) given to the Qur'ān. After the Qur'ān come the Books and Scrolls sent to other Messengers. Some of the other countless Divine words are inspirations coming as particular manifestations of a particular aspect of Divine Mercy, Sovereignty, and Lordship under a particular title and with a particular regard. The inspirations coming to angels, human beings, and animals vary greatly with regard to their universality or particularity.

The Qur'ān is a heavenly book, which contains in brief the Scriptures revealed to the previous Messengers in different ages, and the content of the treatises of all the saints with different temperaments, and the works of all the purified scholars each following a way particular to himself; the six sides of which are bright and absolutely free of the darkness of doubts and whimsical thoughts; whose point of support is with certainty Divine Revelation and the Divine eternal Word, whose aim is manifestly eternal happiness, and whose inside is manifestly pure guidance. And it is surrounded and supported: from above by the lights of faith, from below by proof and evidence, from the right by the submission of the heart and the conscience, and from the left by the admission of reason and other intellectual faculties. Its fruit is with absolute certainty the mercy of the All-Merciful, and Paradise; and it has been accepted and promoted by angels and innumerable people and jinn through the centuries. (*The Words*, "The 25<sup>th</sup> Word," 388-389)

## THE RECORDING OF THE QUR'ĀN AND ITS PRESERVATION

It is commonly accepted that during the human history God the Almighty sent 124,000 Prophets. According to the Islamic definition, a Prophet is one who comes with important tidings, "the tidings of the Religion," which are based on faith in the Existence and Unity of God and His angels, the mission or office of Prophethood and Prophets, Revelation and Divine Scriptures, the Resurrection and afterlife, and Divine Destiny including human free will. The "tidings" also include offering a life to be based on this belief, and promises and warning with respect to accepting this belief and offer-

ing or not. It frequently happened during history that the Religion was considerably corrupted, which caused a Prophet to be chosen to revive and restore the Religion and make some amendments in its rules, or make new laws concerning the daily life. This Prophet, who was usually given a Book, is called a Messenger, and his mission, Messengership. Five of the Messengers, namely Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad, upon them be peace, are mentioned in a verse in *Sūrat ash-Shūrā* (42: 13) and accepted as the greatest of all Messengers.

The name of the Religion which God the Almighty sent to all the Messengers during history is Islam. Just as the laws in the order and operation of the universe are the same and constant, then, similarly, there is no difference between the first human being on the earth and all the human beings of today with respect to their being human with the same peculiarities, essential needs, and the final destination awaiting them. So, too, it is natural that the religion should be one and the same based on the same essentials of faith, worship and morality. As this Religion was corrupted or altered or contaminated with borrowings from false creeds, God sent different Messengers in different epochs of history. He sent the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, as the last of the Messengers, with the perfected and last form of the Religion, and “undertook” the preservation of its Book: *Indeed it is We, We Who send down the Reminder in parts, and it is indeed We Who are its Guardian* (15: 9). Since after Moses, upon him be peace, the religion he communicated came to be called Judaism, and after Jesus, upon him be peace, Christianity, Islam has remained as the name of the perfected, preserved form of the Divine Religion which the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, communicated.

In this world, God the Almighty acts behind natural or material causes. So He has created and will create causes or means to preserve the Qur’ān. One of these means and one of the reasons why the Almighty allowed His previous Scriptures to be corrupted and “undertook” to preserve the Qur’ān is that the Companions of the Prophet, may God be pleased with them, and the succeeding Muslim generations were devoted to their Book more than any other people being devoted to their own, and tried their utmost to preserve it without the least alteration. With the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, God perfected Islam in a way to be able to address all levels of knowledge of understanding to exist and solve the problems of humankind to appear until the Last Day. Therefore, there would be no need for another Prophet to revive or restore the Religion and no further Book to be revealed. So, as the first step to preserving the Qur’ān, it was written down during the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, under his direct supervision. It is due to this that not one word of its text has been deleted, added, or mutilated. There is not a single difference among the copies of the Qur’ān that have been circulating throughout the world during the 14 centuries of Islam.

In considering the fact that, unlike other Scriptures preceding it, the Qur’ān has been preserved in its original form or text, without a single alteration, addition, or deletion, the following points are of considerable significance:

- The Qur’ān was revealed in parts. God the Almighty undertook not only the preservation of the Qur’ān but also its due recitation and the arrangement of

its parts as a Book. He revealed to His Messenger where each verse and chapter revealed would be placed:

*Move not your tongue to hasten it (for safekeeping in your heart). Surely it is for Us to collect it (in your heart) and enable you to recite it (by heart). So when We recite it, follow its recitation; thereafter, it is for Us to explain it. (75: 16-19)*

*Absolutely Exalted is God, the Supreme Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth and Ever-Constant. Do not show haste (O Messenger) with (the receiving and memorizing of any Revelation included in) the Qur'ān (the receiving and memorizing of it) before it has been revealed to you in full, but say: "My Lord, increase me in knowledge." (20: 114)*

- The Almighty emphasizes that no falsehood can approach the Qur'ān and there will be nothing to cause doubt about its authenticity as the Book of God:

*It is surely a glorious, unconquerable Book. Falsehood can never have access to it, whether from before it or from behind it (whether by arguments and attitudes based on philosophies to be invented or by attacks from the past based on earlier Scriptures; it is) the Book being sent down in parts from the One All-Wise, All-Praiseworthy (to Whom all praise and gratitude belong). (41: 41-42)*

- The Messenger of God, upon him be peace and blessings, once a year used to review with the Archangel Gabriel the portion of the Qur'ān that had been revealed until that year. In his last year, after the completion of the Qur'ān's revelation, Gabriel came twice for this purpose. The Messenger concluded from this that his emigration to the other world was near (Yıldırım, 43, 62-63).
- From the very beginning of its revelation, the Prophet's Companions, may God be pleased with them, paid the utmost attention to the Qur'ān, and tried their best to understand, memorize, and learn it. This was, in fact, the order of the Qur'ān:

*And so, when the Qur'ān is recited, give ear to it and listen in silence so that you may be shown mercy. (7: 204)*

- There were few Muslims who knew how to read and write in the starting period of the Qur'ān's revelation. It was decreed after the Battle of Badr, which was the first encounter between the Muslims and the Makkan polytheists, that the prisoners of war would be emancipated on the condition that each should teach ten Muslims of Madīnah how to read and write. Those who learned to read and write first attempted to memorize the Qur'ān. They attempted to do so because the recitation of some portion out of the Qur'ān is obligatory in the Prescribed Prayers; because the Qur'ān was very original for them; and because it purified their minds of prejudices and wrong assertions, and their hearts of sins, and illuminated them; and because it built a society out of illuminated minds and purified hearts.

- In order to understand the extent of the efforts the Companions exerted to memorize the Qur’ān and the number of those who memorized it, it suffices to mention that in the disaster of *Biṭ al-Ma‘ūnah* which took place just a few years after the Emigration, 70 Companions who had memorized the Qur’ān were martyred. Another 70 or so memorizers of the Qur’ān were also martyred in other similar events and battles during the life of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings (as-Ṣāliḥ, 55). When the Prophet died, there were several Companions who knew the Qur’ān by heart such as ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr, Hudayfah ibn al-Yamān, Sālim, Mu‘adh ibn Jabal, Abū’d-Dardā, Ubayy ibn Ka‘b, as well as Ā’ishah and Umm Salamah, the wives of the Prophet. When a person was converted into Islam or emigrated to Madīnah, the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, sent him to a Companion to teach him the Qur’ān. Since a humming sound raised when the learners of the Qur’ān began reciting, the Prophet asked them to lower their voices not to confuse one another (as-Ṣāliḥ, 57, reporting from az-Zarkānī).
- The Qur’ān was revealed in parts mostly on certain occasions. Whenever a verse or chapter or a group of verses was revealed, it was both memorized by many people, and God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, also had it written down. He instructed where it would be placed in the Qur’ān. (The Qur’ān was revealed within 23 years. However, it was called the Qur’ān since the beginning of its revelation.) Those whom the Messenger employed in the writing-down of the Qur’ān were called the Scribes of the Revelation. Histories give the names of 40 or so among them. In addition to writing down the parts of the Qur’ān revealed, the Scribes copied them for themselves and preserved them (as-Ṣāliḥ, 61, reporting from *al-Burhān* by az-Zarkashī).
- When the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, died, several Companions such as ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib, Mu‘adh ibn Jabal, Abū’d-Dardā, and Ubayy ibn Ka‘b had already collected the portions of the Qur’ān as a complete book. ‘Ali had arranged them according to the revelation time of the chapters (M.M. Pūye, 95-8, reporting from *al-Itqān* by as-Suyūṭī, and also from aṭ-Ṭabarānī and Ibn al-Asākīr). Following the death of the Prophet, when around 700 memorizers of the Qur’ān were martyred in the Battle of Yamāmah, U‘mar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb applied to the Caliph Abū Bakr with the request that they should have an “official” copy of the Qur’ān, since the memorizers of the Qur’ān were being martyred in the battles. Zayd ibn Thābit, one of the leading scholars and memorizers of the Qur’ān at that time, was chosen for the task. After a meticulous work, Zayd prepared the official collection, which was called the *Muṣḥaf* (Yıldırım, 62-66; as-Ṣāliḥ, 62-65).
- The Almighty openly declares in *Sūrat al-Qiyāmah*: *Surely it is for Us to collect it (in your heart) and enable you to recite it (by heart) (75: 17)*. All the verses and chapters of the Qur’ān were arranged and collected as a book by the instructions of the Prophet himself, upon him be peace and blessings, as guided by the Revelation. After the Battle of Yamāmah, an official copy was brought about and many copies of this version were produced and sent out to all cities during

the time of the Third Caliph ‘Uthmān, may God be pleased with him (Yıldırım, 66–70; as-Şāliḥ, 65–73).

- One of the foremost reasons for the Qur’ān coming down to us through many centuries without a single distortion or change is that it has been preserved in its own original language. No one in the Muslim world has ever thought to supersede it with any translation of it, with the result that it has been protected from being exposed to what the previous Scriptures were.

In conclusion: the authenticity and genuineness of the copy of the Qur’ān now in our hands, in the sense that it is in the very words which were uttered by God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, is so evident that no Muslim scholar of any standard has ever doubted its genuineness or the fact that each and every letter, word or sentence, verse or chapter was uttered by the Messenger, as the part of the Qur’ān. In other words, the version we have in our hands is undoubtedly the Qur’ān as recited by the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. (For further explanations, see *sūrah* 15, note 3.)

### THE QUR’ĀN’S STYLES

The Qur’ān is a book conveyed by the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, as the Word of God and which testifies to his Prophethood. It is also his greatest miracle, which challenges not only the Arabs of his time but all people to come until the Last Day to produce a like of not the whole but a single chapter of it. The Qur’ān is also unparalleled among the Divine Scriptures in being preserved and transmitted to the later generations without the slightest alteration. There is not a single difference among the copies of the Qur’ān which have been circulating in the world since its first revelation.

Although there is no problem of any theological value which the Qur’ān has not dealt with, and it surpasses all scriptural records of pre or post Islamic ages in the abundant variety of its contents, yet its method of approach, presentation and solution is exclusively unique in itself. Rather than dealing any topic in the common, so-called systematic way used by any author of theology or by an apostolic writer, it expressly says that it has adopted a special manifold method of its own which may be called “*taṣrīfī*.” That is, it displays varieties or changing topics and shifting from one subject to another or reverting to the previous one and repeating deliberately and purposefully one and the same subject in a unique and peculiar rhythmic and recitative forms to facilitate the understanding, learning and remembering of it.

*Look, how We set out the signs (of God’s Existence and Unity and other truths of faith) in diverse ways, so that it may be that they will penetrate the essence of matters and understand. (6: 65)*

The Qur’ān exhibits the order of the universe. As almost all varieties of existing things present themselves side-by-side or mingled before our eyes, the Qur’ān displays varieties linked together with a rhythm of peculiar pitch. This is to show forth the signs of the Unity of God. Although itself openly expresses that this changing attitude may

cause some opponents of it to put forth doubts about its Divine authorship (6: 106), it gives the reason for this as to stir up the depth of human intellect to reflect on the unity in variety and the harmony in diversity. As a matter of fact, the holy Qur'ān deals in each chapter of particular rhythm with various topics in various ways. This variety adds only to its unique beauty and matchless eloquence. An attentive reciter or an intelligent audience of the holy Qur'ān while passing through these varieties of rhythmical pitch, enjoys these to the extent that the Qur'ān itself declares:

*God sends down in parts the best of the words as a Book fully consistent in itself, and whose statements corroborate, expound and refer to one another. The skins of those who stand in awe of their Lord tingle at (the hearing and understanding of) it. Then, their skins and their hearts come to rest in the Remembrance of God (the Qur'ān). This is God's guidance, by which He guides whomever He wills. And whomever God leads astray, there is no guide for him. (39: 23)*

In addition to this unique style of the Qur'ān, the arrangement of its verses and chapters does not follow a chronological order. You find some verses that were revealed together and put in the same place in the Qur'ān but are preceded and followed by other verses. Some chapters and verses are lengthy while some others are very short. Although this arrangement is one of the aspects of the Qur'ān's miraculousness, one of the most important reasons why many orientalist and their imitators in the Muslim world venture to criticize the Qur'ān on the pretext that there is not consistency among its verses is this:

The Qur'ān exhibits the order of the universe. Just as there is both a whole-part and holistic-partial or universal-particular relation among the things or elements in the universe, the same relation is also true for the verses of the Qur'ān. That is, a body is a whole and the head, arms, legs, and other organs are its parts. Any of these parts cannot wholly represent the body because whatever there is in the body it is not to be wholly found in any of its parts. However, each part is a whole in itself. Similarly, humankind and every species in existence is holistic or universal. That is, each species is composed of the members wherein each contains all of the features of the species and therefore, represents the species. Thus, a human being is an exact specimen of humankind in structure.

It is just like this that each of the Qur'ānic verses is a whole in itself and also has an independent existence. Most of them can be put in any place in the Qur'ān without harming either the composition or the meaning. In addition, there is an intrinsic relation almost among all the verses of the Qur'ān, and between a verse and all the others. In the words of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi:

*The verses of the Qur'ān are like stars in a sky among which there are visible and invisible ropes and relationships. It is as if each of the verses of the Qur'ān has an eye which sees most of the verses, and a face which looks towards them, so that it extends to them the immaterial threads of a relationship to weave a fabric of miraculousness. A single *sūrah* can contain the whole 'ocean' of the Qur'ān in which the whole of the universe is contained. A single verse can comprehend the treasury of that *sūrah*. It is as if most of the verses are each a small *sūrah*, and most of the *sūrahs*, each a little Qur'ān.*

And it is a commonly accepted fact that the whole of the Qur'ān is contained in *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, and *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* in the *Basmalah*." (*The Words*, "The 25<sup>th</sup> Word," 394)

There are verses in the Qur'ān which, at first glance, seem to be contradictory. However, there is not a single contradiction in the Qur'ān. As mentioned above, the "taṣrīfī" arrangement of the verses may cause an "apparent" contradiction. However, the Qur'ān is like an organism, all parts of which are interlinked with one another. Both because of this arrangement, and due to the whole-part and wholistic-partial relationship among the verses, in most cases, a correct understanding of a verse is dependent upon an understanding of the whole of the Qur'ān. This is another characteristic particular to the Qur'ān which is another aspect of its miraculousness and demonstrates its Divine Authorship. This characteristic is very important in the interpretation of the Qur'ān, since the Qur'ān is the written counterpart of the universe and humanity. According to Muslim sages, the Qur'ān, the universe, and humanity are the three "copies" of the same book – the first being the "revealed and written universe" and humans as the second are each a "created Qur'ān;" this also teaches us how we can view humanity and the universe. Therefore, what a careless human being sees as a contradiction in the Qur'ān is, in reality, the contradiction in his or her viewpoint. One whose being has been unified with the Qur'ān will see no contradiction in it, as such a one has been freed from all contradictions. If one views the Qur'ān from the windows of one's particular world full of contradictions, he or she will absolutely see contradiction in it. This is why a human being who attempts to approach the Qur'ān must first be freed from all kinds of contradictions.

The Qur'ān was revealed in the language of Arabic. The Qur'ān's language is its outer body. It should not be forgotten that the Religion does not solely consist of either a philosophy nor a theology. It is a method of unifying all the dimensions of our being. Therefore, as pointed out above, the language of the Qur'ān is one of the essential, inseparable elements of the Qur'ān. It was revealed in Arabic, and not only because the Arabs of the time of its revelation could understand it. Rather, a universal Religion must have a universal language. The Qur'ān views the world as the cradle of human brotherhood and sisterhood. It envisages uniting all races, colors, and beliefs as brothers and sisters, and as servants of One God. Its language is one of the basic factors that helps a human being not only to ponder over religious realities but also to unite all the dimensions of his or her being according to the Divine standards. Translations of the Qur'ān cannot be recited in the Prescribed Prayers, since any of its translations is not identical with it. Without Arabic, one can be a good Muslim but one can understand only a little of the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān is the source of all knowledge in Islam, not only the religious and spiritual, but also social and scientific knowledge and good morals, law, and philosophy.

## UNDERSTANDING THE QUR'ĀN

The first step to understanding the Qur'ān is understanding its language. The language has the same meaning for a text as the bodily features have for a human being. The essential existence of a text lies in its meaning, as that of a human being in his or her

spirit. The bodily features are the externalized form which the spirit of a human being has taken on, and therefore serve as a mirror in which to see into his or her character. It is like this that the language and styles of the Qur'ān are the form of its meaning and therefore cannot be separated from it.

The second step to understanding the Qur'ān is penetrating its meaning, which requires practicing it in daily life. Although its language constitutes its outer form and structure, and is therefore very important in penetrating its meaning, restriction to its language in understanding the Qur'ān means restriction to the form or formalism. One can penetrate the meaning of the Qur'ān, in which its essential existence lies, through his or her "heart," which is the seat of his/her spirit. This requires that the heart should be purified by refraining from sins and evils, doing the necessary acts of worship, and living a pious life.

The Qur'ān is, in the words of the late Professor Haluk Nurbaki, a Turkish scientist, "like a rose which continuously grows petals in the womb of time" (Nurbaki, 14). As sciences develop and contribute to penetrate through its depths of meaning, the Qur'ān blooms more and more and grows younger and fresher. This is why, besides having sufficient knowledge of topics such as "abrogation of laws, laws and principles dependent on certain conditions and unconditional, general and particular rules and the occasions on which the verses were revealed," knowing the general principles of natural sciences is also of great importance. In addition, since it is the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings, who received the Qur'ān and taught and practiced it first of all in daily life as an infallible authority, knowing his Sunnah, the way he practiced the Qur'ān, and the example he set in living Islam, is indispensable to understanding the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān is not a book of sciences, nor a book of history, nor a book of morality, only. Nor is it a book in the sense that the word "book" signifies. It is a book to be practiced; it came to guide people to truth, to educate people both intellectually and spiritually, and to govern their life in both the individual and social realm. Therefore, it can be understood by practicing it in the daily life. This point can be better understood when we consider that the Qur'ān was not revealed on one occasion only; it was revealed on many diverse occasions during the 23 years of Muḥammad's Prophethood. Separating the Qur'ān and our practical lives means reducing the Qur'ān to being only a book to be read. It does not unfold itself much to those who approach it as if it were only a book to "read."

Another point to stress concerning the understanding of the Qur'ān is this:

The Qur'ān is a book of moderate size and, at first glance, contains repetitions. However, it declares that there is nothing "wet and dry" that is not recorded in a Manifest Book, that is, in the Qur'ān itself (6: 59). As stated in a Prophetic saying, it contains the history of previous peoples, the tidings of those to come after its revelation, and the solutions to the disagreements between people. It addresses all levels of understanding and knowledge in all places at all times, and satisfies them. Hundreds of interpreters who have written commentaries on it during the 14 centuries of Islam have derived different meanings from it, but none of them has ever claimed that he or she has been able to comprehend the whole of it. Thousands of jurists have inferred



laws from it and based their juridical reasoning on it, but no one among them has ever asserted that he or she has been able to infer all the laws contained in it or understand all the reasons behind its injunctions and prohibitions. All the pure, exacting scholars who have been able to “marry” the mind and heart, all the revivers – the greatest, saintly scholars who have come at certain times to revive and restore Islam – have found their ways in it; all saints have derived from it their sources of inspiration and ways of purification; and all the paths of Sufism have depended on it. But like a source of water which increases as it flows, it has remained as if untouched.

It is due to its miraculous eloquence that the Qur’ān has such depth and richness of meaning. One of the elements on which the Qur’ān’s eloquence is based is its creative style, rich in the arts. It frequently speaks in parables and adopts a figurative, symbolic rhetoric using metaphors and similes. This is natural because it contains knowledge of all things and addresses all levels of understanding and knowledge.

Ignoring the symbolic and artistic style of the Qur’ān, in mere contentment with the outward meaning of its expressions, caused the appearance of a superficial, narrow-minded current called *Zāhiriyyah*. Just the opposite this is another current called *Bāṭiniyyah* (esotericism), which searches for the whole of truth in symbols in negligence of the outward meaning of the expressions. Both currents are harmful. The middle way is always preferable.

### IS A FULL, EXACT TRANSLATION OF THE QUR’ĀN POSSIBLE?

The question “Is a full, exact translation of the Qur’ān possible?” has been the cause of hot debates in the Muslim world for almost a century. This is a question asked without due consideration. For, first of all, a language is not a set of molds made up of letters and words. As his or her style of speech or writing gives a human being away, the language of a nation is a mirror to that nation’s character, molded by its culture, history, religion, and even the land where its people live. It is almost impossible for any word used in a language to have an exact counterpart in another language. For that word has different connotations and associations particular to each people using it and different impressions on each. For example, according to the majority of Muslim scholars, the word *qur’ān* is derived from the verb *qirā’ah*, meaning reading or reciting, and it means recitation. Although the *Qur’ān* has been the proper name for the book sent to the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, even as a common noun in the infinitive form, it is not the exact counterpart of “reading” or “recitation” in English, or another word used for the same meaning in another language. A language, with all its words, is a living entity changing forms and undergoing adaptations during the history of the people using it.

Second, Arabic is a strictly grammatical language. The rules of its grammar are established. It is the richest language of the world in conjugation and derivation. For example, there are three different types of infinitive in Arabic, and, in addition, a verb has 35 different infinitive forms, each of which has different connotations and implications. Again, the tenses do not always have the same meaning and usage in every language. For instance, the Qur’ān describes the events of Judgment Day in the past tense, although Judgment Day will come in the future. Besides other reasons for this usage, the simple past tense in Arabic is also used to give the meaning that a future event will

doubtlessly take place. Also, the present tense is not the same in Arabic and in English. Aside from such differences between any two languages, there are also differences in using the present perfect tense between British and American English. As another characteristic of language, while in Arabic nouns are classified into two genders (masculine and feminine), in English there are three forms of gender. And in English, nouns have two forms of number, singular and plural, while adjectives and verbs do not have plural forms. As for Arabic, it has three forms of number for nouns, adjectives, and verbs: singular, dual, and plural. In addition, in Arabic, nouns have many plural forms, each of which has different implications.

The Qur'ān has another important peculiarity which makes its exact translation into another language almost impossible.

The Qur'ān has made many of its words each into a concept. Besides the word *qur'ān*, many other words such as *rabb* (lord), *ilāh* (deity), *malik* (sovereign), *kitāb* (book), *wahy* (revelation), *dīn* (religion), *millah* (nation, way), *sharī'ah*, *ibādah* (worship, adoration), *taqwā* (piety and righteousness), *ihsān* (perfect goodness or excellence, doing something fully aware that God is seeing His servants), *waliyy* (friend, saint), *nūr* (light), *nabiyy* (prophet), *rasūl* (messenger), *islām*, *īmān* (faith, belief) and other words, with the addition that the words which gave rise to a branch of knowledge or science called the Sciences of the Qur'ān, such as *muhkam* (the established, the decisive), *mutashābih* (the parabolical, the allegorical), *tafsīr* (interpretation), *ta'wīl* (exegesis), *nāsikh* (the abrogator) and *mansūkh* (the abrogated) are each a concept which is impossible to render in another language without necessary explanations.

The reasons why the exact translation of the Qur'ān into another language is not possible are not limited to those mentioned here. That is why no rendering of the Qur'ān can be substituted for it nor recited in the Prayers.

## ON THIS STUDY OF INTERPRETATION

So far, many studies have been made to be able to render the meaning of the Qur'ān in other languages. Each study surely is superior to others in many respects, yet in many others inferior to them. Nevertheless, it is also true that in many of those studies, in addition to many shortcomings, there may be mistakes of understanding.

We do not have any claim that this study, which is partly based on the interpretation of venerable Suat Yıldırım, the renowned professor of the Qur'ānic interpretation in Turkey, is superior to others. However, it differs from them in the following, important points:

- As mentioned earlier, as almost every verse of the Qur'ān has an independent existence, it has also an intrinsic relation with every other verse and with the totality of the Qur'ān. Therefore, understanding and interpreting a verse requires having a complete knowledge and understanding of the Qur'ān as a whole and considering the totality of it. It should not be forgotten that the main interpreter of the Qur'ān is the Qur'ān itself; as verses interpret one another, the Qur'ān as a whole also interprets each of them. We have tried to strictly observe this unique feature of the Qur'ān.

- Bediüzzaman Said Nursi frequently draws the attention to the depths of the meaning which the wording of the Qur’ân has as one of the aspects of its being miraculous. For example, since in Arabic, the definite article *al* adds inclusiveness to the word, he interprets “*al-ḥamdu* – the praise” at the beginning of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*: “All praise and gratitude that everyone has given to others since the beginning of human life on the earth for any reason on any occasion and will give until the Last Day, are for God.”
- Also, from the characteristics of the words used and the word-order in the sentence, *Out of what We have provided for them* (of wealth, knowledge, power, etc.,) *they spend* (to provide sustenance for the needy and in God’s cause, purely for the good pleasure of God and without placing others under obligation), that comes in the third verse of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, the second *sūrah*, he infers the following rules or conditions of giving alms:
  1. In order to make their alms-giving acceptable to God, believers must give out of their belongings such an amount that they themselves will not have to need to receive alms. *Out of* in the expression *Out of what* expresses this condition.
  2. Believers must not transfer to the needy from another’s goods, but they must give out of their own belongings. The phrase, *what We have provided for them* points to this condition. The meaning is: “Believers give out of what We have provided for *them*, (not out of what We have provided for others).”
  3. Believers must not remind those to whom they have given something of the kindness they have done to them. *We* in *We have provided* indicates this condition, for it means: “It is We who have provided for you wealth out of which you give to the poor as sustenance. Therefore, by giving to a servant of Ours out of Our property, you cannot put them under obligation.”
  4. Believers must not fear that they may become poor because they give others. The pronoun *We* in *We have provided* points to this. Since it is God Who provides for us and commands us to spend for others, He will not cause us to become poor because of giving to others.
  5. Believers must give to those who will spend it for their livelihood. It is not acceptable to give to those who will dissipate it. The phrase, *They spend to provide sustenance*, points to this condition.
  6. Believers must give for God’s sake. *We have provided for them*, states this condition. It means: “Essentially, it is Our property out of which you spend, therefore you must spend in Our Name.”
  7. The word *what* in *Out of what* signifies that whatever God provides for a person is included in the meaning of *rizq* (provision.) Therefore, one must spend not only out of one’s goods, but also out of whatever one has. Therefore a good word, an act of help, a piece of advice, and teaching are all included in the meaning of provision and spendin as sustenance for others (*Iṣṣârâtü’l-İcâz*, 40).

Together with all these conditions, the meaning of the expression, the original of which comprises three words, becomes: “Out of what We have provided for them of wealth, knowledge, and power, etc., believing that it is We Who provide and therefore without feeling any fear that they may become poor because of giving and without putting those to whom they give under obligation, they spend both in God’s cause and to provide sustenance for the needy who are sensible enough not to dissipate what is given to them, such amount that they themselves will not have to need to receive alms.”

In this study of interpretation, we have tried to consider such depths of meaning to the extent that the scope of the study allows.

- It is of considerable significance that the Qur’ān was revealed within 23 years on certain occasions. Therefore its due, correct understanding caused the birth of an important science called the Sciences of the Qur’ān, which includes a wide range of topics such as abrogation of a law or verse by others, generalization or particularization of the meaning because of certain occasions or conjuncture, and the occasions on which verses were revealed. If these points are not given due consideration in interpreting the Qur’ān, one with a superficial view can have the impression that there are contradictions in the Qur’ān. In order to prevent such an impression, we have tried to take these points into consideration. For example:

*O you who believe! If you follow those who disbelieve (the hypocrites and Jews in Madinah who spread negative propaganda concerning the events at Uhud), they will drive you back on your heels (into unbelief), and you will turn utter losers (in both this world and the next). (3: 149)*

This verse commands that the believers should not obey the unbelievers. However, like many commandments in the Qur’ān, this one has also relative aspects according to time and conditions. Besides, the verse must have a connection with the verses before and after it. To see this connection sometimes requires knowing the reason for its revelation.

After the Battle of Uhud the hypocrites and Jews began to propagate that had Muḥammad been a true Prophet, he would not have suffered the reverse at Uhud. They tried to persuade the Muslims to turn back into their former state of unbelief. The Muslims this verse addressed in Madinah knew what specifically it was about. For this reason, in order to clarify the meaning and the direct purpose for the verse’s revelation, it requires having an interpretation with explanations. However, in doing this, we should never forget that with respect to its meaning and connotations and commandments it contains, a verse can in no way be restricted to the occasion on which it was revealed. “It does not prevent the commandment a verse contains from having a general, inclusive area of enforcement that it was revealed on a certain occasion,” is a rule in both the Qur’ānic interpretation and Islamic Jurisprudence.

- The structure and character of the words used in the Qur’ān are the source of diverse meanings. For example, the being that refused to prostrate before Adam

was *Iblis*, but it was Satan when it approached Adam to deceive him in the Garden. It is possible to deduce from this word what happened between its refusal to prostrate before Adam and its approaching to deceive him, and this should be shown in a study of interpretation. So the shortest meaning of the verse 2: 36 is as follows:

*(Iblis was inherently devoid of good, and defeated by his vainglory, disobeyed God's command and was driven out from the Garden, becoming Satan despairing of God's mercy and the accursed Satan. Tempting Adam and Eve to the forbidden tree despite Our pre-warning.) Satan caused them both to deflect therefrom and brought them out of the (happy) state in which they were; and We said, "Go down, all of you, (and henceforth you will live a life,) some of you being the enemies of the others. There will be for you on the earth (where you have already been appointed as vicegerent) a habitation and provision until an appointed time.*

Unfortunately, we have not been able to make the whole of this study with such broadness.

- The explanatory words that we have had to put (usually in brackets) before or within the translations of the verses are not additions to, nor any sort of adaptations of, the meaning of the verses. They express the full normal meaning of the words, understood individually and in context. By "context," we mean both the context of the passage or the *sūrah* or the Qur'ān as a whole, and also the historical context, the situation that is the background to the verses. Also, we should be aware that the Qur'ān is miraculous in its power of concision, of conveying much in few words. Sometimes this concision is achieved through the powerful compactness of the structures and syntax of the language of Arabic, raised to inimitable perfection in the Qur'ān. A relatively uninflected language like English simply cannot reproduce the full meaning without explanations to convey the meaning that is carried in the words in Arabic by their inflection, position in the sentence, etc. Sometimes the concision of the Qur'ān is achieved through ellipsis, that is, through the omission of what is already known or easily knowable to one familiar with the language and the subject-matter (see the next point).

The occasions on which the verses were revealed require explanatory additions (as well as notes) because the historical context is not known to us in the way that it was known to the first addressees of the Qur'ān. However, it is important to clarify that, while the historical context is important for the meaning of the verses and, equally important, for the links between them, it does not restrict their meaning. Everyone should respond to the Qur'ān as if its words and meanings were being revealed to them as the first addressees of the Revelation. Knowing the historical context of certain verses or passages, in fact, enhances the understanding of their present and permanent relevance, but it does not diminish or restrict it.

- It is impossible to find a single ample word in the Qur'ān. While narrating the events, without getting into detail, it gives the main points and refers the detail

to the mind. The listener or reader can supply what is missing from familiarity with the story and/or ordinary common sense. For example, in the verse 2: 35, the Divine command to Adam and Eve not to approach the (forbidden) tree is followed by Satan's causing them to "stumble." Several incidents happened between these two events. These should be given in a study of interpretation.

To cite another example:

*Now after all that time, of the two (prisoners), the one who had been delivered remembered (what Joseph had asked him to remember) and he said: "I will inform you of its meaning, so send me forth!" "Joseph, O man of truth!..." (12: 45-46)*

Between *so send me forth* and *Joseph, o man of truth!*, there are several events that the narrative omits: "So send me forth to Joseph so that I may ask him about the dream's interpretation. They sent him, so he left the king's court to get to the prison. He arrived there and, on receiving permission from the prison guard to enter, did so. He came to Joseph and, after exchanging greetings with him, said: Joseph, o man of truth!" By omitting these events, the Qur'an narrates briefly and to the point without any loss of clarity. However, in this study we have tried to mention some such omitted events in brackets to make it easier for the reader to understand.

- The Qur'an's verses interpret one another, so in order to understand the exact and complete meaning of a verse, we should consider the verses particularly related to it. For example, verse 2: 42 should be interpreted by taking into consideration the verses 2: 71, 79, 140, 174, 179; 3: 167; 4: 13, 46; and 5: 106:

*Do not confound the truth by mixing it with falsehood, and do not conceal the truth while you know (the meaning and outcome of what you do, and that what you strive to hide is true, and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, the Messenger whose coming you have been anticipating).*

In many of the Qur'anic interpretations, interpreters are content with making a literal translation. For example, in this verse, they do not mention what it is that the Children of Israel know and conceal. However, we have tried to make the meaning as clear as possible either through annotations or putting explanations in brackets.

- The tenses used, the passing from one tense to another, the nouns being definite or indefinite, the kinds of the clauses (noun or verb – a clause beginning with a verb is a verb clause), and the addressee being in the second or the third person (the person in absence) – all of these make important contributions to the meaning. For example, from verse 2: 30 downward, God addresses Adam directly, but in verse 2: 37, coming after the verse telling about his approaching the forbidden tree, He addresses him in the third person. This means that Adam got into a new relationship with his Lord. Also, the verb *talaqqā* used in the meaning of "receiving" connotes perceiving to be inspired. So the shades of meaning which

all such features of the Arabic language contribute to the verses should be given in a study of Qur'anic interpretation. Thus the shortest rendition of this verse is as follows:

*(Aware of his lapse and in the hope of retrieving his error, rather than attempting to find excuses for it,) Adam received from his Lord, (with Whom he got into a new way of relationship,) words (that he perceived to be inspired into him because of his remorse), and (asked for God's forgiveness through them.) In return, He accepted His repentance. He is the One Who truly returns repentance with liberal forgiveness, the All-Compassionate.*

- Another important point:

The shortest meaning of verse 2: 27 provided by the character of the words is as follows:

*(Those) who break God's covenant (which is a rope of light woven of the threads of Divine Will, Wisdom and Favor, and responsible for the order in the universe, and able to establish peace, order and harmony in human life) after its solemn binding, and sever the bonds God commanded to be joined (among the relatives as a requirement of blood relationship, and among people as required by human social needs), and (in an attempt to spread their vices in the whole community, even in the whole world, like one who, having caught a contagious disease, desires to pass it to others) cause disorder and corruption on earth. Such are those who are the losers (in both this world and the next).*

The meanings given in brackets are not commentary; they are the meanings provided by the words used in the verse and their order, as well as the grammar rules and styles. For example, the original word translated as "break" is *NaQaḌa*, which means raveling a thick, strong rope. This implies that God's Covenant is a strong rope binding people together and humanity to God. The word *mīthāq* translated as binding corroborates this meaning. God's Covenant is a rope of light woven of His Will, Wisdom, Knowledge, and Favoring, and which extends from eternity in the past to eternity in the future. Being responsible for the magnificent order in the universe and establishing the relationship among all creatures, one of its ends was given to the hand of humanity. The present environmental pollution and the state of things in the world are the result of breaking God's Covenant. The verse uses God's Covenant, which is a rope binding people together and humanity to God, with the bonds (among people, including particularly among the relatives) to be joined.

In this study, we have preferred to give these meanings sometimes in brackets and sometimes as notes.

- While narrating the series of events or God's blessings, the Qur'an follows such a style that it provokes minds to ask questions, and the succeeding event or the blessing provides an answer to them. For example, while mentioning the blessings of Paradise in verse 2: 25, one who lives in a palace surrounded by trees among

which rivers flow will not be saved from feeling lonely and needing a companion. The Qur'ān presents to the view pure spouses. If there is something to cloud such a blessing, it is death, and the Qur'ān removes this worry by immediately adding that life in Paradise is eternal. So, the meaning of this verse is as follows:

*Give glad tidings to those who believe and do good, righteous deeds: for them are Gardens beneath (the palaces and through the trees of) which rivers flow. Every time they are provided with fruits (of different color, shape, taste, and smell and that are constantly renewed) therefrom, they say, "This is what we were provided with before." For they are given to them in resemblance (to what was given to them both in the world, and just before in the Gardens, familiar in shape and color so that they may not be unattractive because unknown). Furthermore, for them are spouses eternally purified (of all kinds of worldly uncleanness.) They will abide there (forever).*

- As mentioned before, the verses of the Qur'ān interpret each other and make references to one another through the same words and expressions. Besides, there are words and conceptions functioning as the frame of the Qur'ān's meaning, such as *Rabb* (Lord), *taqwā* (piety and righteousness), *ihsān* (perfect goodness or excellence, doing something fully aware that God is seeing His servants), *ʿibādah* (worship), *islām* (submission to God), *kufṛ* (unbelief; concealing the truth willingly and rejecting it), and so on. Although these conceptions should be interpreted in their full meaning, we have not been able to do so, thinking that it would be too long for the readers to follow making it difficult to concentrate on.

To sum up, the features of the Qur'ān's style and aspects of its miraculousness caused paranthetical explanations in this study. They are all the meanings the verses contain, not our additions.

- Another point to mention is that some of the precepts or practices in Islam – such as slavery, *jihād* (holy strife in God's cause), permission to war and women's share in inheritance – have been made the subject of biased criticism by its enemies and of hot debate by both its friends and defenders. Throughout this study, we have tried to clarify these points.

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It is on us to strive, and it is the Almighty Who will give success, if He wills. I close with a request for prayers from all believers for this humble servant for sincerity, purity of intention, conviction in the pillars of faith, and the grant of the approval and good pleasure of our Lord, our Creator.





## ON THE HOLY QUR'ĀN AND ITS INTERPRETATION

*M. Fethullah Gülen*

**T**he Qur'ān is God's miraculous, matchless message that has been sent to all humanity via His last Messenger. With the Qur'ān, God has shown humanity, one last time, a short-cut to His good pleasure. He has communicated to us about His Essence, Attributes, and Names. He has expressed in the most explicit way, leaving no room for any misunderstanding, His will to be known and recognized in the correct way, to be believed in and worshipped. Almighty God has put emphasis on the duties and responsibilities of believers, while enthusing hearts and agitating souls with His warrant for punishment and promise for reward. He has presented the Qur'ān as a sign for perfection and completion and as an orbit to rotate around for His good pleasure, while condescending to offer this gift to us as a compliment greater than any that has been or will ever be granted to anyone else. The Qur'ān is the most radiant and enduring of the hundreds of miracles bestowed upon the Master of creation, upon him be the best of blessings and peace. In addition to its wondrous discourse, articulation, and styles of expression, with its social discipline, legal rulings, principles of good morality, and education, its analysis of the whole creation including especially humanity, with its many allusions and indications to the essentials of almost all the sciences, which are sometimes even presented as manifest expressions, and the alternative solutions it offers for many administrative, economic, and political problems, the Qur'ān is the ultimate source of reference for everyone and for all times. It is an untainted fountain with an infinite resource; it is a vast ocean which can never be dimmed by even the most complicated and filthy of eras.

With all my respect for its grandeur, I have to confess to my inability and insufficiency to elaborate on the depth of meaning and richness of expression and style of the Qur'ān. A considerable number of studies have been dedicated to the Qur'ān, and many more studies will be carried out on this topic. There is no doubt that all these studies have presented valuable content for any seeking person to grasp the gist of what the Qur'ān stands for and to believe in its message, and they mirror the order of Islam in its true essence. However, it would not be right for anyone to claim that they have come up with a perfect interpretation of the endless content of this expository atlas of humankind, the universe and the truth of Divinity. The Qur'ān can be interpreted only to the extent that a heavenly and Divine word can be interpreted by human perception. Thus, although it does not seem to be possible to spell out this huge atlas within the measures of an article, we cannot stay indifferent to or neglect studying the Qur'ān with the excuse that our interpretations are deficient or the power of our discourse is inadequate. Everyone has the right to study the Qur'ān, more than that, it is a duty upon those equipped with necessary, accurate knowledge. We

should work harder to better understand the Qur'ān, while the learned should wield all their perceptiveness and sensations towards understanding it and conveying its message, allowing a wider audience to learn more from it. Indeed, the Qur'ān is the greatest gift from the Mercy of God to the human mind to be understood and to be conveyed to others. Understanding the Qur'ān is both a duty and an act of gratitude, whereas conveying its message to those hearts in need of its light is a prerequisite of respect and fidelity.

The Qur'ān is a miracle of eloquence honored with the merit of being the voice of all ages. It is the most luminous expression of the Divine Speech, around whose light the angels hover like moths. If we take into consideration its Source and purpose of revelation, its first representative(s) and the impact it leaves on hearts, then we must realize that it is not a book to put to one side. When the Qur'ān speaks, angels fall deep into a silent vigilance, spirit beings fall prostrate, and the jinn, enchanted with its voice, set out to the deserts to meet it.

The Qur'ān is the expression and explanation of God's laws of creation or "nature," and the strongest and immutable source of religious rules and pillars. The Qur'ān is the indisputable Book that includes the most reliable criteria for studying existence (the whole universe and humankind). Thus for all individual, familial, social, or ethical problems, we must seek wisdom and illumination from the Qur'ān; it cries out that its source is the all-encompassing Knowledge of the One Who knows everything, along with all causes and results. The Qur'ān has captivated everyone to whom its voice has reached – provided they were not prejudiced – with its holistic perspective, comprehensive discourse and style, the vastness of its content and meaning, its delicate expressions, its magical expounding in proportion to the different levels of knowledge and understanding, and its capacity to penetrate souls. Neither its friends nor its foes have been able to come up with something in a similar style or an utterance that is equal in grandiosity, the former motivated to imitate it, the latter in fury to choke off its voice, despite their efforts for almost fourteen centuries, even when they use the same material and concentrate on the same issues. Their works have never been able to overcome artificiality, they have never been appreciated by masters of literary skills, and they have never evoked any lasting or effective influence.

The Qur'ān has such a musical harmony and delicate correlations between the topics it deals with, be they interrelated or apparently unrelated with each other, so that one is able to realize, with only the slightest effort of comprehensive thinking, that many apparently unrelated topics have points of junction. The mastership of discourse belongs to the Qur'ān, which no literary personality can challenge, and enables those of its audience who are unprejudiced and can judge with some reason to obtain some things from it, introducing them to deeper contemplation beyond their horizons of thought. If once they can judge fairly and let their souls delve into this heavenly waterfall of expression, all other speech-like voices will immediately turn into nothing but rumblings.

Above all, the Qur'ān has come from an all-encompassing Knowledge; it contains and explains the meaning and content of human and non-human existence, of humankind, nature, and all the worlds; it is both their language and interpreter of their pur-

pose of creation. It speaks to multifarious dimensions of its audience all at the same time: while addressing the mind, it does not neglect to speak to the heart in its own language; when it calls out to the consciousness, it does not push emotions aside; while conversing with the faculties of reasoning and logic, it does not leave the soul without any favor. All faculties and senses, external and internal, benefit from the Qurʾān, which gives each its share without giving rise to any deprivation and contradiction. They all receive their share from this heavenly table, each to the extent of its capacity, and enjoy a most harmonious composition.

All Divine Scriptures, especially before human interpolations were mixed with the original texts, possessed the same holistic approach and all-embracing quality; nevertheless the superiority and widest comprehension of the Qurʾān are evident in proportion to the profundity of the spirit of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him be peace and blessings. It is by no means possible to show any other heavenly or manmade book which excels it with its content and extensiveness. It is by no means an exaggeration to claim its uniqueness in dealing with humanity, the universe and Divinity in the most comprehensive, as well as the most exquisite fashion, while interpreting them in the best forms of synthesis and analysis in its own way.

All of the topics that the Qurʾān deals with are the most valuable treasures of the truths pertaining to Divinity and the realm of creation. Some of these truths are decisive or explicit in meaning and content, and others are concise, metaphorical, and allegorical, the explanation of which has been entrusted to the one who brought the Qurʾān, upon him be peace and blessings, and the scholars favored with inspiration. The Qurʾān never complicates any of the matters it presents or analyzes. It presents topics concerned with the essentials of faith, worship, and morality, and basic principles of individual and social life clearly and succinctly; while for matters requiring comprehensive thinking, reflection, and careful consideration, it demands deeper examination and scrutiny, and suggests turning to God, without approving of burdening oneself with grave matters that one cannot shoulder. Like a wondrous chandelier which continuously shines brighter, it is a means for brand new discoveries at diverse wavelengths as hearts and minds go deeper in thought, thus offering Divine gifts of all kinds to our internal and external senses. With its blessings and inspirations augmenting in excess, and light rain becoming a deluge, and with its endless beauty and glittering lights, the Qurʾān offers banquets one within another to those who ponder and study it.

True understanding of existence and what lies beyond the sensed dimension of the cosmos, and also humankind with its spiritual depths, is possible only through the Qurʾān. Readers discover in its bright realm straight thinking and real sources of reflection, and are thereby saved from the vicious circles of deception and misjudgments based on probabilities. There is no other source of knowledge that is free from error, uncertainty or doubt other than this miraculous Speech from God, the All-Knowing of the Unseen. The Qurʾān explains and presents everything explicitly, plainly, and correctly. It enables us to understand that it is we who make errors in evaluating the issues, giving rise to contradictory judgments and filling in the gaps entrusted to reflection. Understanding and interpreting the Qurʾān correctly is not only a duty upon us, but also a requirement of our fidelity to it. The fulfillment of this duty and fidelity is closely

related with the erudition of every capable and well-equipped individual and in their living in devotion to God. Such individuals dive into this vast ocean with utmost sincerity and commitment for the good pleasure of God, uncovering the truth so that it flourishes. They proceed toward this infinite horizon with caution, composure, and comprehensive thought, and without surrendering to their carnality. The Messenger, who brought the Qur'ān from God, is their first and greatest guide; they also follow the pious scholars among the earliest generations of Islam in the light of its expressions, which are decisive and explicit in meaning and content. They are less likely to err; their efforts to attain the pleasure of God are rewarded with special treatment. Their interpretations and explanations of the Qur'ān are each a hue and adornment of Qur'ānic uniqueness.

On the other hand, the Qur'ān cannot be explained as it deserves in consideration of its position and loftiness with rudimentary Arabic and the limited scope of dictionaries; such an attempt would also constitute manifest disrespect to this heavenly monument of speech. It should be rendered in other languages as is required. Anything concerning Qur'ānic expositions (*tafsīr*) should be very well-researched and before it is launched, every *tafsīr* should be tested against the exalted Islamic sciences. What falls to us is not to bring the Divine Word down to our level of perception and expression in its immeasurable immensity and depth, excusing such an act as we have translated it for the benefit of everyone.

While it is a duty, an appreciation of, or an act of respect toward the Qur'ān for experts to make the Qur'ān known to everyone via exposition, interpretation, or a commentary, such an attempt would be paramount to insolence if one did not have a high command of Arabic grammar, the principles of rhetoric or eloquence, knowledge of the study of Qur'ānic exposition (*tafsīr*), the methodology of *ḥadīth* studies (Traditions of the Prophet) and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The Qur'ān cannot be translated as a novel is; and even the translation of a novel calls for an expertise in its own genre.

Forging the way toward a sound interpretation of the Qur'ān, it would be better to discuss first what a “translation” is, and what *tafsīr* (exposition) and *ta'wīl* (commentary) mean.

Translation is the rendering of a text or statement in one language into another language, while preserving the meaning. An accurate translation would be to transfer the exact meaning of every word – if this is ever possible – while preserving the relationships between word combinations. On the other hand, a literal translation of the words only, or an exclusively semantic translation, would be a deficient translation.

To a certain extent, we can also talk about translation software; however, the current technology or even more advanced technology to come is not able to help very much in the translation of substantial literary works. Now consider the situation when the text is the Word of God, which addresses all times, conditions, and levels, and, therefore, the exposition of which, with all its depths, is considerably dependent on time, inspiration, and circumstances. Some works of literature are said to be impossible to accurately render; then it is clear that there is no way that the Holy Qur'ān, with its immense profundity, could ever be expressed by an ordinary translation.

Many Muslim scholars, including Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, are of the opinion that it is impossible to translate the Qur'ān, due to the aforementioned and many other considerations. Some other scholars, on the other hand, approach the matter cautiously, but more moderately, provided that the prerequisites underscored above have been adhered to.

The late Hamdi Yazır (1878-1942), one of the greatest contemporary expounders of the Qur'ān and the writer of the monumental commentary titled *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili* ("The Qur'ān: the Tongue of the Religion of Truth"), states that the translation must exactly correspond to the original text in terms of explicitness and indications; conciseness and comprehensiveness; generalizations and specifics; restrictedness or exclusiveness and inclusiveness; powerfulness, and appropriateness, eloquence, and style. Therefore, prose or poetry can be translated into another language which is as developed as the original language, with the condition that the translator is well-versed with the subtleties of both languages; however, such a translation is hardly possible for a book which addresses the mind and heart, the soul and all the senses together, with all its diverse literary delicacies, and its vigor and exuberance. And what happens if the book to be translated is a work of God that transcends all other books Divine or non-Divine with its dimensions beyond time and space, and speaks to all ages?!...

The Qur'ān is, in the words of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, a Divine interpretation of the book of existence. It is the voice and breath of the laws of creation; the true interpreter of things and events that bear multifarious meanings; a candid expounder of this world and the world to come; the revealer of the treasure of the Divine Names hidden in the heavens and on the earth; the mysterious key to the mysteries beyond all things; the plain language of the beyond manifested in this world; the sun, the foundation, and the geometry of the spiritual world of Islam; the sacred map that explicitly lays out the worlds of the Hereafter with clearly drawn lines; the voice and clearest interpreter of the Divine Essence, Attributes, and Names; the most reliable teacher of all humanity; the air, the water, and the light of the Islamic world; and the Word of the All-Exalted, All-Majestic Being, Who is the Creator and Lord of all worlds; and His decree and address.

This is not to say that the Qur'ān cannot be understood; on the contrary and most importantly of all, it was revealed to humanity to be understood and to be lived by. However, its phrases are so deep and have so many meanings, and its content is so multi-layered, that even if we could know and understand the meaning of every single word, and sense certain things from word combinations, we would still certainly miss many truths that are contained in styles, indications, suggestions, connotations, and purposes, that cannot be fully reflected in any translation.

I am of the opinion that every person who approaches the Qur'ān with an open mind can perceive all of the above characteristics, and thus appreciate that its sublimity and transcendence cannot be confined to a simple translation. A translation might certainly have some value in proportion to the translator's learning, knowledge, horizon of perception, and skills; however, it can never convey the Qur'ān in all its profundity. Therefore, no translation, nor commentary or interpretation can ever be called the Qur'ān itself.

## TAFSĪR AND TA'WĪL

We all have a need for the Qur'ān and thus are obliged to understand it, even if at different levels. In order to penetrate its essence and understand it according to what it really and essentially is we must study it following a comprehensive exposition (*tafsīr*) that has been prepared in accordance with the methodology of the science of *tafsīr* by learned scholars. We should not narrow down its content, which is as extensive as all the worlds, to the levels of our inadequate learning, knowledge, and perception.

*Tafsīr* is an exposition which entails an effort to reflect the content of a text. A Qur'ānic *tafsīr* is an exposition of the Divine Word that takes into account the grammar, the principles of eloquence, and the explanations of God's Messenger and the earliest Muslim generations (the Messenger's Companions), as well as an exposition illuminated by the light of the mind and the rays of the heart. Most of the *tafsīrs* which have been prepared up to now can be said to comply with this. Any given *tafsīr* can be defined according to the dominance of any feature given above. For instance, if the *tafsīr* is based in various ways upon the commentaries and explanations of the Messenger of God, as well as on the opinions of the Companions who best understood the language of the time, then this is a "*tafsīr* based on Traditions or knowledge reported (from the Messenger and his Companions)" (*at-tafsīr ar-riwāyah*). A "*tafsīr* by expert knowledge" (*at-tafsīr ad-dirāyah*), on the other hand, is an exposition based on, in addition to reported knowledge, a direct or indirect study of linguistics, literature, and other relevant fields of science.

In earlier times, the Qur'ān was primarily expounded by recourse to the Qur'ān itself, with the Sunnah being the second source of its exposition. The explanations of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, were always the most reliable source from which the Companions benefited. Most of the Companions already had a good command of the language; therefore, they encountered few problems. Those issues which needed explanation were either referred to the Prophet or clarified by the Prophet himself without any need of another recourse.

In later times, large volumes that compiled such statements, explanations, and expositions were gathered, an effort which was initially started earlier by some Companions. A very rich heritage was left behind by the *Tābi'ūn* (the generation of Muslims who came after the Companions) to the following centuries. Verifying scholars, such as Muḥammad ibn Jarīr at-Ṭabarī, made great use of this heritage from the tenth century onwards. Alongside the explanations of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, the collections composed of the reports from the Companions and the next two generations have always constituted a reliable source for scholars.

Az-Zamakhsharī, a scholar of the Mu'tazilah and a master of the language, is considered to be one of the pioneers of the "*tafsīr* by expert knowledge" with his *al-Kashshāf* ("The Discoverer"). Fakhru'd-Dīn ar-Rāzī's *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* ("The Keys to the Unseen") is one of the most powerful voices of the Sunnī *tafsīr* approach and trend, and is considered to be one of the greatest representatives of this tradition. Baydāwī's *Anwar at-Tanzīl wa Asrār at-Ta'wīl* ("The Lights of the Revelation and the Mysteries in Its Meaning") is one of the significant links in the chain of *tafsīrs*; this

is of particular significance as it contains answers to Zamakhsharī's Mu'tazilī thoughts and considerations.

Subsequent centuries witnessed a number of *tafsīr* studies within the framework of Sufism and jurisprudence. Ebu'l-Lays as-Samarkandī, Baghawī, Ibn Kathīr, Jalālu'd-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, Ebu's-Suūd, Kemalpaşazade, İsmail Hakkı Bursevī, Ālūsī al-Baghdādī, Konyalı Vehbī and Allame Hamdi Yazır are some of the distinguished figures who have preserved this sacred tradition.

A majority of these figures and others have applied the utmost care to their expositions; they did whatever needed to be done with superhuman effort in order to accurately understand the Divine purposes in the Qur'ān. They carefully studied word-by-word how the Companions, who constituted the first row of its audience, understood and interpreted the Qur'ān; their studies were based on the essentials of the Religion in their studies and approach to the Qur'ān, and they tested their personal opinions against the disciplines of Qur'ānic study and the authentic Sunnah. Thus, they discarded distorted crumbs of information which had been put forward by the enemies of the Qur'ān as commentary and explanations. Their effort was a marvelous feat by which we are better able to understand the will of God.

It is also worth noting at this point Hamdi Yazır's thoughts on *tafsīr*: *Tafsīr*, he says, is opening something that is closed and revealing it, therefore, a Qur'ānic *tafsīr* is an effort to disclose the meanings of God's Word in accordance with His will.

With its wording and meaning of immeasurable profundity, each word of which gives its share to everyone in every age, the Qur'ān is a unique, matchless Book. It addresses different ages, different nations, and people of different intellectual levels all at the same time. It is a book of wisdom that is easily understood by its readers, yet at the same time has veiled, difficult, terse, or concise, as well as metaphorical or allegorical aspects. The profundity and secretiveness of the first three aspects can be revealed through agreement among the scholars, whereas the fourth is entrusted to the interpretation and commentary of the verifying scholars well-versed in knowledge, who remain faithful to the essentials of the Qur'ān and Islam, and have the capacity to understand what is figurative or allegorical.

Although almost every individual who knows its language can grasp something from the Qur'ān, a true and comprehensive understanding of it can be achieved only by those experts of exposition and commentary who have attained the required and correct level of knowledge. These experts take into consideration the linguistic rules, and pay necessary attention to the methodology of *tafsīr* in understanding what is veiled, difficult, or abstruse. They exert endless efforts in reflection, contemplation, and meditation in order to be able to attain a correct understanding of the Divine purpose, what God really means. They resort to the explanations of God's Messenger in order to expound the concise verses (*mujmal*), and explore the depths of reported knowledge with expert knowledge and vice versa. Throughout history, the genuine commentators and expounders have always followed this same path.

As for *ta'wīl* (commentary), it means referring a word, an attitude, or an action to or explaining it with one of its probable meanings. Some have defined *ta'wīl* as expounding words and actions to the contrary of what reason superficially judges; in other



words, it is also possible to say that *ta'wīl* is expounding something read or seen or heard with other than what first comes to the mind and with a rational knowledge that is not instantly comprehended. Imam Abū Manṣūr al-Māturidī makes the distinction that *tafsīr* is the exposition of the Qur'ān by the Companions, and *ta'wīl* is the commentaries and interpretations made by the *tābi'ūn* and succeeding generations.

*Ta'wīl* comes from the root *AWL* and due to the fact that it implies the preference of one of the probable meanings, it would be wrong to propose meaning(s) which is/are in no way related with the wording of the Qur'ān as being either *tafsīr* or *ta'wīl*.

It is also essential that there should be some sign that provides evidence for the meaning proposed, or a rational or transmitted proof that supports the idea put forward. It would be wrong to load different meanings on words or sentences on the grounds of "figurativeness" or "allusion," without a sign or proof, while ignoring what the word or sentence apparently means. Such loading of different meanings has no real value in any case.

The end-result or product of *ta'wīl* is called a *me'āl* (interpretation). We can define this as the preference of one of the meanings. A Qur'ānic interpretation is neither just a translation nor a *tafsīr*. An interpretation might include points or issues that are typically found in a *tafsīr*; however, it does not go beyond this framework.

From the first centuries of Islam, alongside many high- or low-quality translations, there have been, and will continue to be, many interpretations and *tafsīrs*. We applaud all sincere efforts dedicated to voice the spirit of the Qur'ān and to reveal the Divine purpose. We particularly applaud efforts which do not ignore the passage of time and the aspects of Qur'ānic content and meanings that address themselves to each part of time, the circumstances that prevail in every age and environment, the essential purposes of the Religious Law and efforts which adhere to them in accordance with the spirit of the Qur'ān and the authentic Sunnah, the thoughts enriched with the passage of time and through developments in human life, and new discoveries and attainments in sciences and human thought.

## ON THIS STUDY OF INTERPRETATION

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my due appreciation for the services of Ali Ünal to the Qur'ān, and I hope that he will be able to produce many other good works.

I personally think of this fellow brother as one of those figures who can read our age well, who seeks solutions for the problems of our day, as one who is imbued with love for the truth and a desire for learning. There are quite a few people today who study the Qur'ān and try to uncover the Divine purposes in the same way as the pioneers (the Companions) did. It is without a doubt that Ali Ünal is one of these. Above everything else, he is not a stranger to the Message of the Qur'ān, and I assuredly express my confidence in his overall approach to Islamic issues. He is an intellectual who confronts himself frequently and is filled with the courage to voice his beliefs confidently. His perseverance to attain the truth in religious matters, the importance he lays on

consultation, his concern to avoid doing wrong, and his readiness to return from error are indications of his proximity to the Almighty Lord.

He has never claimed that his work is the best among the interpretations of the Qur'ān. As a matter of fact, no one should make such a claim. His efforts and services to the Qur'ān, as well as those of his predecessors and successors who followed and will follow the same way, are in proportion to their knowledge and sincerity, and to God's favor and help.

In this work, he has paid careful attention to the disciplines of *tafsīr* methodology, like many other contemporary commentators, and he has answered the criticisms of those many hypocrites who harbor incessant animosity toward Islam and of the many furious aggressors. His answers are to the point and sometimes, having recourse to contemporary interpretations and commentaries, he has articulated important things in today's language. He has always taken side with the Qur'ān with sincerity and unpretentiousness. While expressing his views, he is humble but determined and persistent, resolved to attain the truth, but always open to correction.

In his interpretation, he has consulted a variety of Sunni-Shi'ite sources, whether classical or contemporary. I see this not as a luxury, but as an endeavor to find a worthwhile inference or comment that could have been inspired by God Almighty. Motivated by the idea that "Wisdom is the lost property of a believer; a believer should obtain it wherever he finds it," Ali Ünal has aimed to present, for the benefit of everyone, any truth which he has found to be in compliance with the essentials of Islam.

Together with the requirements mentioned for a good *tafsīr*, *ta'wīl*, and *me'āl* (interpretation), God's special help or favor is incomparably important in order to discover His purposes and what He means in His Speech. Without this favor, nothing can be truly discovered, comprehended, or voiced. In my humble opinion, Ali Ünal has made the utmost endeavor to correctly understand and render the Qur'ān comprehensible for us; he is filled with a desire and diligence to carry out the necessary research in order to answer any old or new objections and accusations made against Islam; and in the face of efforts made by a positivist group to reduce every truth to material experience and observation, his confidence and trust in God's Word is exactly as it should be in a believer. Nevertheless, all these positive attitudes and features can earn their value only by Divine help and special favor, and we hope that everything written and expressed here has been realized through this help and favor.

A number of books have been written about Qur'ānic interpretation and commentary, while objections to the Qur'ān and some of its contents have been repeatedly addressed. Many more interpretations and commentaries will continue to be prepared in the future, too, just as many new objections will be answered, and this will perhaps continue until the end of time. How many new doubts will be manufactured about the Qur'ān? How many more times will minds be exposed to contamination? What new unthinkable plots will Satan, our eternal enemy, play on weak believers? What new scenarios, unheard of until today, will the devils of humankind and jinn put on the stage to tempt humanity? And how many more times will they induce suspicion with regards to our values and agitate people? Such animosity has always existed and will continue to exist. Thankfully, hundreds of people like Ali Ünal, with zeal to serve the Religion,

will always stand to face them by exploring new depths of that Book of lofty truths and strive to interpret that Eternal Speech, which they hold in the greatest esteem. The mischievous organizations of Satan and his companions will always be challenged by the companions of the Qur'ān.

The Interpretation in your hands can be perceived as a product of the aforementioned efforts. At certain points, the work goes beyond the limits of a restricted interpretation to include answers to doubts that have been put forward by some deniers, as well as by some orientalist and their ignorant imitators, and it presents satisfactory information to remove doubts in hearts with frequent references to the invincible power of the Qur'ān.

The fundamental elements of the Qur'ān are constantly emphasized in this work: the Unity of God (*tawhīd*), Prophethood (*nubuwwah*), Resurrection, and worship (together with justice) are discussed in keeping with the approach of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. The essence of faith and the ways in which it flourishes are frequently brought to mind, together with topics concerning the spirit and meaning of worship.

The work presents to its reader much new material about faith, unbelief, and hypocrisy, as well as former and new representatives of these attitudes. The *Sūrah Baqarah* (the Cow) is studied in the scope of a large *tafsīr*, delving into the history of the Children of Israel, and issues of war and peace. The truth of Jesus and *Āl 'Imrān* (the Family of 'Imrān), the rights of women, and issues concerning the lawful and forbidden are also broadly presented. Paradise, Hell, and the world in-between are told of together with instances of wisdom. The answers given to distorted thoughts are wise and based on accurate knowledge. It is clear that a serious effort has been made to discover the instances of wisdom in the narratives. Issues such as the Night Journey and Ascension of God's Messenger, the Companions of the Cave, the companionship of Moses and al-Khadr, and the campaigns of Dhu'l-Qarnayn are all studied in detail and in a manner which is found in *tafsīrs*. The whole of the work gives the impression that Ali Ünal has tried to compress the content of the Qur'ānic *tafsīrs* and commentaries into a single volume of interpretation.

It is impossible to cite all the distinguished aspects of this work, but we will give some examples from the last chapters.

In *Sūrat al-Mulk* (the Sovereignty), the fourth verse is interpreted in the style of Bediüzzaman, and many things are whispered into our hearts that transcend the scope of an ordinary interpretation. It says: "Perfect artistry in creation despite abundance, perfect order despite absolute ease, perfect measure, proportion, and firmness despite incredible speed, perfect individualization despite world-wide distribution, the highest price and value despite the greatest economy, perfect distinction despite absolute integration and similarity – all point to the One, Single Creator and Lord, Who has absolute Will, Power, and Knowledge."

Another example is from a footnote to the first verse of *Sūrat al-Insān* (Human): "Humankind is the fruit of the Tree of Creation and therefore contained in its seed. So the Tree of Creation has grown out of the seed of humankind. In other words, as a tree is the grown or developed form of its seed, humankind carries in its body and being the nature and all original elements of other beings. What meaning a seed bears

with respect to a tree, humankind has with respect to the universe. Science should concentrate on this point while investigating how life began on earth and how humankind was originated.”

There are references to modern scientific discoveries, and we are given as much knowledge as can be found in a *tafsīr*. For instance, the 1993 report of the International Meteor Organization is referred to in connection with the fifth verse of *Sūrat al-Mulk*: “The Perseid meteor shower observed almost every year suggests that those meteors are shot for certain, important purposes, for they surprise the observers by showing great diversity. The observations made in, for example, 1993, demonstrate the fact that the structure of the shower is yet little understood.” Such verses are significant sources of knowledge, but it is always difficult to say exactly how we benefit from them.

Metaphorical or allegorical verses are interpreted within the Sunni approach and understanding, their exact nature, however, being referred to the Knowledge of God Almighty. For example, verse 16 in *Sūrat al-Mulk* is interpreted in this way: *And yet, are you secure that He Who is above everything will not cause the earth to swallow you up then, when it is in a state of commotion?*

In many cases, and distinct from similar studies of Qurʾānic interpretation, this work presents meanings beyond the words and phrases that are suggested by the context and the whole of the Qurʾān. Although this entails numerous explanations inside parentheses within the text, it is hoped that the meaning and content are thus better disclosed for the reader. Verse 18 in *Sūrat al-Qalam* is an example from among many: *They made no allowance (in their oaths, being oblivious of the rights of the needy and oblivious of God’s will).*

*Sūrat al-Jinn* (the Jinn) 72: 18 is interpreted: *All places of worship (and all parts of the body with which one prostrates) are for God, and all worship is due to Him alone, so do not worship anyone along with God.* The interpretation of *Sūrat al-Muzzammil* (the Enwrapped One) 73: 4 is: *Or add to it (a little); and pray and recite the Qurʾān calmly and distinctly (with your mind and heart concentrated on it).* There are many other examples, but may these few suffice for now.

The author sometimes quotes directly from great commentators of the past, preferring their way of understanding to his own. For example, in interpreting verse 17 in *Sūrat al-Hāqqah* (the Sure Reality), he provides noteworthy information transmitted by Hamdi Yazır from Ibn ‘Arabī and others, concerning the eight angels carrying the Throne of God Almighty.

The author stands firmly at various places where others might speculate and tries to prevent distorted understandings. For instance, for verse Noah 71: 17: *And God has caused you to grow from earth like a plant*, he footnotes the following explanation: “The verse alludes to the first origin of the father of humanity from the elements of the earth – soil, air, and water – and also the material origin of every human being, which are the same elements that are made into particular biological entities in the human body. As Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır points out, the word *nabātan*, which comes at the end of the verse as an adverbial complement to ‘grow’, denotes the particular way of human cre-

ation and growth. So, it allows no room for any inclination toward the Darwinian Theory of Evolution.”

The work emphasizes the role of *asbāb an-nuzul* (reasons for and occasions on the revelation of verses) in understanding the Qur'ān, but it never confines the interpretation to them. Thus it can approach many issues from a different, wider perspective without diverting from the rules of the methodology of *tafsīr*. For instance, this work suggests some other probable considerations in interpreting the initial verses of *Sūrah Abasa* (He Frowned).

I personally believe that the reader will benefit from this interpretation of the Qur'ān at least as much as he or she will from others. I pray that the endeavor dedicated to this work may become a means for Divine blessings and the seeking of forgiveness from God Almighty for our mistakes and misdeeds.

