

From the Risale-i Nur Collection

THE AFTERLIFE

Fact or Fallacy?

Bediüzzaman
Said Nursi

Translated by
Colin Turner

From the Risale-i Nur Collection,
The Tenth Word of *The Words*

THE AFTERLIFE: Fact or Fallacy?

by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi

Translated from the Turkish
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About the Book

Written in the mid-1920s, Said Nursi's Tenth Word, also known as the Treatise on Resurrection, appeared at a time when, throughout all of the educational establishments of the new Turkish Republic, the move to distance students from belief in God and the hereafter was gaining momentum. One of the ideas then being promoted was the rejection of the idea of bodily resurrection. The writing of the Tenth Word was in effect a reason-based response to that denial. Almost a hundred years have passed since this treatise first appeared, and while much has changed in the intervening century, atheism and naturalism are in many ways every bit as prevalent now, globally, as Nursi feared that they might become. Were he alive today, I tend to think that he would deem the Tenth Word every bit as necessary now as it was back in the 1920s, if not more so.

Nursi's methodology in the Tenth Word is, like that in most of his works, heavily dependent on the Quran. The Quran appeals to human reason in its various attempts to demonstrate both the reality and the rationality of the hereafter, and the resurrection and judgment which precede it. The Quran insists that its readers reflect upon God's many varied 'signs' before affirming the truths which they indicate. Indeed, nowhere is the idea of blind acceptance of these fundamental principles sanctioned or tolerated. Belief must have its source in the affirmation of what is, at base, logical and reasonable. Throughout the Tenth Word, Said Nursi brings to our attention many of what he claims are solid proofs of the existence of the resurrection, the 'grand tribunal' of Divine judgment, and the existence of heaven, hell and everlasting life. Of course, the Nursian 'proof' is more strong indication

than proof in the usually accepted sense of the word, for after all, realities such as the hereafter are not rationally demonstrable: one cannot provide scientific evidence of the existence of the next world, and nor can one evince photographic evidence of heaven or hell. However, what Nursi does is to offer rationally and emotionally appealing arguments around this-worldly signs and indications of the next world which are always based in logic and never less than intellectually reasonable. In fact, his method is more or less the same method used by the Quran to convince its readers of God's oneness. And that is to throw light on the countless signs (ayat) scattered through the universe in general, and in the very being of humankind in particular, which with overwhelming clarity provide inference to the best and most reasonable explanation. Nursi is in this sense a most loyal interpreter of the Quran, holding up a mirror to Divine revelation and replicating its approach in all of his discussions and arguments. To read Nursi, then, is to read a clear and faithful interpretation of the Quran which appeals not only to the intellect but to the heart, both of which must be fully satisfied before they are able to affirm the reality of the hereafter and attain a true and lasting belief in its existence.

Colin Turner
Durham, May 2022

The AFTERLIFE

Fact or Fallacy?

A Note For The Reader: The reason that I have used so many metaphors, parables and comparisons in these treatises is to make the concepts at hand easier to understand, as well as to show how rational, well-founded and coherent the truths of Islam really are. Each story or parable concludes with a truth; it is, therefore, a work of fact rather than a work of fiction.

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Look, then, to the signs of God's mercy. See how He restores life to the earth after it has died. Indeed it is He who brings the dead to life, for He is powerful over all things.¹

If you wish for a discussion on resurrection and the hereafter in simple, straightforward, easy-to-read language, then join my own soul and listen to the following allegory:

There were once two men, traveling through a land as beautiful as heaven itself.² As they looked around them, they were surprised to see that everyone had left their front doors open; shops, too, had been left open and unguarded. Money and other kinds of property appeared to be openly accessible, seemingly with no-one there to claim it. One of the men began to gather up as much as he could, completely oblivious to the fact that he was committing theft on a grand scale. And no-one came forward to stop him! His friend said,

“What on earth are you doing? You’ll be punished, and no doubt I’ll be arrested along with you as an

¹ Quran, 30:50

² We mean, of course, the world.

accessory. All of this property belongs to the state, clearly. The people of this land, including the children, are all soldiers or government officials. It is only because they are at present employed as civilians - and consequently too busy - that they are not doing anything to stop you. But the laws here are strict; there are cameras and tape-recorders everywhere, as well as government agents. You need to sort this out!"

But the other man, obstinate and empty-headed, said, "No, none of this is state property. It belongs to some endowment and has no obvious owner. It's here to use as people think fit, and so I'm using it. I see no reason to deny myself any of these fine things. In fact, I won't believe they belong to anyone unless I see the owner with my own eyes."

He carried on spouting sophistry and a serious argument ensued. He said, "Who is the king here? I can't see him. Can you?"

His friend said, "Look, every village must have a headsman. Every needle has been manufactured by someone and every book clearly has an author. How, then, can a kingdom as well-ordered as this have no ruler? How can so much wealth have no owner? You can see yourself that a train pulls in on the hour, every hour, filled with precious, artistically made gifts, arriving as though from nowhere. And on all of those goods you can see seals and stamps, announcements and proclamations - are you saying that there is no-one behind all of this? And what about the currency that is used here, and the flags that you see flying on every building all over the kingdom - are you saying that there is no-one responsible for them, and that they have no owner? You appear to have studied something of Western culture. However, you are unable to read

these Islamic inscriptions and you refuse to ask those who know what they say to explain them to you. So listen while I read to you the greatest royal decree.”

The brainless one said, “Okay, let’s suppose this place does have a ruler. My taking a tiny bit of the king’s wealth isn’t going to harm him, is it? It’s not as though his treasury is going to suffer as a result. Besides, I don’t see anything here resembling a prison or place of punishment.”

The first man said, “That is because this country is like a training ground. At the same time, it is a gallery where all of the king’s art is exhibited. It may also be seen as a temporary shelter for travellers, a caravanserai, if you wish. Don’t you see that every day one caravan arrives and another departs? It is constantly being emptied and replenished. The foundations of this place are shallow and not meant to last forever: soon the whole realm will be demolished and its inhabitants will depart for another, more enduring abode. And when they get there, they will be either rewarded or punished, depending on how they have performed and behaved while they are here.”

“I don’t believe *that* for a second,” snapped his traitorous, empty-headed friend rebelliously. How is it possible that a whole land should be destroyed and everyone transported to another country?”

His dependable friend replied, “Since you’re being obstinate and rebellious, let me show you with just twelve of the countless indications available that there will one day be a ‘supreme tribunal’, after which two separate domains will be established: one will be a place of reward and generosity, the other a place of imprisonment and punishment. I will also show you that just as this land we are in now is partially emptied

at the end of each day, a day will come when it will be emptied completely, and then destroyed.”

First indication: Is it at all possible that, in a kingdom as spectacular as this, those who serve the king obediently would go unrewarded, and those who rebel against him would go unpunished? As you can see, reward and punishment seem to be virtually absent here. It makes absolute good sense, then, that there should be a ‘supreme tribunal’ elsewhere.

Second indication: Look at how this kingdom is organised and administered. Everyone, including the poorest and weakest, is provided with more than ample sustenance of the very highest order. Excellent care is taken of the sick, for example. And just look around you: everywhere we can see delicious food fit for kings; beautiful clothes; jewel-encrusted ornaments and decorations – everything one could possibly want can be found here. See how everyone – apart from you – is attentive to his or her duties; no-one steps out of line by as much as an inch. No-one considers himself or herself above jobs that are modest and menial: even the noblest of people is engaged humbly and dutifully in the most lowly of services. It is clear, then, that the ruler of this kingdom possesses great generosity and compassion, as well as great dignity, honour and majesty. Now, generosity requires a giving nature, while compassion cannot exist without benevolence. And dignity and honour require that impertinence be chastised. Yet in this realm we do not see even the slightest trace of reward and punishment: oppressors depart this realm in full possession of their power while the oppressed leave humiliated and downtrodden. It is clear, then, that their cases have been referred to that ‘supreme tribunal’ mentioned earlier.

Third indication: You can see for yourself that this country is run with great order and wisdom, and you can tell that affairs of state and the economy are handled fairly and with an eye for balance and harmony. Now, a wise rulership will always ensure that those who seek the government's protection are treated favourably; justice – and the honour of the state itself – demands that the rights of the citizen be respected and fulfilled. But in this country, justice and wisdom rarely have the outcomes that they should have. As a result, the guilty usually leave this realm unpunished. This adds weight to our contention that true justice is left for the 'supreme tribunal' to dispense in the future.

Fourth indication: Look at the numerous unique jewels that are to be found here; look at the amazing, unparalleled variety of foods available, all laid out as though for a banquet! All of this shows that the ruler of these lands possesses infinite generosity, as well as a treasury that is truly inexhaustible. Now, such wealth and generosity require and, indeed, deserve to be seen in their entirety. But in order for this to happen, there needs to be a display of bounties that is eternal, with every possible object of desire that the citizens can imagine. Furthermore, an eternal display requires that all of the visitors who come to view it should remain there eternally, and not suffer the pain of death and separation. For just as pain begins where pleasure ends, where pleasure ends, pain begins.

Just look at these displays and how they are announced and introduced. Listen to those who proclaim and make public the subtle, delicate arts of the amazing, wonder-working king. They are proclaiming his perfections and making known his peerless, hidden beauty. Since they speak of the subtle reflections of his veiled loveliness, it is certain, then, that he possesses

absolute and awe-inspiring beauty and perfection. This flawless hidden loveliness certainly requires one who will admire and appreciate it, who will gaze upon it uttering *Mashallah!*, thus disclosing it and making it known to others.³

Beauty that is concealed and peerless wishes to see itself, and be seen, in two ways. The first consists of contemplating itself in various different mirrors; the second consists of seeing itself as others see it – others whom that beauty entrances and astounds. In short, hidden beauty actually wants to see and be seen; it wants to contemplate itself eternally while also being contemplated eternally by others. It desires permanent existence for those who are enraptured by it and who wish to gaze upon it forever.

For eternal beauty will never be content with transient admirers. And an admirer of beauty who is destined one day to leave that beauty behind will find his love of that beauty turning to hate whenever he remembers that he is destined one day to depart. His admiration and respect will turn to contempt. For it is in humankind's nature to detest the unknown and the unobtainable. And everyone spends only the shortest of times here in this temporary abode before being forced to leave, scarcely fulfilled at all, after having witnessed and experienced only the palest of reflections of beauty and perfection. Thus it is necessary that there should exist an eternal realm where those lovers of loveliness will go in order to contemplate for all time the beauty

3 The exclamation *Mashallah!* is uttered in recognition of the wonder that is Divine bestowment. It literally means, 'What God has willed!', which is shorthand for, "How wonderful it is, that which Allah has willed." This exclamation is uttered whenever the Muslim believer encounters something that reminds him or her of God's endless bestowments and generosity.

and perfection of the Divine.

Fifth indication: It is clear from the above that this incomparable Being possesses great mercy. For we see how He causes help to be given quickly to those who suffer misfortune; we see how He answers every question and petition, and how with great compassion He sees to the needs of the lowliest of his subjects.⁴ Come, let us go now because there will be an important meeting on that island over there. All of the nobles of the land will be attending. Look, do you see the commander who is speaking, the one covered in medals? He is the most noble commander of them all and he is giving a speech. He is asking the compassionate monarch for certain things, and all of those in the audience are nodding in agreement, saying that they too wish for the same things. It is clear that the commander who is speaking is much favoured by the king. Let's listen to his words:

“Your Majesty, you have conferred great favours on us, showering us in bounties. But it is clear that they are nothing but tasters or samples of the real thing. We ask you to show us their noble source! Admit us to your court and do not let us waste away in these deserts! Admit us into your presence and have mercy on us. Let us experience there the bounties that we have only tasted here! Do not leave us in exile and despair. Do not leave your yearning, obedient and grateful servants to their own devices. Do not let us perish!”

Can you not hear him voicing these needs in his supplication? Do you think it at all possible that a monarch with such power and compassion, and who

⁴ For example, says Nursi, if the hoof of a herdsman's sheep is injured, either medication will be provided or a veterinary doctor sent.

regularly meets the needs of his ordinary subjects, would not fulfil completely the needs of his most noble and beloved commander – needs expressed with such dignity and presence?

For that commander is speaking on behalf of the whole of humankind: his wants and needs reflect the wants and needs of the whole community. And the fulfilment of those wants and needs is called for by the justice, compassion and pleasure of the king. It is not difficult for the king to fulfil those desires, and it is certainly no more difficult than it was to fill with bounties that temporary abode that was the world. Given that so much effort was expended to equip and run a dwelling place that lasted only five or six days, it is clear that it will not go to nothing. The foundations of this kingdom were laid in order for it to be a training ground, a place of witnessing. It is clear from this that the king will want to demonstrate the full extent of his power by admitting us to his court and displaying there the true source of his treasures, perfections and skills in a way that will entrance us. It will be a feast for our eyes and a source of astonishment for our powers of reason. No, those sent to this temporary abode in order to be tried and tested will not be left to their own devices; they will not be abandoned. For they will be destined either for palaces in which they will experience bliss, or dungeons in which they will experience punishment.

Sixth indication: Come now and take a good look! Look at all of these amazing railways, planes, machines, warehouses and exhibition halls. All of these show that behind the veil, a magnificent monarch is ruling the country.⁵ Such a monarch requires subjects who

⁵ Today when vast armies are ordered to take up their weapons, in accordance with the rules of manoeuvre, they raise

befit his majesty. But now, all you see is a kind of hostel – a temporary abode for travellers that is filled and emptied from day to day. One may also liken this place to a military training ground where one group of the king's soldiers is gathered for manoeuvres; tomorrow that group will move on and another group will take its place. Or you may liken this place to an exhibition centre which people visit for an hour or two in order to gaze at precious examples of the king's art, or specimens that reflect the ruler's kindness and generosity. Once one exhibition comes to an end, another one begins, and so on. Whoever arrives here is inevitably destined to depart one day, and whoever leaves never returns.

their bayonets to the sky and in so doing resemble a forest of upright oaks. Similarly when, on festival days, the soldiers in a garrison are commanded to wear their parade uniforms and all of their medals, they come to resemble an ornate, well-decorated garden, full of blossoming flowers. The world is like a parade ground, and when the infinitely varied species of soldier who serve the Pre-Eternal Monarch receive the order, 'Be!', that multitude of beings – angels, jinn, men, animals and plants, even – also resembles a magnificent army advancing, their bayonets fixed and upright. Similarly, each day and each week of the spring is like a feast day for each species of the vegetable kingdom, with each group presenting itself for inspection before the penetrating gaze of the Pre-Eternal Monarch. Each of those groups bears the different coloured and bejewelled medals that it has been given and exhibits it. For each of this groups is a reflection of Divine artistry, a manifestation of God's Creative Power. The whole of the earth becomes on such days a vast parade ground, filled with the brilliant costumes and decorations of its 'soldiers'. Such wise and well-ordered demonstrations of artistry and ornament show clearly to all who are not blind that they are subject to the command of a Monarch whose power and wisdom are absolute.

It becomes clear, then, that whatever you interpret this place to be – whether you see it as a training ground, a hostel or an exhibition hall – the fact is that beyond this, elsewhere, there are permanent palaces, lasting abodes, eternal gardens and treasuries full of everlasting bounties – the samples and tasters of which you experienced briefly during your stay in this world. It is for the sake of the source of these bounties that we strive here. Here, in this world, we have to work; it is there, in the next world, that we will receive our reward. And that reward will be a form and degree of happiness that will accord with everyone's capacity and understanding.

Seventh indication: Let us walk a little among these civilised people and see what we can see. Everywhere, in every corner, there are photographers taking pictures and scribes engaged in writing things down. Everything is being recorded. They are noting down every single thing that happens: even the most apparently insignificant deed is being registered.

Now look up at that huge mountain over there. There you can see a special photographer, seated atop the summit at the command of the king. He is taking pictures of everything that is happening in this place. The king must have told him to record every transaction that is made and every deed that is carried out in the kingdom. The ruler is having someone record absolutely everything that takes place in his kingdom.⁶ He is keeping a precise record of events, and this suggests that one day, he will use this record to call his subjects to account. In short, he is gathering evidence.

⁶ The photographer on the mountain, Nursi says, is an allusion to the 'Preserved Tablet', the reality and existence of which has been dealt with in the *Twenty-Sixth Word*.

Is it at all possible, then, that this All-Wise King – one who deserves the name ‘The Preserver’ – would not use this evidence to call his subjects to account? After all, he preserves what appear to be the most trivial events that take place in his realm. He records the most commonplace doings of the lowliest of his subjects; why, then, would he not record the most significant deeds done by his greatest ones? Why would he not call people to account? And why, once he has called them to account, would he not either reward or punish them? After all, it is those who are foremost among his subjects that carry out deeds which are an insult to his glory and which offend his dignity and compassion. Why, if such deeds go unpunished in this world, would he not postpone judgment to a ‘supreme court’?

Eighth indication: Come, let me read to you the decrees that the monarch has issued. Over and over again he makes the same promises and repeats the same threats: “I will take you from your present dwelling place and I will bring you to My court. There I shall give eternal happiness to the obedient and I shall fling the disobedient into jail. That temporary abode will be destroyed and I will create a different realm, filled with eternal palaces and everlasting dungeons.” It is not difficult for him to fulfil these promises, which are of tremendous importance for his subjects. In fact it is incompatible with his dignity and his power that he should break his own promises. Stop confusing things and look! You affirm the lies that your imagination tells you; you bow down to your confused intellect, your deceived and deceptive soul, and you deny the words of a Being who cannot be compelled in any way to break his promise. Indeed, his high position does not allow such faithlessness, for all visible deeds bear witness to his truthfulness. As a result you deserve to

be punished severely. You are like a traveller who closes his eyes to the sunlight and relies instead on his own imagination. His whims suggest to him that he should illuminate the terrifyingly dark path in front of him with the light of his own brain, even though it shines no brighter than a glow-worm. Once that monarch makes a promise, he will by all means fulfil it. Keeping his promise is simple for him. Furthermore it is most necessary, not just for us and all other creatures, but for him, too, and his kingdom. There is, therefore, a supreme court and a sublime felicity.

Ninth indication: Come now! Look at the heads of these offices and different groups.⁷ Each has a private telephone that connects it personally to the king. And sometimes they enter his presence in person. See what they unanimously say and report, namely that the monarch has prepared an awesome and most magnificent place of reward and punishment. His promises are emphatic and his threats are severe. His pride and dignity are such that he would never lower himself to the breaking of promises. Those who attest to this report are so numerous that they form a consensus. They say, “The seat of this sublime monarchy, some of the traces of which can be seen here, is situated in a place very far from here. The buildings which exist in this arena of examination are temporary in nature and will later be exchanged for palaces that will last forever. These places here will change. For this magnificent, deathless monarchy, the

⁷ By ‘heads of these offices and different groups’ Nursi means the prophets and the saints. The ‘private telephone’ is an allusion to the link that the prophet or saint has with God. Situated in the heart, this link acts as a mirror in which revelation or inspiration is reflected. The heart is, Nursi says, like the telephone receiver.

splendour of which is clear from its works, can in no way be based on temporary, unstable and imperfect foundations. Rather, it is founded on cornerstones that are solid, unmovable and everlasting, and totally in accord with its nature.” There is, then, another realm after this one and we are most certainly destined to go there.

Tenth indication: Today is the first day of spring.⁸ Come and look, because certain changes will take place and amazing things are about to happen. Let us go for a walk across the green plain, studded as it is with beautiful flowers. Others too are taking advantage of the fine weather on this beautiful spring day. If you look carefully you will see that there is surely some magic at work, for buildings which were utter ruins have suddenly sprung up again, and this once empty plain has now become a city filled with life. Look, see how everything changes from hour to hour, like the images on a movie screen; see how everything takes on a different shape, a different form. Yet although these varied, fast-moving and highly complex scenes are constantly changing, one sees in them a perfect order, with everything occupying its proper place.

⁸ The Tenth Indication is an allusion to the Ninth Truth. The vernal equinox, which takes place on March 21st each year, is technically the beginning of spring. As for the ‘green plain’, this is a metaphor for the whole of the earth in springtime. The fast-changing scenes and spectacles are allusions to the different groups of springtime beings, the various classes of creatures which appear in summer, and the sustenance that becomes available for both humans and animals – all of which are produced from the beginning of spring to the end of summer by the All-Powerful and Glorious Maker. And this All-Wise and Most Beautiful Creator brings forth all of these bounties in orderly succession, renewing them all with the utmost compassion and despatching them all without any interruption.

Those fictional scenes presented to us on the cinema screen are not as well-ordered as these real ones, and even if a million skilled magicians were to join forces, they would be incapable of producing such artistry. We may conclude, then, that the monarch hidden from our view is able to perform miracles even greater than this one.

And it is foolish to ask, "How can a kingdom as vast as this be destroyed and reconstructed somewhere else?"

Numerous changes and revolutions take place all the time, every hour of the day, and this transition that your mind cannot accept – the transition from this realm to the next – is one such example. The world is a vast network of interrelated comings and goings, of things joining together and separating, and from this ceaseless motion and these continuous transformations it may be deduced that a clear, overarching purpose is involved. To spend ten years of effort in order for two things to come together for no longer than a hour or two would be plainly ridiculous, and so it is clear that the occurrences we witness here are not ends in themselves: they are simply means. They are indications of truths which exist elsewhere; they are simply reflections or imitations of that truth. They are brought about in miraculous fashion by that sublime Being, and their effects are recorded and preserved perfectly, in the same way that every detail of an army's battleground manoeuvres is written down and recorded for future reference. This implies that what happens at that great gathering in the future will be based on what happens here. Furthermore, the end results of all that occurs here will be on permanent display in some vast supreme gallery. All of the things here which we experience as fleeting and temporary will appear before our eyes in an eternal, unchanging

form.

All of the changes and fluctuations that take place in this world, then, are ultimately for the sake of that 'supreme tribunal' and all of that which follows on from it, be it eternal happiness or other states as yet not known to us.

Eleventh indication: Let us put obstinacy aside and take a trip both into the past and on into the future. Let us see the miraculous works that this Being has accomplished elsewhere. Wherever we look there are marvels of artistry just like the dwellings, the open spaces and the exhibition halls that we witness, although they all differ in style and form. Although they are all transient, they are enough to show the absolute wisdom, justice and compassion of their Maker: such attributes of His are abundantly clear from the magnificent way in which these things are ordered and presented. In fact, they show that no wisdom can be imagined more perfect than His, and no generosity more bountiful. Similarly, it is evident to all except those who are totally devoid of insight that there is no compassion more all-embracing than His, and no justice more glorious. Imagine for a second that there were no place in which the truths of his wisdom, compassion, mercy and justice could be displayed fully. In other words, imagine that there were no permanent dwelling places at all – no sublime, everlasting palaces, no wondrous, eternal places of rest and relaxation in which His contented subjects could reside. Imagine this, if you can. Do you not see that in the absence of everlastingness, the wisdom that we see here would no longer be wisdom? Do you not see that in the absence of an eternal exhibition hall in which all of the Maker's attributes could be viewed and enjoyed forever, the mercy and compassion that we see here would no longer be mercy and compassion? This

present, impermanent kingdom is neither big enough nor lasting enough for all of the King's attributes to be experienced. In the absence of a permanent realm, however, all of those attributes would have to be denied. We would be obliged to deny the wisdom we see, the compassion we observe, the mercy that is in front of our eyes, and the signs of justice that are all around us. It would be idiotic; it would be like denying the existence of the midday sun in a clear blue sky. Furthermore, we would also have to reject as a liar or a tyrant the very One from whom all of this wisdom, generosity and compassion emerge. This would be like turning truth on its head. And turning truth into its opposite is impossible, as anyone endowed with reason would agree – apart, of course, from the idiotic Sophists, who deny the existence of everything.

Therefore one must conclude that a realm exists apart from this present realm. And one must conclude that in that realm there will be a supreme tribunal, an exalted house of justice and reward, and a place where all of this compassion, wisdom, mercy and justice will be made fully manifest.

Twelfth indication: Now let us return. We will speak with the chiefs and officers of these various groups, and we will ask them whether the equipment they have been given has been given only for the duration of their brief stay here, or whether it has been given to them for the sake of obtaining a life of eternal bliss in another realm. Since we cannot inspect everyone, let us look at this officer here. We can see that on his ID card, his rank, salary and duties have been recorded, together with a list of supplies and various instructions. It is clear that his rank has not been awarded to him for just a few days; it is designed to cover a period much longer than that. It tells us on his card when he is to receive

his salary, but the date written here is a date way off in the future, pertaining to a time long after this realm will have come to an end. His duties are the same: they have not been given to him simply for the sake of this brief lifetime on earth: they have been given to him so that he might earn the reward of everlasting happiness in the company of the king. His supplies, too, are meant to last far more than the few days that he spends here: their amount is such that they are clearly meant for a long and happy life elsewhere. The instructions, too, make it clear that he is destined for somewhere else, that his presence here is temporary, and that he is working here for the sake of another realm.

Now look at these files. They contain instructions for the use of weapons and various other kinds of equipment. If there were no exalted, eternal realm, the categorical instructions and the clear information in this file would be meaningless. Furthermore, this noble officer, respected by all of his fellows, would fall from grace: he would descend to a position lower than all other men. He would be poorer, more afflicted, more wretched and abased than any other human being.

Apply the same principle to everything and everyone else. In the absence of an eternal realm, everything and everyone here becomes meaningless. Whatever you consider and wherever you look, it is abundantly clear that after this transient realm, another, permanent, realm exists.

My friend, this temporary world can be likened to a field. It can also be likened to a training-ground or a market. There can be no doubt that a supreme tribunal, and a realm of everlasting happiness, will succeed it. To deny that this is so is to deny the identity cards of all of the officers, together with the details of their equipment

and their orders. In fact, it is like denying the order that exists in the country, together with the government and all of the measures that the government takes. To deny all of these is to sink to a level lower than that of the foolish sophists, who deny anything and everything.

You should bear in mind that indications of the transition of creation from one realm to another are more than just these twelve. In fact there are indications and proofs too many to compute, all of them showing that this impermanent kingdom will one day be transformed into a permanent, unchanging realm. There are also innumerable signs that human beings will be taken from this temporary dwelling and sent to the court of the Ruler of all creation. I will provide one indication that is more compelling than all twelve indications mentioned together.

Look, if you will, at the great assembly on the island that we mentioned earlier. Do you recall the commander in the middle of that assembly, the one with all of the medals? Well he is making an announcement. Yes, that noble, radiant commander is conveying to the crowds a beautifully composed decree. He says, "You must prepare yourselves, for you will soon leave this place and be taken to another, permanent realm – a realm which will make this realm appear like a dungeon in comparison. You will enter the court of our king, and there, if you heed and obey these words, you will receive the gifts of his compassion and generosity. However, if you disobey and rebel, you will be thrown into a terrifying dungeon."

Yes, that is the message he is communicating. If you look at the decree, you will see that it bears a seal which indicates its source. If you look carefully, you will see that it can in no way be imitated; only a fool would fail

to see that this is, most certainly, the seal of the king. Furthermore, the commander who is proclaiming this decree has been decorated many times by the king; no-one apart from those who are wilfully blind can fail to see that he is the truthful messenger conveying the king's orders. Bearing this in mind, is there any doubt that the teachings he conveys through this supreme decree are true? Is there any way that this doctrine of passing from one realm to another can be rejected and declared false? No, it is not possible – unless, that is, we deny everything we have seen. And so, my friend, now it is your turn to speak. What do you say?

“What can I say? How can anyone possibly deny any of this? Who can point at the midday sun and say it is not there? The only thing left for me to say is, *All praise be to God!* I thank Him a hundred thousand times that I have been saved from the tyranny of my own whims and desires, from my deluded thoughts and imaginings. I thank God that I have been allowed to escape an eternal dungeon with its everlasting punishment. I have come to believe that there is indeed a realm of perpetual bliss in the company of the monarch, far away from this chaotic, temporary abode.”

The parable which points to the truth of resurrection and the hereafter has now reached its end. From this point onwards we shall, with God's grace, move on to the most sublime reality of all. We shall set out twelve interrelated 'truths', corresponding to the twelve 'indications' outlined above.

Introduction

This introduction comprises four points, covering several issues explained in the *Nineteenth, Twenty-Second* and *Twenty-Sixth Words*.

First point: In the parable we have just read, the foolish man and his companion correspond to three other ‘concept pairs’: the ‘evil-commanding soul’ (*al-nafs al-ammara*) and the heart (*qalb*); the students of philosophy⁹ and the students of the All-Wise Quran; and the people of unbelief and the community of believing Muslims.

The most serious error made by the people of unbelief, the students of philosophy and the ‘evil-commanding soul’ is their failure to recognise God and believe in Him; their misguidance lies chiefly in this. As the trustworthy man in the story said, ‘There can be no letter without a letter writer, no law without a legislator’. Taking his words as our departure point, we say:

Consider a book in each word of which a minute calligraphy pen has inscribed the words of another book in its entirety, and in each letter of which the words of a magnificently structured poem have been written. Is it at all possible that such a book could be authorless? It is, quite clearly, impossible. Similarly, this cosmos cannot be without its ‘inscriber’; again, this is clearly beyond the bounds of possibility. For the cosmos is like a vast book. And each page of the cosmic book contains many other books. And each of the words of those books contains another book, and in each of its letters one finds a poem.

The face of the earth is but a single page in this vast, cosmic book. And each tree on this earth is a word, and

within each of those words one finds another book. So see just how many books this page known as 'earth' contains! And every fruit on every tree is a letter, and every seed a dot. And in that dot one finds the index of the whole cosmic tree, in all its vastness. A book like this can have been written only by the pen of One who possesses unending glory, untold splendour and unimaginable beauty. A book like this can have been penned only by an author who possesses infinite power and wisdom. Unless one is drunk with misguidance, to observe the cosmos in this way – as a vast book – will lead inevitably to faith, to belief in that All-Glorious Author.

Similarly, we know that a house cannot rise up from its foundations without a builder – especially a house that is full of awe-inspiring works of art, wondrous ornaments, decorations and designs; especially a house in which as much artistry has gone into the decorating of a single tile as has gone into the decoration of the whole building. No human mind could possibly accept that such a house could appear without a master architect and a skilful builder.

But look, that is not all. In that house, the rooms take shape and change continuously, hour by hour, with the utmost order and ease – just like someone changing clothes, or like scenes on a cinema screen changing from one moment to the next. In fact, the running together of frames in a film to produce moving pictures could quite easily be likened to the creation of numerous little rooms, one after the other, producing a sequence of real, ever-changing scenes.

The cosmos works in a similar way, and in order to do so, it requires an infinitely wise, all-knowing and all-powerful Maker. For the cosmos is like a magnificent

palace that has the sun and the moon as its lamps, and the stars as its candles. Time is like a rope or ribbon hung within it, onto which the Glorious Creator each year 'threads' a whole new world. And within the world that He threads on the string of time, He places three hundred and sixty-five forms, each fresh and well-ordered. He changes them in an exceedingly wise and well-ordered fashion.

He has made the face of the earth into a bountiful spread, and with the coming of each spring He decorates it with hundreds of thousands of different species of creation, filling it with countless kinds of generous gifts. He does this in such a way that they are all easily distinguishable, one from the other, quite separate and distinct, despite the fact that they are standing together, close and intermingled. Given that there are countless other examples such as these, is it possible to deny that all of this has a Maker?

Again, to deny the existence of the midday sun in a clear blue sky is madness. It is sheer lunacy, particularly when you consider that the reflection of the sun is to be seen in every bubble on the surface of every ocean, in every raindrop on dry land, and in every flake of snow. To deny the existence of the sun would, given the fact that its traces are everywhere, be nothing more than the raving of the deranged. For if one denies the existence of the single, unique sun, one is compelled to accept the existence of a whole series of minor, mini-suns, each real and existent in its own right, as numerous as the drops of water in the ocean, as countless as all the flakes of snow. To deny the single, unique sun would mean that one would have to believe that each of the minute particles that reflect the sun actually contains a sun itself – even though that particle is minute and unable to contain anything but its own being! It would

be an even greater sign of madness and misguidance to deny the existence of the Glorious Creator's attributes of perfection, particularly given the fact that we witness continuously the wisdom and order with which the cosmos is run, changed as it is from one moment to the next with the utmost harmony and discipline. To deny, then, the existence of God and His attributes of perfection would mean that instead of accepting the single, unique Creator, we would have to believe that absolute divinity is present in all things, even a particle or an atom. This is because every particle of air, for example, is somehow able to enter, and to work within, every flower, fruit and leaf. If such a particle has not been entrusted with this task by a Creator, the particle itself will have to possess infinite knowledge and power. For without such knowledge and power, it would be unable to know the structure and form of all the objects it penetrates and works within, and indeed how to penetrate and set to work there.

Every particle of soil is in theory capable of assisting the germination of any seed that exists. If that particle is not acting under some command, it must of necessity contain within itself equipment and instruments necessary for the germination of every single plant or tree in the world. In other words, if the particle is not acting under orders, it will have to possess the artistry and power which is needed in order to recognise and understand countless different structures and the countless forms that those structures are caused to assume, as well as the actual ability to bring about those forms. In short, if the particle of soil is not acting under the orders of an All-Powerful, All-Knowing Maker, it will itself have to possess all of the attributes of perfection of that Maker. The same is true with respect to all other particles in all of the other realms of creation.

From this you can understand that in all things one can find numerous, clear proofs of the oneness and unity of God. To create all things from one thing, and to make all things into one thing, is something possible for the Creator of all things and Him alone. Pay attention, then, to the sublime verse, *There is nothing that does not proclaim His Glory with praise*. Because if one does not accept the One, Unique God, one has to accept as many gods as there are created beings.

Second point: In the parable, we talked about a noble commander and we said that whoever is not blind, and is able to see how respected and decorated he is, will understand that he acts at all times under orders. It will be clear that this commander is the obedient servant of the monarch. That noble commander is, of course, the most noble Messenger of God, Muhammad (PBUH, Peace be upon him). The sacred Creator of a cosmos that is decorated as ornately and amazingly as this must of necessity have a noble Messenger, in the same way that the sun must of necessity possess light. For just as the sun cannot exist without shining, Divinity cannot persist without showing itself through the sending of prophets and messengers.

Is it at all possible that an absolutely perfect beauty should not wish to demonstrate and display itself by means of one who will make it known? Is it at all possible that an absolutely perfect artistry should not wish to make itself known by means of a herald who will draw humankind's attention to it? Is it at all possible that the universal monarch and all-embracing lord of creation should not wish to announce His oneness through the different levels of multiplicity? For He is the One Whom all creatures need, but Who Himself needs absolutely nothing at all. Is it likely, then, that such a Creator would not announce this at every level

of multiplicity and particularity via a go-between? By 'go-between' we mean that Islam's messenger is both the realm of multiplicity's representative at the Divine court and the Divine court's messenger to the realm of multiplicity. He is creation's representative by virtue of his comprehensive worshipfulness, and he is God's messenger to creation by virtue of his closeness to God and his having been entrusted with God's message.

Is it at all possible that one who possesses absolute beauty would not want both to see his own beauty and to display that beauty in numerous mirrors to others? Is it at all likely that one with such inherent perfections would not want to show the beauty of those perfections, in all their subtlety and loveliness, to the whole of creation? The Messenger, Muhammad (PBUH), is the beloved of God. He is loved by God on account of his worshipfulness and on account of his holding up a mirror to God. He is also the bearer of God's message, thus making God beloved of mankind and demonstrating to the whole of creation the beauty of God's names.

Is it at all possible that the owner of a treasure trove filled to the brim with wondrous miracles and rare, invaluable gems, would not want to have them displayed to the world by an expert jeweller who is able to describe them perfectly? Would such an owner not wish to reveal his hidden perfections in this way?

The Creator decorates the cosmos in a way that shows mankind the perfection of all of His Names. He turns the cosmos into a palatial gallery, filled with all kinds of wonderful objects and precious works of art. Is it at all possible, then, that He would not choose someone to act as an expert teacher, guiding humankind through His gallery of wonders?

Is it at all possible that the Lord of the cosmos would not send someone to help humankind solve the puzzle of creation? Is it possible that He would fail to despatch someone to explain the aims and purposes of all the changes that occur in the cosmos, or to give answers to the three key questions posed by all beings, namely, "Where did we come from?", "Where are we going?" and "Why are we here?" ?

The Glorious Maker makes Himself known to all conscious beings through His beautiful creation, and He makes Himself loved by means of the precious bounties He showers on His creatures. Is it possible, then, that He would fail to communicate to those beings – through a messenger – the things that He desires from them in exchange?

Humankind is created with both the painful awareness of multiplicity and the innate ability to live and act worshipfully. Would One Who created human beings in this manner not wish to turn them away from multiplicity and lead them to unity – and away from suffering – by means of a guide and teacher?

Prophethood has numerous functions, each of which serves as a decisive proof that Divinity requires that there be a messenger. Now, has anyone ever appeared in the world more in possession of the abovementioned virtues, qualities and functions than Muhammad (PBUH), the Arabian prophet? Has time ever shown us one more worthy of the rank of messenger and the responsibility of conveying God's message? Surely not. For he is the master of all messengers, the foremost of all prophets. He is the leader of all the pure-hearted, closer to God than all of those who have drawn close to Him. He is the most perfect of all creatures, the king of all those who guide humankind to righteousness.

Countless indications of his prophethood have come in the form of more than a thousand recorded miracles on his part. These include, for example, the splitting of the moon and the flowing of water from between his fingers, and they enjoy the unanimous confirmation of all trustworthy scholars. But the greatest miracle of all – the supreme miracle – is the Glorious Quran itself. The Quran is an ocean of truth, miraculous in forty different respects, and it alone more than suffices to demonstrate his prophethood, making it as clear as the sun. Since we have discussed elsewhere the forty ways in which the Quran is miraculous, we refer the reader to those other works.¹⁰

Third point: No-one should imagine that humankind is too tiny and insignificant for this vast world to be brought to an end and another realm to come into being simply for the sake of holding humankind to account. For human beings, while tiny in appearance, bear great importance as the masters of all creatures. For the human being is created in such a way that he or she is able to comprehend all things, manifesting universal worshipfulness and thus acting as a herald of God's monarchy.

They ask, "Human beings spend only a brief amount of time on earth. Surely they do not stay here long enough to earn punishment that is eternal?"

But the answer is clear. Unbelief is such that it seeks to drag creation, which is something as valuable and esteemed as a letter written by God, down to the depths of meaninglessness and futility. Unbelief is an insult to all of creation, to existence itself, since it denies the

¹⁰ The miraculousness of the Quran has been discussed in various places in the Risale, but the most comprehensive discussion takes place in the *Twenty-Fifth Word*.

manifestations of God and it rejects the reflections of His sacred names that can be found on all beings. Unbelief seeks to negate all of the countless proofs that demonstrate the truthfulness of God Almighty. It is, therefore, a crime of infinite proportions, and thus deserves infinite punishment.

Fourth point: In the story, we saw in those twelve indications that a king who possesses a temporary, limited realm must of necessity possess another, eternal, infinite realm which is able to display the totality of His splendour, beauty and power. Similarly, it is impossible that the Eternal Creator of this transient world would not create an eternal realm too. It is impossible that the Everlasting Maker of this fine but constantly changing cosmos would not create another cosmos that is permanent and unchanging. This world resembles an exhibition gallery, a field, a testing-ground. It is impossible, therefore, that the Wise, Powerful and Merciful Creator of this world would not also create a hereafter where the different purposes of this world are to be made manifest. There are twelve 'gates' which open on to this truth, and those gates are to be unlocked by means of twelve other truths. Those truths are as follows:

First Truth

The Gate of Lordliness and Sovereignty. The Manifestation of the Name 'Sustainer' (*al-Rabb*)

God possesses both lordliness (*rubūbiyya*) and absolute sovereignty (*salṭana*), and it is through the glory of these names that the cosmos comes into being, displaying His perfections and setting out certain aims and purposes, both for creation itself and for humankind. Is it possible, then, that He would fail to

establish rewards for those who respond to those aims and purposes with faith and worship? Is it possible that He would fail to punish those who reject His aims and purposes with scorn and unbelief?

Second Truth

The Gate of Generosity and Mercy. The Manifestation of the Names 'Generous' (*al-Karīm*) and 'Merciful' (*al-Raḥīm*)

In His works, the Lord of this world demonstrates infinite generosity and mercy, infinite splendour and glory. Is it possible that He would not give rewards in a manner which befits His generosity and mercy? Is it possible that He would not punish wrongdoers in a manner which befits His splendour and glory?

If you look at the world and how things work here, you will see that all beings, from the very weakest to the most powerful, are given the kind of sustenance that suits them. Indeed, the weakest and most needy are often given the very best kind of sustenance.¹¹ Moreover, there are cures to be found in the most unlikely of places for every ailment and disease. This bounty and liberality is given with such sublime

¹¹ All licit nourishment, Nursi says, is obtained not through shows of strength but through demonstrations of need and impotence. Proof of this, he says, is that powerless infants enjoy the very finest of foods – their mothers' milk – while wild beasts have to exert much energy and cunning in order to find their food. Fish, who lack intelligence, he says, grow fat very easily, while the cunning fox and the wily monkey are thin from having to constantly run about in search of food. There is, therefore, an inverse relationship between strength and willpower on the one hand and sustenance on the other. The more one relies on strength and willpower, Nursi says, the more difficult it will be to seek and sustain one's livelihood.

generousness that it is clear that behind the scenes, the hand of infinite generosity is at work.

Take the spring, for example. Each year as spring approaches, the trees are dressed in clothes as fine as silk, just like the intimate companions of Paradise. They are bejewelled with flowers and fruits, and they are made to stretch out their branches as though they were the hands of servants, offering us numerous kinds of the most delicate and delicious fruits. Similarly, we are given sweet, wholesome honey to eat from the hand of the bee, despite its sting. We are clothed in the finest, softest of materials spun by an insect that has no hands. And within tiny seeds, great treasures of mercy are preserved for us. It is obvious that all of this is the effect of a most bountiful generosity, a most elevated sense of mercy.

With the exception of human beings and certain wild animals, all things – from the sun, the moon and the earth to the smallest of creatures – perform their duties with the utmost precision, not overstepping the mark by even an inch, observing a kind of universal obedience in a spirit of awe and humility. This shows that they are all acting on orders, responding to the command of One Who possesses great glory and dignity. If you look at the way in which all mothers – be they from the animal, vegetable or human realms – feed and take care of their weak and powerless infants with the most delicate forms of nourishment such as milk, it will become clear that their tender compassion is a reflection, a manifestation of God's all-embracing mercy.¹²

12 The fact, says Nursi, that lions prefer the needs of their cubs to their own needs, feeding them before they feed themselves, shows that they are acting in accordance with the commands of One Who is infinitely merciful, generous and kind. He also points

Since the master of this world, then, has such absolute generosity, mercy, splendour and glory, it follows that His infinite splendour and glory require the chastisement of those whose behaviour causes offence. Similarly, His infinite generosity requires the giving of bounty, while His infinite mercy calls for the giving of favour. Now, in this brief, transient life, not even a millionth part of God's perfection establishes itself and is on display. There must, then, be a blessed realm elsewhere that is suited to the showing and giving of infinite generosity and mercy. If there is no future realm where the entirety of God's mercy is to be displayed and experienced, any mercy that we see while in this world can no longer be classed as mercy at all. If there were no eternal realm where God's infinite mercy is to be on show, the mercy that He shows now would have to be rejected as something wholly unmerciful – and this, clearly, would be like pointing to the sun at midday and denying its existence. For if there were no eternal realm after this, death, which is inescapable, would turn that mercy into disaster, that love into affliction, that blessing into vengeance, human intellect into an instrument of torture, and pleasure into pain. In the absence of an eternal realm, the very essence of God's compassion would disappear.

Furthermore, there must also be a realm of punishment befitting God's glory and His dignity. For generally,

out that the usually cowardly chicken will actually attack a lion in order to defend its young, while the fig-tree, he says, is content with mud, saving the precious sap to give to its offspring, the fruit. The fact that even unconscious plants and beasts function in the wisest and apparently most conscious of manners demonstrates beyond all doubt that there is One Who is Utterly Knowing and All-Wise who has set them to work, and that they are simply acting in His name.

oppressors leave this earthly realm while still in possession of their power, and the oppressed depart while still suffering humiliation. These cases – the case of the unpunished oppressor and the unavenged victim – are deferred for consideration by a supreme tribunal in the future; they are not ignored.

Of course it does sometimes happen that punishment is meted out in this world: the torments suffered by disobedient and rebellious peoples in the past show that humans are not left to their own devices. Indeed, they are always subject to the blows that God's splendour and majesty may choose to visit on them.

Out of all of the creatures in the cosmos, humankind has the most important responsibility - namely to recognise God and to worship Him as a result - and it is for this reason that humans have been endowed with the most important capacities and capabilities. As humankind's Sustainer, God makes Himself known to them through all of His well-ordered works; He makes Himself loved through the countless, beautifully decorated fruits of His mercy, and He demonstrates His love and mercy through the endless variety of bounties that He showers on all human beings. Now if humans fail to recognise God and worship Him in return, and if they fail to make themselves beloved of God through their worship, or fail to respect Him with thanks and with praise, is it at all possible that they should be left to their own devices and go unpunished? Is it at all likely that God in His splendour and glory would fail to prepare for the unbelievers among humankind a realm of chastisement and requital?

Similarly, is it at all possible that He would not prepare a realm of reward and everlasting bliss for those believers who *do* respond when the Merciful

and Compassionate Creator makes Himself known to them? Is it at all likely that He would ignore their faith and worship or fail to recognise their thanks and their veneration?

Third Truth

The Gate of Wisdom and Justice; the Manifestation of the Names 'Wise' (al-Ḥakīm) and 'Just' (al-ʿĀdil)

The Glorious Lord demonstrates His lordly sovereignty in the wisdom, order, justice and equilibrium which can be seen in all things, from the atom to the sun. Is it at all possible, then, that He would not shower favour upon those who seek refuge under the protective wing of His lordship? Is it at all possible that He would ignore those who believe in Him, and whose acts are carried out in order to worship Him?

Again, is it possible that He should not chastise those rude and impertinent ones who disbelieve in His wisdom and justice, and who rebel against Him in their insolence?¹³ Now in this world, not even a thousandth part of His wisdom and justice is exercised with respect

13 The fact that the question 'Is it at all possible?' is repeated a number of times reflects a 'most significant mystery', says Nursi. Misguidance and lack of belief spring for the most part from the habit that we have of imagining things to be impossible or irrational, which is why we then deny them. In this discussion of resurrection, Nursi says, it has been demonstrated decisively that true impossibility and irrationality pertain to the path of misbelief and misguidance, while possibility, rationality and ease of belief pertain to the path of faith and the 'highway' of Islam. In short, the philosophers gravitate towards unbelief on account of their considering things to be impossible. The *Tenth Word*, however, repeats time and time again the question 'Is it at all possible?', thus demonstrating where true impossibility lies and, in the process, dealing the unbelievers a 'punch in the face'.

to humankind; rather, the full manifestation of justice is deferred. Most of the people of misguidance leave this world without being punished, while most of the people of guidance leave here while still unrewarded. It is clear from this, then, that their respective cases are postponed for a supreme tribunal, which will precede the emergence of a realm of eternal bliss.

Yes, it is clear that the Being Who controls this world does so in accordance with His infinite wisdom. If you require proof, consider the purposefulness of all things, and the preservation of interest and benefit in general. Look at the limbs, bones and veins in the human body; look at the cells in every limb and organ of the human body. Do you not see the numerous wise benefits that He intends in His creation of these marvels? Do you not see that from certain limbs there are wise benefits to be had that are as numerous as the fruits on a tree? All of this shows that the cosmos is run in accordance with infinite wisdom. The existence of the utmost regularity and equilibrium in all things is evidence of the same truth.

Look at a seed and see how the precise programme of the development of a beautiful flower has been compressed within it. See how the 'pen of destiny' has inscribed on that seed the 'scroll of deeds' of the tree that is meant to grow out of it. Its whole future life history is there, together with an inventory of all of its parts and components. It is clear from this that the pen which writes these things writes with the ink of absolute wisdom. The existence of a high degree of subtle artistry in all things shows that upon each thing one can see the stamp or seal of an infinitely Wise Maker.

Furthermore, included in the tiny body of each

human being is the index of all being, the keys to all of the treasures of Divine mercy, and the mirrors of all of the Divine names. This itself demonstrates the existence of wisdom within that infinitely precise and subtle artistry. Now, given that His wisdom permeates everything within the sphere of His lordliness, is it at all possible that God would not wish to favour those who seek refuge beneath the wing of His lordliness? Is it at all likely that He would not reward their faith and obedience by bestowing bliss upon them for all eternity?

Do you actually need proof that all things are done with justice and equilibrium? The fact that all things are endowed with being, and are formed and put in their appropriate places with precise equilibrium and just measure, is proof that all matters are carried out in accordance with absolute justice and balance. Similarly, all things are given their rights in accordance with the dictates of their disposition; they all receive whatever is necessary for their being and their continued existence in a manner which is in keeping with how they have been created. All of this is the mark of a hand of infinite justice.

Again, the fact that answers are always given to the petitions and requests made by the 'tongue of disposition' in all things, by natural need and necessity, demonstrates the existence of absolute justice and wisdom.

Now, is it at all possible that justice and wisdom, which hasten to fulfil the lowliest need of the most apparently insignificant of creatures, would fail to fulfil humankind's greatest need of all, namely the need for immortality? Is it at all possible that Divine wisdom would fail to respond to the greatest plea of

humankind, who is the greatest of all creatures? Is it possible that Divine justice would refuse to heed humankind's greatest need and most heartfelt desire? Is it possible for wisdom and justice not to preserve the dignity of Divine lordliness by preserving the rights of His servants? Human life is extremely brief, and human beings are unable to experience the true essence of absolute justice in this limited, transient world. It is for this reason that matters of justice are postponed until a supreme tribunal can be convened in the future. For true justice requires that this apparently insignificant creature known as humankind should be either rewarded or punished, not in accordance with their size or stature but in accordance with the severity of their crimes, the importance of their nature and the magnitude of their functions and responsibilities. Since human beings, who are created for eternity, never experience absolute justice in this limited, transient world, there will of necessity exist an eternal Hell and an everlasting Paradise in which they will be either punished or rewarded, in accordance with the judgment of that Just and Awesome Possessor of Beauty, that Wise and All-Beautiful Possessor of Awe.

Fourth Truth

The Gate of Generosity and Beauty; the Manifestation of the Names 'Generous' (al-Jawād) and 'Beautiful' (al-Jamīl)

The Creator possesses an inexhaustible treasury of riches and treasures; He possesses a peerless, eternal beauty and a flawless, everlasting perfection. He also possesses generosity and liberality which are infinite and without peer. Is it at all possible, then, that all of this should not require the existence of grateful spectators, astounded onlookers and yearning supplicants, all

destined to remain for all eternity in a place of bliss and repose? See how He has decorated the face of the cosmos with all of these objects of beauty, creating the sun and the moon as its lamps, covering the surface of the earth with the finest varieties of sustenance and turning it into a banquet of bounty. See how He transforms fruit trees into various different dishes, each of which is renewed several times a season. All of this shows the existence of an absolute generosity and liberality. Such unending kindness, such inexhaustible treasuries of mercy, require the existence of a place, an abode of rest and repose, that is unlimited and everlasting, and able to contain in it anything and everything that anyone could possibly desire. They also require that those who enjoy such pleasures should remain in that abode of bliss forever, without having to suffer the pain of separation and the cessation of pleasure. For just as the cessation of pain brings pleasure, the cessation of pleasure brings pain – and pain which that infinite generosity is unwilling to tolerate. It thus requires the existence of an eternal paradise and of supplicating souls who will abide in it eternally.

Infinite generosity and liberality wish to bestow kindness and favour that are similarly infinite and eternal. The bestowal of infinite kindness and favour require infinite gratitude in return. And this then necessitates the perpetual existence of those who receive all of this kindness, so that they may show their thanks and gratitude for that perpetual giving and that constant generosity. A brief pleasure, made bitter by cessation, is not compatible with the requirements of absolute generosity and liberality.

If you consider the different regions of the world, you will see that each is like an exhibition gallery where God's

handiwork is displayed.¹⁴ Pay attention to the 'lordly proclamations' in the hands of all the plants and animals on the face of the earth and listen to the prophets and the saints, who announce the beauties of Divine lordliness. Unanimously they display the flawless perfections of the Glorious Maker by demonstrating His miraculous arts, thus attracting the gazes of humankind.

The Maker of this world, then, possesses the most important, astounding, well-concealed perfections. It is these that He wishes to display by means of His miraculous artistry. For flawless, secret perfection wishes to be made known to those who appreciate, admire and gaze upon it in wonder. Eternal perfection requires an eternal display. Such a display in turn requires the eternal existence of those who appreciate and admire it. The value of perfection will always decrease in the eye of its admirer if that admirer is deprived of an eternal period of time in which to gaze upon it.¹⁵ Again, the beautiful, artistic, brilliant and gorgeously decorated creatures that cover the face of the earth bear witness to the loveliness of an unrivalled transcendent beauty. They indicate the subtle charms of a unparalleled hidden beautifulness, in the same way that sunlight bears witness to the sun.

14 The existence of a brightly designed and brilliantly decorated flower; says Nursi, or a most artfully conceived and bejewelled fruit on a twig as thin as a wire, affixed to a dry, bonelike tree, is without doubt a proclamation to all conscious beings of the fine arts produced by a most skilled, wise and miracle-working Maker. This holds true not only for the vegetable kingdom but also for the animal kingdom.

15 A famous beauty, Nursi says, once expelled from her circle a common man who had become infatuated with her. In order to console himself, the man told everyone how ugly he found her, thus denying her beauty outright. This, Nursi says, is a classic example of 'sour grapes'.

Each manifestation of that sacred transcendent beauty indicates the existence of the countless hidden treasures in each of the Divine names. Now this hidden beauty is exalted and without peer. And so just as it desires to view its own loveliness in a mirror, and to gaze upon the various degrees of its beauty in a conscious reflection, it also desires to see its beauty how others see it.¹⁶ In other words, it wishes to look at its own beauty in two ways: firstly, by beholding itself in differently coloured mirrors; and secondly, through the gaze of those who look at that beauty with yearning and bewilderment.

In short, beauty desires to see and to be seen. And both seeing and being seen require the existence of yearning witnesses and bewildered admirers. And, since beauty is eternal, its witnesses and admirers must also exist eternally. An eternal beauty can never be satisfied with transient admirers! An admirer condemned to irrevocable separation will soon find his love turning to hate once he knows that he has to depart. For just as self-seeking humankind hates the unknown, it is also opposed to everything that is out of its reach. Love that is not infinite will respond to a beauty that requires unending admiration with implicit hatred, enmity and rejection. From this we are able to understand the profound reasons why unbelievers nurture enmity towards God.

And so endless generosity and liberality, peerless

¹⁶ Although all beings that act as mirrors held up to God's beauty constantly disappear, those that appear in their place display and manifest in their forms and features the same beauty. This shows that the beauty in question cannot belong to the creatures themselves; the visible instances of beauty that we see are, Nursi says, the signs and indications of a beauty that is sacred and transcendent.

loveliness and beauty, flawless perfection – all of these require the existence of grateful supplicants and yearning admirers who are eternal. Yet in this brief, limited world we see that everyone leaves quickly, having had no more than a taste of that limitless generosity – enough, it may be said, to whet the appetite but not enough to satisfy. If follows on, then, that human beings are destined for a place of eternal joy where infinite bounties will be bestowed on them in full measure, for all eternity.

In short, just as this world, and all that is in it, demonstrates beyond all doubt the existence of the Glorious Maker, the existence of His sacred names and attributes show and require as a logical outcome the existence of the hereafter.

Fifth Truth

The Gate of Compassion and Muhammadan Worship; the Manifestation of the Names 'Answerer of Prayer' (al-Mujīb) and 'Compassionate' (al-Raḥīm)

The Lord possesses infinite compassion and mercy, fulfilling compassionately the most trivial needs of His lowliest creatures in the most unexpected of manners. He hears the barely audible pleas for help uttered by His most obscure creatures, and He responds to every petition that reaches Him, whether vocalised or mute. Given that He does all of this, is it at all possible that he would not pay heed to the greatest petition forwarded by His supreme servant, the most beloved among His creatures?¹⁷ Is it at all likely that He would not hear his

¹⁷ Nursi here is referring to the prayers of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Prophet, says Nursi, has ruled his community for the past fourteen hundred years, with over a billion subjects – subjects who renew their pledge of allegiance to him on a daily

most exalted prayer and grant him what he wishes? The kindness and ease which is manifested in God's feeding and nurturing of young, weak animals show that the Ruler of the cosmos exercises His lordliness with the utmost mercy. Is it all possible, then, that a compassion that is merciful to this degree would refuse to accept the prayer of the most beautiful and virtuous of all creation? This is explained in greater detail in the *Nineteenth Word*, but let us just repeat the gist of the matter here:

I remind the reader, just as I remind my own soul, that in the allegory earlier we talked about a meeting that took place on a certain island, where a noble commander was giving a speech. In order to understand the truth that this allegory encapsulates, let us leave our present age and travel in our imaginations to the Arabian peninsula during the blessed era of the Prophet. Let us journey there so that we can watch him while he is carrying out his duties and engaging in worship. See, just as he is the means for the attainment of eternal bliss, through his prophethood and guidance he is the cause for the existence of that bliss and the means whereby paradise is created, simply by virtue of his worship and prayer. Watch him as he prays for eternal

basis. Furthermore, his subjects bear witness to his perfections and obey his commands with perfect submission. His spirit colours half of the earth and a fifth of humanity. He is the beloved of their hearts and the educator of their spirits, and such a being is without doubt the greatest servant of the Lord Who controls the cosmos. The desire for everlastingness, which exists in all human beings by virtue of their very nature, is a desire which lifts humankind from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high. Consequently it is only fitting that such an elevated desire be communicated to the Provider of all needs by only the greatest of His servants, supplicating in the name of the whole of humankind.

bliss with his sublime supplications and his supreme acts of worship; it is as though the island – the whole world, even – is praying and supplicating along with him. For the worship he performs contains not only the worship performed by his own community but, in its very essence, the worship performed by all the other prophets, with whom enjoys a connection and a correspondence.

Furthermore, he performs his supreme prayer and offers his supplications in a congregation that is so vast that it is as though all of the enlightened and perfected human beings, from the time of Adam to the present, were standing behind him and following him in prayer and saying 'Amen!' to his supplications. He is praying on both his own and on their behalf for a need so universal – the need for immortality – that it seems as though human beings are not the only ones joining him in supplication. Indeed, it appears as though the inhabitants of the heavens and the whole of creation are joining him in prayer and saying silently, 'Yes, O Lord! Grant him his wish, for we desire it too!' He petitions and pleads with God for everlasting bliss with such touching sadness, with such yearning, that he causes the whole of creation to weep as they share in his prayer.

You see, he desires and prays for bliss, for this purpose and goal which frees human beings and all other creatures from their abysmal state of utter annihilation, from their worthlessness, their uselessness and their purposelessness. It is a goal which raises them up, elevating them to the very height of preciousness and exaltedness. It is a desire for eternity which lifts them to the rank of being a precious letter written by God.

Listen to how he petitions God and see how elevated

his pleas for assistance are, and how sweet his requests for mercy. It is almost as though he is causing all of creation, the heavens and the throne of God itself, to listen to his prayer and to echo him ecstatically with cries of 'Amen, O Lord, amen!'¹⁸

18 From the time of the Prophet to the present day, Nursi says, all of the invocations of peace and blessings made upon the Prophet by his community have served to act as a kind of collective 'Amen!' to his prayer; it is as though his community has, throughout history, participated in his supplication. Every mention of the Prophet - be it in the course of the daily canonical prayers, when the Prophet is blessed as part of the obligatory rite, or in the supplication for him uttered after the second call to prayer (according to the Shafi'ite school of law) - has served as a powerful, collective 'Amen!' to the Prophet's supplication for eternal bliss. The eternity and everlasting bliss desired by all human beings as part of their natural disposition is requested by the Prophet in the name and on behalf of all humanity, and a vast segment of mankind utters 'Amen!' in response. Is it at all possible, asks Nursi, that such a prayer would be rejected? Indeed, says Nursi, is it not at all possible that the Master of this world, all of whose acts are self-evidently underscored with consciousness, knowledge and wisdom, should be unaware of the acts of the foremost of His creatures? It is not at all possible that the All-Knowing Master should remain indifferent to the Prophet's deeds and prayers. And it is impossible that the Powerful and Merciful Creator should not accept his prayers, since He has not remained indifferent to them. Yes, through the light of the Muhammadan Being, the world was transformed. The true essence of all beings in the cosmos became apparent because of that light; it became clear that all things are letters written by the Eternal Creator, proclaiming the Divine names. It became clear that they are precious and profound beings, each with a God-given function and destined to manifest eternity. Were it not for that light, beings would be condemned to utter annihilation; they would have remained useless, valueless, purposeless and confused; they would have continued to be seen as the results of blind chance, sunk in the darkness of illusion. It is for this

See, he requests eternal bliss from a Being – One Who is so All-Hearing, Generous and Powerful, so All-Seeing, Merciful and Knowing, that He sees, hears and accepts the most secret wish, the most insignificant desire of the most obscure of His creatures, and observably so. He takes pity on His creatures and answers all of their pleas, even if they are offered silently. He bestows all things and answers all requests with such wisdom, mercy and understanding that there can be no doubt that all acts of nurturing and regulating come from one source and one source only: the All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Generous and Merciful Creator.

So let us listen to the Pride of All Being, that source of honour for all of mankind, that vanguard behind whom stands the whole of humankind. Let us listen to the one who is unique in all of creation as he lifts up his hands towards God's throne and offers up a prayer which, in its reality, contains the essence of all human worship. What is his plea? See, he is asking for eternal bliss for himself and his community. He is asking for eternity, for Paradise. He is making his plea together with all of the sacred, Divine Names that reflect their beauty in the mirrors of all created beings. As you can see, he is seeking intercession from and through those Names.

Now if there were not already countless reasons for the existence of the hereafter, a single prayer offered

reason that just as human beings say 'Amen!' to the prayer of the Prophet, other beings too, from the face of the earth to the Throne of God, from the atom to the star, take pride in his light and proclaim their connection with him. The very spirit of the Prophet's worship is indeed none other than this prayer for eternity. Again, all of the motions and workings of the cosmos are in their essence nothing but prayer. For example, the journey of the seed until it becomes a tree is a form of prayer to the Creator.

by that exalted being would be enough to warrant the creation of Paradise – a task as easy for the power of the Merciful Creator as the creation of spring.¹⁹ Indeed, how could the creation of paradise be difficult for One Who possesses absolute power? For each spring He makes the face of the world into a plain resembling the plain of resurrection, producing hundreds of thousands of ‘mini-resurrections’ which are evident examples of the real thing. Just as the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) was the reason for the foundation of this ‘arena of examination’, his worshipfulness was the reason for the foundation of the ‘abode of bliss’. After all, did God not say, “Were it not for you, were it not for you, I would not have created the spheres?”²⁰

Is it at all possible that the flawless perfection of Divine artistry and the matchless beauty of Divine lordliness that we see in the order of the world would respond to his prayer with silence? Is it at all possible that the comprehensive mercy that we witness, and which reduces all to bewilderment, would choose not to

19 Compared with the vast book of the hereafter, the face of the earth is like a single page. Now, to display wondrous samples of art and examples of resurrection on the face of the earth, and to include on that single page, in perfect order, all of the different species of creation, is certainly more difficult than creating and constructing the delicate, symmetrical structure of Paradise in the broad arena that is eternity. For each of the species which is ‘resurrected’ in the spring is like a whole book, and since there are hundreds of thousands of species, the single ‘page’ that is each spring will include in a very small space countless hundreds of thousands of books. What Nursi is saying here is that Paradise is as easy for the Creator to construct as a single page, particularly when one considers how intricate and complex a single page actually is.

20 ‘Ali al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shifa*, i, al-Ajluni, *Kashf al-Khafa*, ii, 164

answer his prayer and, instead, would allow extreme ugliness, cruelty and disorder to hold sway? Is it possible that the most petty and insignificant desires would be granted, but the weightiest, most important desires would go unfulfilled, as though not even worthy of being considered? Is it possible that Divine wisdom and mercy could fail to fulfil his requests? No, a thousand times, no! Were such beauty to accept such ugliness, it would itself become ugly.²¹ Thus just as the Prophet opened the gates of this world with his prophethood, so too does he open the gates of the hereafter with his worship.

May the blessings of the Compassionate One be with him, to the extent of all that this world and paradise contain. O God, grant blessings and peace to Your servant and messenger, that beloved one who is the master of both realms, the pride of all the worlds, the source of life in both spheres and the means for the attainment of happiness both here and in the hereafter. O God, bless him and his family and all of his companions, as well as his brethren from among the prophets and messengers. Amen!

²¹ There is unanimous agreement that a total reversal of a truth is impossible. It is impossible that something should become the very opposite or reverse of itself; the law of non-contradiction deems it impossible for something to become identical with its opposite while retaining its original identity. Thus, says Nursi, absolute beauty cannot become ugliness while retaining its identity as beauty. In the example, it is not possible that the beauty of Divine dominicality, which is evident throughout creation, should retain its identity while becoming simultaneously the very essence of ugliness. This would be the strangest of all impossible and false notions, says Nursi.

Sixth Truth

The Gate of Splendour and Eternity; the Manifestation of the Names 'Glorious' (al-Jalīl) and 'Eternal' (al-Bāqī)

The splendour of Divine lordliness subdues and commands all beings, from atoms to suns, from particles to trees, and turns them into obedient soldiers. Is it at all possible, then, that Divine lordliness should concentrate its entire attention on these wretched beings that pass brief lives here in this temporary abode, and not create an eternal realm of everlasting splendour in which to manifest itself unendingly? Consider the changing of the seasons and the sublime motions of the planets, which move like aeroplanes through the heavens. Consider how earth acts as humankind's cradle and the sun as its lamp, and how all things are subjugated to human beings for their use. Consider the awesome transformations that are taking place all the time, such as the revival and decoration of the dry, dead earth each spring. All of these things show that behind the veil, a sublime lordliness exists; they show that behind closed doors, a most splendid kingship has the reins of all things in its hand.

Now, a lordly kingdom like this requires subjects that are worthy of itself, as well as a mode of manifestation that is appropriate to its dignity. But if you look at the hostel that is this world, you will see that the most important class of subjects, and those whose functions are the most comprehensive of all, are gathered here only for a brief moment, and under the most wretched of circumstances. The hostel fills and empties each day, and all those who come here stay only as long as it takes for their service to be tried and tested. The hostel, too, changes hour by hour, and all of the monarch's subjects

stay only for a few brief moments in order to gaze upon the samples of the Glorious Maker's generosity. This abode is in this sense like a gallery where the Maker's subjects come to inspect His miraculous works of art with a buyer's eye. They then disappear. The exhibition also changes from minute to minute. Whoever leaves the exhibition never returns, and whoever steps foot through the door will ultimately have to depart.

Now the state of this hospice and the circumstances that attend here show that beyond this place – beyond this testing-ground, this gallery, this exhibition hall – there are permanent palaces and everlasting abodes which display in full God's sovereignty. Whatever is on show in this temporary exhibition hall is only a sample, a replica, of those pure and priceless originals which exist beyond this world in numberless treasure-houses and gardens. If we strive in this world, it is for the sake of what awaits us in the world to come. We work here and we are rewarded in the hereafter. Bliss awaits everyone there, in accordance with his or her capacity, so long as they do not waste or throw away what they have been given here. Yes, it is impossible that eternal kingship would concentrate exclusively on these wretched, transient beings.

Consider this truth through the lens of the following allegory. You are traveling along a road and ahead of you, you see a hostel, a caravanserai, if you wish. The caravanserai has been built by some famous local celebrity as a place where people who visit him can come to stay. Millions of dollars have been spent on the architecture, the furnishings and the decoration of the caravanserai so that guests may enjoy and benefit from their one night's stay there. However, a one night stay is all that anyone is allowed, and so obviously any guest who overnights there will only be able to enjoy a

tiny percentage of all that the caravanserai has to offer. And so each guest takes a photograph of the objects on show in the caravanserai with his or her special camera. Furthermore, the caravanserai owner's servants record with great precision the conduct of all the guests, noting everything down and preserving it all with great care. For every day, the owner changes the décor of caravanserai and destroys most of the ornaments on display, replacing them with new ones before the next group of guests arrives. Now, after seeing such a caravanserai, would any doubt remain that the person who has constructed that building also possesses numerous permanent dwellings, filled with inexhaustible treasures and precious items, and an uninterrupted flow of great generosity? The generosity that he demonstrates in the caravanserai is merely meant to whet the appetites of his guests for those things that he keeps elsewhere. The caravanserai is there simply to awaken their desire for the gifts that he has prepared for them and which are stored in another place. And so, if you are able to look at the caravanserai that is this world without collapsing into drunkenness on account of it, you will understand the following nine principles:

First principle: You will understand that this world, like the caravanserai, does not exist for its own sake. It is impossible that it should assume this shape by itself. Rather, it is a well-constructed inn or hostelry, designed to receive the endless caravans of beings which, one after the other, arrive, spend the night and then depart again.

Second principle: You will understand that those who stay in this hostel are guests and travellers, and that they are invited by their Generous Sustainer to the Abode of Peace.

Third principle: You will understand that the ornaments and decorations in this world are not there simply to be enjoyed or admired. They may indeed give pleasure for a while, but once pleasure ceases, pain begins. They are there to give you a taste – to whet your appetite – but they can never satisfy you completely, ever. For either the duration of the pleasure is short, or your life itself is brief – too brief for you to be satiated. These valuable ornaments, here for moments only, must then have been designed to teach you something. They must be here for the sake of wisdom, and to arouse gratitude.²² They must have been created to encourage human beings to seek out the everlasting originals of which these are merely copies and replicas. Therefore they do not exist for their own sake; they exist for the sake of goals and objectives beyond themselves.

Fourth principle: You will understand that the adornments and decorations of this world are like samples, or forms, of the blessings that are stored and preserved in paradise by the mercy of the Compassionate One for the people of faith.²³

22 The lifespan of all things is short, says Nursi, even though their value is high and the subtleties of their artistry both beautiful and sublime. This implies that everything we see here is a copy, a replica, a form of something else; it implies that everything we see here exists only to direct the gaze of the ‘customer’ to the original, to the ‘real thing’. Since this is the case, Nursi says, it may be said that the various adornments and decorations of this world are merely samples of the bounties of Paradise, prepared by the Compassionate, Merciful Creator for His beloved servants.

23 There are numerous purposes, Nursi says, behind the existence of everything; and everything that exists has numerous results that follow-on from its being. See the end of the document for the rest of this footnote, which is numbered 20 originally.

Fifth principle: You will understand that all of these transient objects have not been created simply in order to be annihilated; they have not been designed to appear for a few moments and then vanish. Rather, the purpose of their creation is that they should be assembled and given a form, and that their form should be noted, their images preserved, their meanings made known and their results recorded. This is so that everlasting sights and scenes may be woven for the people of eternity, and so that they may serve various other purposes there. You will understand that things have actually been created for eternity, and not simply to appear and then go to nothingness. As for the apparent annihilation that is death, this is in reality merely the release from service which comes after the completion of duties. For while on one level all things face annihilation, on another level and from many other aspects they remain and they endure eternally.

Consider, for example, a flower, which is like a word of Divine power. For a short time the flower looks at us, smiling, and then hides behind the veil of annihilation. It departs in the same way that a word departs from the lips. But when a word leaves your lips, as it departs it entrusts thousands of its fellows to men's ears. In other words, it leaves behind meanings in human minds as numerous as those minds. The flower, too, expresses a certain meaning and, having fulfilled that duty, departs. But as it departs, it leaves a visual impression of its form in the memory of everything and everyone that has seen it, and it leaves something of its inner essence in every seed. It is as if each memory and each seed were a camera, recording the beauty and decorativeness of the flower; it is as if every memory and every seed were the means for its perpetuation. If this is so in the case of a humble creature like a flower,

think of what it means when we apply the principle to human beings, the highest form of life and the possessors of souls that desire eternity. You can see, then, how closely connected humankind is to eternity and the desire for everlastingness. The laws according to which large flowering and fruit-bearing plants are formed, and according to which the images of their forms are preserved and perpetuated with the utmost regularity in tiny seeds, often in the most tempestuous of circumstances – those laws can be seen as the spirits of those plants. Now, if the spirit of a plant ties that plant so firmly to eternity, how much more firmly tied to eternity is the human spirit – a being far more exalted and comprehensive in nature than a plant?! The human spirit, like the spirit of the plant, is also a kind of law, but one which is conscious and luminous, issued directly from the Divine command.

Sixth principle: You will understand that humankind has not been left to graze at will, with a rope tied loosely around its neck. On the contrary, the images and impressions of all human deeds are recorded and registered, and the results of all human actions are preserved for the day when the human race is to be called to account.

Seventh principle: You will understand, too, that the destruction that the beautiful creatures of summer and spring suffer in the autumn does not exist solely for its own sake. When things disappear in the autumn, they are simply being dismissed after having completed their service. It is also in order to make way for the new creation which is due to arrive the following spring; it is simply a preparation of the ground so that new beings can grow and assume their functions and responsibilities. And it is a form of Divine warning to conscious beings, alerting them to the need to wake

up from the sleep of negligence that causes them to forget their duties. Death is always a wake-up call in this respect. It is designed to rouse them from the drunken slumber that makes them forget their debts of gratitude and their obligation to offer praise and thanks.

Eighth principle: You will understand, also, that the Eternal Maker of this transient world has another, everlasting world, and that it is to this everlasting world that He urges and impels His servants.

Ninth principle: Finally, you will understand that a being as Compassionate as He is will certainly give His chosen servants gifts in that world which no-eye has ever seen and no ear has ever heard. He will give to humankind things the image of which has never crossed a human heart or mind before. In this we truly believe.

Seventh Truth

The Gate of Protection and Preservation; the Manifestation of the Names 'Preserver' (al-Ḥafīẓ) and 'Guardian' (al-Raqīb)

The Divine attribute of preservation protects all things with the utmost order and balance, be they large or small, trivial or sublime, wet or dry, on earth or in the heavens. Whatever and wherever they are, He takes stock of them with the utmost accuracy and precision. Humankind, for its part, has been gifted with humanity and raised to the rank of Divine representative (*khalīfa*); moreover, human beings bear the duty of the 'Supreme Trust' (*amāna*). Bearing all this in mind, is it at all possible that human deeds would not be recorded and weighed in the scales of justice? Humankind's deeds and actions are closely related to

God's comprehensive lordliness (*rubūbiyya*), and thus it is impossible that God would not take stock of what humans do and reward and punish them accordingly.

Yes, the Being that runs this cosmos preserves all things with perfect balance and order, which reflect His knowledge, wisdom, will and power. For we see that every created being is fashioned with the utmost order and symmetry. Each of the forms that it assumes as it journeys through existence is extremely well-ordered, as is the totality of those forms overall. When created beings have completed their duties and approach the end of their lives, many of the forms they have taken on during their journey on earth are stored in the minds of human beings by the almighty Preserver. This means that once they have departed this world, they remain in the memories of human beings, each of which resembles a kind of 'preserved tablet', or in some similarly mirrored form. He inscribes their life histories in seeds, each of which is like the result and outcome of the whole. In this way He ensures that all things are preserved in mirrors which are related to both the inner and outer worlds. Human memory; the fruit of a tree; the kernel of a fruit; a flower seed – all of these demonstrate the universality and comprehensiveness of the principle of Divine preservation.

Every year, the 'deeds' of all flowers and fruits are recorded in an appropriate manner in their minute seeds, where the laws of their creation and the images of all their future forms have also been inscribed. Do you not see this? The following spring, the record of their deeds is made public in an appropriate manner as another vast world of spring is brought into the open with the utmost order and wisdom. All of this demonstrates the powerful comprehensiveness with which the principle of Divine preservation exercises

itself. Now, given that the future 'deeds' of things as trivial and transient as seeds are preserved, is it all possible that the deeds of human beings would not be stored and guarded? From the point of view of universal lordliness, the deeds of humankind bear important fruits in the worlds of the spirit, the unseen and the hereafter. Is it at all possible, then, that they should not be recorded and preserved as a matter of extreme importance? Surely it is not.

Yes, from this manifestation of Divine preservation it can be understood that the Master of all creation devotes great care to the order of all things that come into existence in His kingdom. He pays great attention to the function of His sovereignty and lavishes great care on the lordliness of His kingship. And so He ensures that all occurrences and services, however seemingly trivial, are recorded. And He preserves in numerous things the form of everything that happens in His domain. His name 'Preserver' (*al-Ḥafīz*) shows that an important record of deeds will in the future be weighed up and subjected to a thorough examination: the registers of all human deeds will be opened up and revealed, and in particular those of the most noble and honourable beings among humankind whose very essences were the most perfect.

Human beings are made noble by the fact that each one of them is God's representative on earth and a recipient of the Trust. They witness the universality of God's lordliness and proclaim God's unity in this realm of multiplicity. As overseers and witnesses to the worship and glorification of God carried out by all other beings, therefore, humans are in one sense party to that worship and glorification. Is it at all possible, then, that such beings should do all of this and then sleep peacefully in their graves without ever

being wakened to the truth or questioned regarding their deeds? Is it at all possible that they could evade the plain of resurrection and avoid being tried at the Supreme Tribunal? No, such a thing is clearly impossible.

Or is it possible that humans could flee and hide themselves in a kind of self-annihilation, concealing themselves below ground, far from the view of the Powerful and Glorious One to Whose Power all things bear witness? All of the certain happenings of the past and the possible occurrences of the future are miracles of Divine power, belonging to the One Who creates the winter and the spring together as a kind of mini-resurrection.²⁴ Given this power of His, is it

24 The whole of the past, from the present moment to the very beginning of creation, consists of a series of occurrences. Every day, year and century that has existed is like a line, a page or a book written by the pen of destiny; the hand of God's power has inscribed His miraculous signs on the pages of time with the utmost wisdom and order. Similarly, the future, from the present moment until the resurrection, also consists of possible occurrences, known as contingencies. The past consists of occurrences; the future, of contingencies. Now if we compare these two 'chains of time', as Nursi calls them, it will be seen clearly that the Being that created yesterday and brought into existence the creatures peculiar to it is capable also of creating tomorrow and all that goes with it. Again, there is no doubt that the beings and wonders of that amazing display we call the past are the miraculous works of a Powerful and Glorious One. They bear decisive witness that the Powerful One is capable of creating the future and its contingencies, as well as manifesting all of its wonders. The one who creates an apple must without doubt be able to create all of the world's apples, as well as bringing the vast spring into being. Conversely, the one who cannot create a spring is also by default unable to create a single apple either, for the apple is fashioned at the same workbench as the spring. Each apple is an example in miniature of an apple tree, or even

possible that humans could hide from Him and escape His justice? If the human race is not called to account and judged accordingly while in this world, it follows that they must be taken to a Supreme Tribunal and proceed to a final realm of felicity or misfortune.

Eighth Truth

The Gate of Promise and Threat; the Manifestation of the Names 'Beautiful' (al-Jamīl) and 'Glorious' (al-Jalīl)

All of the prophets sent by the Maker of this world have repeated, over and over again, the 'promise and threat' of Divine reward and punishment. They have proclaimed this unanimously and they have been witnessed by all of the saints and people of truth. Is it at all possible, then, that the Maker of the world could fail to fulfil that promise and that threat, and in so doing

a whole garden or a cosmos. The apple seed that bears within it the life-story of the huge tree is, from the point of view of artistry, so miraculous that the one who creates it thus can be incapable of nothing. And so the one who creates today is able also to create the day of resurrection, and it is only the one capable of creating the spring that is capable, too, of creating the resurrection. The one who sews all of the worlds of the past to the ribbon of time and displays them there with utmost wisdom and order is, without doubt, capable of sewing other beings to the ribbon of future time and displaying them there. In several parts of the *Risale*, particularly the *Twenty-Second Word*, we proved with utter certainty that, 'the one who cannot create everything cannot create anything, and the one who can fashion one thing, can fashion everything.' Also, if the creation of everything is entrusted to a single being, the creation of all things becomes as easy as the creation of a single thing. This is how facility arises. If, on the contrary, it is entrusted to numerous causes and ascribed to multiplicity, the creation of a single thing becomes as difficult as the creation of everything; such difficulty approaches the border of impossibility.'

display ignorance and weakness? God forbid! None of that which is implied by His promise and threat is difficult for His power to fulfil; in fact, it is extremely simple. It is as easy for Him as bringing back this spring the countless beings of last spring – some of them identically, some of them in outward appearance.²⁵ It is our need, and the need of all things, that He should fulfil His promise. Furthermore, and it is dictated also by the requirements of His own Names, and not least by His lordly sovereignty. For him to break His promise would be at odds with the dignity of His power; it would also go against the comprehensiveness of His knowledge. This is because the breaking of a promise can arise only from ignorance or impotence.

So to those who deny, I say this: Do you know how foolish a crime your unbelief is? You have become ensnared by your own lying fancies, your own delirious intellect and your own deceptive soul. And you are rejecting as a liar One Who can in no way be compelled to break His own promise. You are rejecting as a liar One Whose glory and stature can in no way admit the breaking of His own word. You are rejecting as a liar One to Whose truthfulness the whole of creation bears witness. Despite your infinite pettiness, you are committing a crime that is infinitely great in proportion. According to certain Traditions, the fact that the teeth of some of the people of Hell will be as big as mountains will serve as proof of the magnitude of their crime. Those who deny God are like travellers who close their eyes to the sunlight and who gaze instead at the fantasies in their own minds. Their imagination wishes to illumine the awesome path in

²⁵ Nursi says that by 'identically' he means the 'resurrection' of trees and the roots of plants; by 'outward appearance' he means things such as leaves and fruits.

front of them with the light that comes from the lamp of their own minds. But in reality, the light of that lamp is less than the light of a glow-worm. God's truthful words are the very beings we see all around us, while His veracious, eloquent signs are the very processes of nature we witness in action. Bearing this in mind, it is clear that He will fulfil whatever He has promised. He will establish a Supreme Tribunal and He will bestow on some the gift of ultimate bliss.

Ninth Truth

The Gate of God's Bestowal of Life and Death; the Manifestation of the Names 'Eternally Living' (al-Ḥayy), 'Self-Subistent' (al-Qayyūm), 'Giver of Life' (al-Muḥyī) and 'Giver of Death' (al-Mumīt)

In giving life to this vast dry, dead earth, the Creator demonstrates His power by deploying more than three hundred thousand different forms of creation, each of them as remarkable as humankind itself. And although He makes these created beings interconnect and collaborate with each other in a complex and sophisticated manner, He demonstrates His all-embracing knowledge by preserving the distinctions and differentiations that characterise them. All things are made to aid one another while at the same time remaining submitted to him, revolving within the circle of His will and His command, and demonstrating the splendour of Divine lordliness. And God shows the importance He has given to the human race by creating it as the most precious, the most comprehensive and the most valued fruit on the tree of creation; by addressing human beings without an intermediary; and by subjugating all other created beings to them. Furthermore, He has directed the vision of all of His servants to everlasting bliss by promising them

resurrection in all of His heavenly decrees. Is it at all possible, then, that a Creator so powerful, wise, compassionate and all-knowing would fail to fulfil His promise by not bringing about the resurrection? Is it at all likely that He would fail, or be unable, to restore human beings to life, to gather his creatures together and convene the Supreme Tribunal as He has promised? Is it at all possible that He would lack the power to create heaven and hell? No, such a thing is clearly unthinkable.

Indeed, the Almighty Disposer of the affairs of this world creates numerous signs, examples and indications of the supreme gathering on the Plain of Resurrection every century, every year and even every day. He creates 'mini-resurrections' all the time on the narrow and transient face of the earth. Spring is but one example. Every year, over the course of five or six days, more than three hundred thousand different kinds of flora and fauna are first gathered together and then dispersed. The roots of all trees and plants are revived, as are some animals, and restored exactly as they were before. Other animals are recreated in a form so similar as to be virtually identical. The seeds of different plants are very much alike in outward form, yet over a number of days or weeks, they become distinct and differentiated from each other as they are brought to life with the utmost ease, order, equilibrium and speed. Is it at all possible that any of this could be difficult for the One Who performs all of these acts? Given what He does each spring, does it appear likely that He would be unable to create the heavens and the earth in six days? Does it appear possible that He would be unable to resurrect all of mankind at once, with a single trumpet blast? No, clearly such inability on His part is absolutely unthinkable.

Let us suppose that there is a gifted writer who is able, in a single hour, to write out the jumbled, obliterated letters of three hundred thousand books on a single sheet of paper, without any error, omission or defect. If someone were then to tell you that this same writer is also able to write from memory a whole book written by him that had fallen into water and become unreadable, would you doubt his ability? Or take a king who, in order to display his power or merely to issue a warning, has whole mountains removed with a single command, turning his realm upside down and transforming the sea into dry land. Then imagine that there is a landslide in his realm, blocking the path in front of guests who are traveling to a royal reception in the king's palace. If someone were to tell you that the king would clear that landslide, regardless of its size, with a single command, allowing his guests to pass, would you doubt his ability to do so? Or imagine that a general gathers together a great army, and someone tells you that this same general will summon the battalions together again with one blast on his trumpet after they have dispersed in order to rest. Would you doubt this or disbelieve it? If you did, you would no doubt be accused of madness.

Now if you have understood these examples, look even further and see how the Pre-Eternal Designer turns over the white page of winter before our very eyes and opens the green pages of spring and summer. Then, with the pen of power and destiny, and in the most beautiful script imaginable, He inscribes on the page of the earth's surface more than three hundred thousand species of creation. And none of these blocks or interferes with any of the others, even though they are all written close together. There is no error in the shaping and formation of the letters, each of which is

clearly distinct from the rest. The Wise, Preserving Creator inserts and stores the spirit of a huge tree in a seed no bigger than a dot. How, then, could one ever doubt His ability to preserve the spirits of those who die? The All-Powerful One causes the globe to revolve like a pebble shot from a sling. How, then, could one ever question His ability to remove this globe from the path of His guests who are traveling to meet Him in the Hereafter? From non-being, with the command, 'Be!', the Creator²⁶ continuously recruits fresh troops in the form of living beings, forming the very particles of their bodies with the utmost order, thus creating highly disciplined armies. Would it not be sheer impertinence to question how He is able to make bodies submit to His discipline like a well-ordered battalion? Would it not be an insult to question His ability to gather together, with a single summons, the fundamental particles and component members of their bodies, all of which are mutually acquainted?

You can see for yourself the numerous designs made by God as signs, examples and indications of resurrection. They have been placed by Him in every age and epoch, be it in the alternation of night and day or even, quite simply, in the appearance and disappearance of clouds in the sky. Imagine that you were alive a thousand years ago. Now think of how much time has passed and the number of 'mini-resurrections' that would have occurred by now, over and over again, ceaselessly, down the centuries, the years and the days. If, then, after witnessing so many indications, you still believe

26 In the original Ottoman Turkish, the phrase 'the One of Glorious Essence' has been used. This has been paraphrased here as, quite simply, 'the Creator', both for ease of understanding and in order to avoid a long discussion on the meaning of 'essence' when used in the context of the Divine.

bodily resurrection to be improbable and rationally unacceptable, it is clear that your attitude is one of pure lunacy.

See what the Supreme Decree – the Quran – says about this truth that we are discussing:

Look upon the signs of God's mercy and see how He restores life to the earth after its death. Indeed He is the One Who shall bring to life the dead, and He is powerful over all things.²⁷

In short, there is nothing that makes the gathering of the resurrection impossible; indeed, absolutely everything points to its necessity. God's glorious and eternal lordliness make it necessary, as does His almighty and all-embracing sovereignty. He is the One who gives life and death to this vast and wondrous earth as though it were a mere animal. He has made this earth in the form of a pleasing cradle, a fine vessel, for both humans and animals. He has made the sun a lamp which gives light and heat to the hostel that is this world, and He has created the planets as vehicles for the transportation of His angels. Now, the sovereignty and lordliness of such a Creator cannot rest upon, or be restricted to, a world that is transient and unstable, deficient and imperfect. He must, therefore, possess another realm that is fully worthy of Him. He must possess a realm that is permanent, stable, unchanging and utterly in keeping with His glory. Indeed, He does have another realm, and it is for the sake of that kingdom that He causes us to dwell and labour here. And it is to that realm, that kingdom, that He summons us. All of those whose spirits have been enlightened, and who have cast aside outer appearances and witnessed the truth – they all give evidence that He

²⁷ Quran, 30:50.

will transfer us to that other kingdom. All of those who have been ennobled by their closeness to the Divine Presence, together with all of those spiritual greats endowed with luminous hearts – they all bear witness to the fact that He will take us to that other realm. Unanimously they inform us that He has prepared for us rewards and requitals there, in line with His firm, repeated promises and stern warnings.

The notion that He would break His promise is utterly baseless, for the breaking of promises is a sign of weakness and despicability. Such an idea is totally at odds with the glory of His sanctity. Similarly, the failure to fulfil a threat arises either from forgiveness or powerlessness.

Unbelief is an extreme and heinous crime and cannot be forgiven.²⁸ God is absolutely Omnipotent and thus can in no way be said to lack power; indeed, He is exalted far above any such suggestion. Those who bear witness to this truth do so unanimously, despite the differences of approach, temperament, method and

²⁸ Unbelief is something which dismisses creation as worthless and meaningless. As such it is, says Nursi, an insult to the whole of the cosmos and a denial of the manifestation of the Divine Names in the mirror of created beings. Indeed, it is disrespect for all of the Divine Names and a rejection of the evidence brought by all beings to the truth of Divine Oneness. It is nothing less than a denial of the whole of creation. Unbelief corrupts man's potentialities and capacities in such a way that he becomes incapable of reform and unreceptive to good. Unbelief is thus an act of utter injustice and a transgression against all of creation and the rights of the Divine Names. The injustice against these rights and the unredeemable nature of the unbeliever's soul make unbelief unforgivable. The words 'to assign partners to God is indeed a great transgression' in Quran 31:13 express this meaning.

school of thought. Their number and quality are such that they have the authority of learned consensus. Each of them is a guiding star of mankind, the beloved of a community, the object of veneration of a nation. As their importance demonstrates, each of them is an expert and an authority on this matter. In any art or science, the opinions of two experts are preferred over the opinions of thousands of laypersons. And in the transmission of a report, two affirmations are preferred to thousands of negations.²⁹ For example, the testimony of two men confirming the sighting of the new moon at the beginning of Ramadan nullifies completely the negation of thousands of deniers.

In short, there is no truer report or firmer claim in the world than this, and no truth more apparent. The world is without doubt a field, while the resurrection is the threshing floor, where the wheat is separated from the chaff at harvest time. And heaven and hell are storehouses...

Tenth Truth

The Gate of Wisdom, Grace, Mercy and Justice; the Manifestation of the Names 'All-Wise' (al-Ḥakīm), 'Generous' (al-Karīm), 'Just' (al-'Ādil) and 'Merciful' (al-Raḥīm).

As we have seen, this world is an impermanent dwelling place, a transient testing ground, an unstable gallery of Divine signs, exhibiting the wisdom and grace, the justice and mercy of the Glorious Possessor of all things. And since those perfections of His are so clear and unambiguous, so comprehensive and overwhelming, is it at all likely that this world

²⁹ This pertains to *ilm al-hadith*, i.e. the discipline of validating and interpreting Prophetic Traditions.

could be all that there is? Is it at all possible that in His kingdom, in worlds both seen and unseen, there should not exist other, permanent realms – everlasting dwelling places with eternal, immortal residents? For if this present world is all that there is, would this not make a mockery of the Divine perfections? Would it not reduce that wisdom and grace, that justice and mercy, to sheer nothingness?

We have seen, too, that from among all His created beings, it is humankind that the All-Wise Being chooses to receive His direct, universal message. It is humankind that He creates as a comprehensive mirror held up to His Names. It is humankind whom He allows to taste, weigh and experience all of the contents of His numerous treasure-troves of mercy. It is humankind to whom He makes Himself known and it is humankind whom He loves and by whom He makes Himself loved. Is it at all possible, then, that after doing all of this, He should fail to send the wretched human race to the eternal realm? Is it at all likely that He would fail to invite His most beloved creations to that abode of permanent bliss and make them eternally happy there?

The Creator imposes on every being – even a tiny seed – a task that is as heavy as a tree. He decks it out with instances of Divine wisdom as numerous as the flowers, and with bounties and benefits as numerous as the fruits. Why would He do all of this if the purposes behind those instances of wisdom, bounty and benefit were intended to pertain to this world only? How could this world, which has less value than a grain of mustard, be the be-all and end-all of infinite perfections such as Divine wisdom and grace, Divine justice and mercy? It is clear that beings have been created as seeds, and that this world has been

fashioned as a place of cultivation in readiness for the harvest of the hereafter, where everything will manifest its true meaning. Is it at all reasonable that He should not create beings as seeds for the world of meaning, or this world as a place of cultivation in readiness for the harvest of the hereafter? Does it make any kind of sense that all of the wondrous transformations and alternations that take place here should be for this world and this world only? Would that not render them futile and purposeless? Is it at all reasonable that He should not direct all beings towards the world of meaning and the hereafter, so that their true purpose may be revealed?

To place in all things a desire for eternity, only then to limit the life of all things to this transient world, would entail His stripping His own perfections of the very things that make them perfect. It would mean that His wisdom, His generosity, His justice and His mercy would be characterised by their very opposites. Is it at all possible that He would deny in this way the true essences of all of those beings that point irrefutably to His perfect attributes? Is it at all likely that He would negate the indications that all things make to His perfections?

Bearing in mind the countless duties that God imposes on humankind, together with the weight of those duties, would it not be unreasonable of God to give human beings nothing more than a few earthly rewards? Can reason accept that God would act meaninglessly, in a manner that is totally at odds with His justice and His wisdom, both of which are true and all-encompassing? For God shows himself to be a possessor of absolute wisdom, for He attaches to every organ and member of every animate being instances of wisdom and sources of benefit as numerous as the leaves and fruits on a

tree. Given that He does this, is it at all possible that He would fail to bestow on humankind the gift of eternal life, which is arguably the greatest and most significant of all instances of Divine wisdom? For eternity is the most necessary of all Divine purposes; indeed, it is the existence of the hereafter that makes wisdom, wisdom; it is the coming of the eternal realm that makes His mercy truly merciful; and it is the promise of an everlasting home that makes His blessings truly meaningful. The existence of an everlasting abode, where His servants will meet with Him and enter into everlasting bliss, is both the source and the aim of His wisdom, His bounty, His mercy and His generosity. Were He to abandon these, all of His works would become utterly futile.

For if He were to fail to create a hereafter, what would become of the here-and-now? Without an everlasting realm, this present realm would resemble a palace built out of brilliantly ornate stones, each containing thousands of intricate designs, and filled with precious, artistically fashioned furniture and household tools and appliances – but with no roof. With no roof, the rain and the snow would soon lay waste to all of the beautiful objects inside the palace, destroying them needlessly and turning the construction of the palace itself into an act of utter futility. Is it at all possible to imagine that God is One Who could commit such an act of pure folly? No, it is not in the least imaginable. Because from absolute goodness only goodness can pour forth; from the Possessor of absolute beauty only works and acts of beauty can be seen. And from One Who is absolutely wise, nothing devoid of wisdom or purpose can emerge.

If you embark on the ship of history and set sail for the past, you will see long dead worlds, gathering places,

stations and stopping points as numerous as the years. You will realise that each of those places resembles the station that is this present world, this gathering of creation, this arena of examination that we now see. In form and quality, the present and the past are indeed different, and yet as far as their orderliness, their wondrousness and the way in which they mirror the power and wisdom of the Maker are concerned, their resemblance to one another is undeniable. In those transient stopping places, those temporary stations, those fleeting meeting halls, you will see clear signs and indications of the Maker's wisdom, His generosity, His justice and His mercy. Indeed, that wisdom will appear so manifest, that generosity so evident, that justice so overwhelming, and that mercy so comprehensive, that the existence of attributes more perfect than these will appear impossible. Thus a more perfect wisdom than this will appear inconceivable; a generosity more beautiful than this will appear impossible; a justice more glorious than this will appear unthinkable; and a mercy more comprehensive than this will be completely unimaginable.

But if, supposing the impossible, there were no permanent abodes, no lofty, everlasting palaces and mansions, with eternal residents – God's joyous servants – to exist forever in those realms, then it would be necessary to reject all of the Divine perfections as meaningless. If there were no hereafter, and no everlasting life, the wisdom, justice, generosity and compassion of that Eternal Monarch, Who from moment to moment is transforming and re-creating both this temporary stopping place and its visitors, would be emptied of their true essences. Yes, although those four perfections are powerful, spiritual elements, and every bit as evident and universal as the four

material elements of light, air, water and earth, in the absence of a hereafter, their existence would have to be denied. For it is obvious that since Divine wisdom, justice, generosity and compassion are absolute, this world and all that it contains cannot be enough to mirror them. Consequently, if there is no other place – no infinitely vast place – where these absolute perfections can be manifested fully, then we would have no choice but to deny the existence of those perfections in this world. Yes, we would have to deny the existence of wisdom, despite the fact that it touches everything that we see in this world. We would have to deny the existence of the generosity that we observe and experience in our own souls and in most other created beings. We would have to deny the existence of justice, indications of which we perceive quite clearly.³⁰ And we would have to deny the existence of

30 According to Nursi there are two kinds of justice: the affirmative and the negative. The affirmative variety consists in the giving of rights to those who deserve them. This form of justice exists in this world in a most obvious fashion, because, as was shown in the Third Truth, it gives beings all of the things they request from their Glorious Creator in accordance with particular criteria and in a manner that is balanced and harmonious. It does not matter whether the things that beings request are requested verbally or through the ‘tongue of mute eloquence’, i.e. the ‘speech of need and necessity’. This kind of justice is, then, as certain and sure as life itself. The other kind of justice – ‘negative justice’ in Nursi’s terms – consists in punishing the unjust; it gives wrongdoers their due by way of requital and punishment. This kind of justice is not manifest fully in this world, even though there are countless signs and indications that permit us to sense its true nature. For example, all of the chastening blows and punitive tribulations that have rained down on rebellious communities, from the Ad and Thamud to the present day, show quite clearly that retributive justice exists and is in fact in a position of domination, despite its occasional apparent absence.

compassion, which we see operating everywhere, on all levels. To deny all of these perfections would also mean denouncing the one from whom all of these perfections pour forth – this wisdom, this generosity, this justice and this mercy – as a treacherous tyrant and an idiotic trickster. God forbid that it should come to that, for it would be a total reversal of the truth, which is impossible. Even the foolish sophists, who denied the existence of everything – including their own selves – would not be ready to countenance such a proposition.

To sum up, just consider the way the world works. Consider the movements of the vast heavens, the magnificent revolutions and the wondrous manifestations that we can see taking place in the cosmos. Consider the imposing gatherings and the rapid dispersals – things coming together to form new life and things separating and departing to manifest death. If all of this took place merely for the fulfilment of a few trivial purposes connected with this brief earthly life, it would be like attaching to a tiny stone a series of wise objectives as vast as a mountain range. And it would be like attaching to a vast mountain range objectives as petty and insignificant as a few tiny pebbles. There would be a mismatch between the vastness of the cosmos and the insignificance of the petty, earthly purposes towards which it has been set. There would be a disconnection between the wondrousness of the workings of the world and the petty, worldly aims to which they are directed. No intellect or wisdom would find this acceptable. This disconnection shows quite clearly that all beings have their faces turned towards the ‘world of meaning’.³¹ Their eyes are fixed on the

31 The ‘world of similitudes’ is that realm in the invisible, immaterial world where the spiritual images and correspondences of

Divine Names and it is there where all things will bear fruit. Their ultimate aims pertain to that world and that world alone. Their substance may be hidden beneath the soil of this world, but it is in the 'world of similitudes' that their flowers will unfold and burst forth. Humans sow – and are sown – in this world, in accordance with their capacity, but it is in the world to come that they will harvest, and be harvested. If you consider the aspect of beings that is turned towards the Divine Names and the hereafter, you will see that each seed – a veritable miracle of power – has an aim, a goal, as vast as a tree. Each flower is like a word of Divine wisdom and has meanings as numerous as flowers on a tree; each fruit is like a wonder of Divine artistry or a poem dictated by Divine mercy, with wise purposes as abundant as the fruits on a tree. As for the fruits which find their way onto our tables, the eating of such fruits is only one of the countless wise reasons for their existence. When we eat a fruit, it fulfils its purposes, expresses its meanings and then dies, only to be buried in our stomachs.³²

These transient beings yield everlasting fruits in another place, leaving permanent forms of themselves there and expressing meanings which are also everlasting; at the same time they also engage in ceaseless praise and glorification of their Maker. And since human beings

all beings in the visible, created realm are to be found.

32 Nursi's use of parables featuring flowers, seeds and fruit is legion. Asked why he used such motifs, he said it was because those phenomena rank among the most delicate, wondrous and remarkable expressions of God's power. He believed that using such imagery was important, especially since naturalists, philosophers and the 'people of misguidance' were unable to read the 'subtle script' written upon flowers, seeds and fruits by the 'pen of destiny and power' and had consequently choked on them, and fallen into the 'swamp of nature'. (*The Words*, p. 99)

become human by perceiving those aspects of beings which are oriented to the hereafter, they are able to find their way to eternity by means of those transient beings. This being the case, it is clear that there must be some other purpose for all these beings that are cast around between life and death, and which are first gathered together and then torn apart.

There are no errors in these analogies and examples. Things are brought together and are then dispersed, at great expense, merely so that pictures can be taken which may then be shown later on the cinema screen. Thus one of the reasons that we are brought here for a short time is so that pictures may be taken and images developed, providing evidence of our deeds that will be displayed on the day of reckoning. Every detail of the individual and social lives that we lead will be registered, recorded and documented, and this account of our deeds, to be revealed at the vast gathering that is the resurrection, will determine how we fare in the world to come. As the Prophet (PBUH) said, 'This world is the sowing ground for the hereafter.' Since this world exists, and since wisdom, generosity, compassion and justice exist within it, it is certain that the hereafter also exists. Indeed, the existence of the hereafter is as certain as the existence of this world. And since everything in this world has aspects which are oriented towards the world to come, in one sense it may be said that this world is proceeding towards the next. Consequently, to deny the hereafter is the same as denying the here-and-now, and all that this present world contains. The hour of death, and the grave, awaits each human being, and so too do the gardens of heaven and the dungeons of hell.

Eleventh Truth

The Gate of Humanity and the Manifestation of the Name 'Truth' (al-Ḥaqq)

God Almighty, Whose right it is to be worshipped, creates human beings within the vast nexus of created entities as the most significant of all of His servants. The significance of humankind has to be seen in the context of the absolute nature of His lordliness (*rubūbiyya*) and the fact that this lordliness is universal, permeating all of His realms. God has made humans the most thoughtful recipients of His glorious declaration and the most comprehensive mirrors held up to His beautiful names. He has created humankind in the fairest of forms and as the most beautiful miracle of His power. Indeed, He has created humans to receive the manifestation of the Greatest Name, together with the quality of the Greatest Name that is inherent in other Names; this He has done in order for them to be able to perceive and assess the contents of the Divine treasures of mercy. God has made the human being an investigator of secrets, and as such He has equipped him more than any other creature with various tools, instruments and measuring equipment.

And yet He has also made humans the most needy of all creatures, and the most delicate, with respect to His infinite gifts. The human being is the poorest and most impotent of all creatures, the one who suffers most from the threat of annihilation, and the one who desires immortality more than any other being. And so while human beings are the most sublime of all creatures in terms of disposition, they are at the same time the poorest and neediest of all animals, subject to pain and wretchedness at every turn in their short stay on this earth.

Given that this is how the human race has been created, is it at all possible that God Almighty should do all of this with human beings and then not send them to that eternal realm to which they are most suited and for which they both long and implore? Is it possible that He should thus negate the whole essence of humankind and act in a manner that is totally at odds with His own truthfulness? Is it at all likely that He would commit an act of injustice which truth itself deems ugly?

Consider again how He Who rules justly, and Whose mercy is absolute, has treated humankind. He has bestowed on the human race such a disposition that it was ready to take on the Supreme Trust – something which the heavens and the mountains were afraid to do. This Trust was offered to humankind so that they would, with their petty crafts and measuring tools, come to know the all-encompassing attributes of perfection; accepting the Trust mean that humans would be able to recognise all of the workings of the Divine and uncover His infinite manifestations. God created humans as the most delicate, weak and vulnerable of all beings, and yet at the same time He entrusted them with the regulation of all animal and vegetal life on earth, allowing them to intervene in the creation's modes of worship and Divine glorification. God created humankind to be a representation in miniature of the entire cosmic process, thus causing human beings to proclaim His glorious lordliness to all other beings, both in word and in deed. As such, God preferred humans over the angels, giving them the rank of vicegerent or representative on earth.

Now, is it at all possible that God would bestow all of these bounties on human beings and then fail to give them eternal bliss – which is the very purpose, result and fruit of all of these duties? Is it at all possible that

He would make humans the most wretched, suffering, humiliated and ill-fated of all His creatures? Is it at all possible that He would give humans the gift of intellect – a gift reflective of His own wisdom, and the luminous means whereby human beings are able to attain happiness – and then turn that gift into a dark instrument of torture? Would this not contradict absolutely and utterly His infinite wisdom and His all-encompassing mercy? Such a thing is surely not possible.

Cast your minds back to the officer in our comparison. Recall that we were able to tell by looking at his identity papers that his rank, duty, wage, equipment and instructions all offer evidence that he exists not for the sake of some temporary battlefield, but that he is exerting himself for the sake of a kingdom elsewhere that is everlasting. Similarly, those to whom truth and certainty have been unveiled will all agree that the subtle mysteries inscribed on the pages of the human heart, together with the senses written on the pages of the human intellect and equipment included in humankind's essential character, are all oriented towards eternity and everlasting happiness. All those things given to human beings have been fashioned in accordance with their ultimate destination.

For example, if the servant of the intellect known as the 'imaginative faculty' were told, 'You can live for a million years and rule over the world, but in the end you will become nothing', it would react with sorrow rather than joy – unless, that is, it were deceived by vain fancies and the interference of the evil-commanding soul. However great something is, if it is ultimately transient, it will never be able to satisfy even the slightest of human faculties.

Humankind's creational disposition is clear: human

desires extend to eternity; human thoughts embrace the whole of creation; and human wishes encompass all of the different varieties of eternal bliss. From this it becomes obvious that human beings have been created for eternity, to which they will, indeed, proceed. This world for humankind is nothing but a temporary hostel: it is nothing but a waiting-room for the hereafter.

Twelfth Truth

The Gate of Messengership (risāla wa tanzīl) and Revelation; the Manifestation of In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

God's most noble Messenger (PBUH) has without a doubt opened up for mankind the path to the hereafter and the gates of Paradise. He has done this through his own striving, supported by the power of his miracles as well as the thousands of decisive verses of the All-Wise Quran – a book that is itself miraculous in forty different ways. And in opening up the path to everlastingness, that Messenger has been supported and affirmed by all of the other prophets, together with all of the miracles that they too have demonstrated. And the claims of these prophets have in turn been affirmed by all of the saints, together with all of the visions and works of wonder that they have experienced and performed. And the saints, for their part, are verified by all of the pure scholars, who bear witness to these truths with their own investigative efforts. Bearing all of this in mind, do you consider it possible that unfounded doubts, no stronger than a fly's wing, would be able to close that path?

From the previous truths it has become clear that

resurrection is a truth with foundations so secure that not even a power capable of lifting up the globe and casting it aside would be able to shake it. For God Almighty Himself affirms this truth with the meaning of all His names and attributes. His most noble Messenger (PBUH) confirms this truth with all of his miracles and other proofs. The All-Wise Quran confirms it with all of its verses and the truths within them. And the cosmos itself bears witness to this truth with all of the creational signs it displays and all of the wise processes that take place within it. Now, given that the Necessary Being has united with the whole of creation – apart from the unbelievers – on the question of resurrection, is it possible that petty, insignificant doubts and satanic insinuations could shake and uproot the truth of the resurrection – a truth built on foundations that are so strong, it resembles a mountain? Could such a thing be possible? Surely the answer must be that it could not.

Now, do not imagine that the proofs of the resurrection are restricted to the twelve truths that we have outlined here. The All-Wise Quran, which has been our instructor through these twelfth truths, indicates thousands of other aspects of the matter; each of those aspects serves as a sign that our Creator will transfer us from this transient realm to an everlasting one. Nor should you imagine that the Divine Names which logically entail the existence of the resurrection are limited to the Names that we have discussed so far – names such as Wise, Generous, Merciful, Just and Preserver. Indeed, all of the Divine Names that are manifested in the ordering of the cosmos require, logically speaking, the existence of the resurrection. In fact, they demand it.

Furthermore, do not think that the creational signs

which indicate the resurrection are confined to those we have mentioned above. For indeed, in the majority of beings there are different aspects and qualities which are like curtains opening left and right: one aspect bears witness to the Maker while the other aspect points to the resurrection. For example, the inherent beauty in humankind's being, created as it is in the 'fairest of forms' (*aḥsan al-taqwīm*), demonstrates the existence of the Maker. At the same time, the fact that human beings, together with all of their comprehensive abilities, are destined to decline and die is itself ample proof of the resurrection. Sometimes, looking at the same aspect in two different ways reveals the existence of both the Maker and resurrection. For example, if one considers the wise ordering, the just balance, the gracious decoration and the merciful bounty inherent in most things, it becomes clear that they demonstrate their own source – namely the powerful hand of a Wise, Generous, Just and Merciful Maker. And if you look at the brief, seemingly insignificant lives of the transient beings that manifest these qualities, despite their power and infinitude, you will see that they point to the hereafter.

In other words, all things recite in silence, and cause others to recite, the words, "I believe in God and in the Last Day."

Conclusion

The preceding twelve truths confirm, support and supplement each other; they come together, as one, to demonstrate the required result. These truths are like strong walls made of steel and diamonds; is there any doubt in existence that is capable of penetrating them? Is there anything that could shake the belief in the hereafter which is enclosed within their perimeter?

Consider the verse, *Your creation and resurrection will be that of a single soul* (31:28). What this means is that the creation and resurrection of all human beings is as easy for Divine power as the creation and resurrection of a single human being. I have explained in detail the truth expressed by this verse in a treatise entitled *Nokta* (The Point), and I will now revisit a few of the comparisons that I used in that work.³³

Taking as our guiding principle the truth that is *And God's is the highest similitude*,³⁴ let us consider the following example. If the manifestation of the sun were in accordance with its own will, one could say that, thanks to the mystery of luminosity, the sun bestowed the mystery of its manifestation on numerous transparent objects with the same ease as on a single particle. Thanks to the mystery of transparency, as far as receiving the reflection of the sun is concerned, the tiny transparent particle is equal to the entire face of the vast ocean. Thanks to the mystery of order, a huge battleship can be overturned with the same ease that a toy boat is overturned by a child's little finger. And thanks to the mystery of obedience, a vast army is caused to move under the same order used by a commander to make a single infantryman move.

Now imagine a vast set of cosmic weighing scales

or balances, big enough to weigh two suns, but also sensitive enough to register the weight of two tiny walnuts. Now, if two suns of equal weight were placed in the pans of the scale, the same power which causes one walnut to be lifted up to the heavens and the other walnut to descend to the ground would move those huge heavenly bodies with the same ease. In this base, deficient, transient realm of contingency, the greatest and the smallest things are equal, while an infinite number of things appear equal to a single thing. Since this is so, it is obvious that, thanks to the mystery of luminosity, transparency, order, obedience and balance, for the Possessor of absolute power, small and great will be the same, as will much and little. Since these things for Him are equal, it is clear that He will be able to summon all human beings to the resurrection with a single blast on the trumpet, just as if they were a single human being. This is by virtue of the mysteries of the luminous manifestations of the infinite and utterly perfect power of His essence. It is by virtue, too, of the transparency of the 'inner dimensions' of things, as well as the order decreed by wisdom and Divine determining. And it is thanks to the complete obedience of all things to His creational demands, as well as the equilibrium which exists in all contingent beings.³⁵

Furthermore, the degrees of strength and weakness a thing possesses depends on how much the opposite of that thing intervenes in it. For example, degrees of heat are determined by the intervention of cold; degrees of beauty are determined by the intervention of ugliness; degrees of light are determined by the intervention of darkness, and so on. But if something exists in and of

³⁵ This equilibrium consists in the fact that for the contingent being, existence and non-existence are equally viable.

itself, and is not accidental, then its opposite cannot interfere with it or intervene in any way; if it did, a union of opposites would have to occur, and that is logically impossible. In something that exists in and of itself, there can be no gradation, no degrees. Now the power of the Possessor of Absolute Power is essential to Him: it is absolute, not accidental like contingent beings. It is therefore impossible that its opposite – impotence – should intervene in it. Since this is the case, it becomes clear that it is as easy for the Glorious Lord to create a whole spring as it is for Him to create a single flower.

If, however, creation were ascribed to causes, then the creation of a single flower would be as difficult for those causes as the creation of a whole spring. For God it is as easy to resurrect and gather together all human beings as it is to resurrect a single human being.

All that we have explained so far with regard to resurrection, including the truths and comparisons which point to it, is derived from the radiance of the All-Wise Quran. Its sole purpose has been to lead the soul to surrender and the heart to acceptance. The Quran now has the right to speak, for its speech is true speech, and all other speech is subordinate to it. Let us then listen to it:

*Say: "With God is the argument that reaches home: if it had been His will, He could indeed have guided you all."*³⁶

Look upon the signs of God's mercy, and see how He restores life to the earth after its death. Verily He it is Who shall bring to life the dead, and He is powerful over

36 Quran 6:149

*all things.*³⁷

*And he makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own [Origin and] Creation: he says, "Who can give life to [dry] bones and decomposed ones [at that]?"*³⁸

O mankind! Fear your Lord! For the convulsion of the Hour [of Judgement] will be a thing terrible!

*The Day ye shall see it, every mother giving suck shall forget her suckling-babe, and every pregnant female shall drop her load [unformed]: thou shalt see mankind as in a drunken riot, yet not drunk: but dreadful will be the Wrath of God.*³⁹

*God! There is no god but He: of a surety He will gather you together against the Day of Judgement, about which there is no doubt. And whose word can be truer than God's?*⁴⁰

As for the righteous, they will be in bliss;

*And the wicked - they will be in the fire.*⁴¹

When the Earth is shaken to her [utmost] convulsion,

And the Earth throws up her burdens [from within],

And man cries [distressed]: "What is the matter with her!" -

On that Day will she declare her tidings:

For that thy Lord will have given her inspiration.

37 Quran 30:50

38 Quran 36:78

39 Quran 22:1-2

40 Quran 4:87

41 Quran 82:13-14

*On that Day will men proceed in companies sorted out,
to be shown the deeds that they [had done].*

*Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of
good, see it.*

*And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall
see it.⁴²*

The [Day] of Noise and Clamour:

What is the [Day] of Noise and Clamour?

*And what will explain to thee what the [Day] of Noise
and Clamour is?*

*[It is] a Day whereon men will be like moths scattered
about,*

And the mountains will be like carded wool.

*Then, he whose balance [of good deeds] will be [found]
heavy,*

Will be in a life of good pleasure and satisfaction.

*But he whose balance [of good deeds] will be [found]
light,-*

Will have his home in a [bottomless] Pit.

And what will explain to thee what this is?

[It is] a Fire blazing fiercely!⁴³

*To God belongs the mystery of the heavens and the earth.
And the decision of the Hour is as the twinkling of an eye
or even quicker: for God has power over all things.⁴⁴*

42 Quran 99:1-8

43 Quran 101:1-11

44 Quran 16:77

Listening to these and other clear verses of the Quran, let us say, "Yes, we believe and we give our assent."

I believe in God, His angels, His books, His messengers and in the Last Day. I believe that all things decreed to occur, whether good or evil, are from God Almighty; that resurrection after death is a reality; that Paradise is a reality; that Hell-fire is a reality; that intercession is a reality; that Munkar and Nakir are a reality; and that God will resurrect those who are in the graves. I bear witness that there is no god but God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

O God, grant blessings to the most delicate, the most noble, the most perfect, the most beautiful fruit of the Tuba of Your mercy, him whom You sent as a mercy to all the worlds, and as a means for our attaining unto the most beautiful, the fairest, purest and most exalted of the fruits of that Tuba, the branches of which are outspread over the hereafter and paradise; O God, protect us and our parents against the fire, and cause us and our parents to enter Paradise with the pious, for the sake of Your chosen Prophet. Amen.

To those who study this treatise with open minds, I say this: Do not be saddened if you are unable to understand this treatise and all its details completely. For many great philosophical minds were, by their own admission, not able to grasp the truth and reality of the resurrection and the hereafter entirely. For example, Ibn Sina said, 'The resurrection cannot be understood by rational criteria.' His judgment was that we must believe in the resurrection on scriptural rather than rational grounds: reason, he said, is unable to aid our belief where the resurrection is concerned. Similarly, all of the scholars of Islam have held unanimously that resurrection rests entirely on traditional proofs, and

that it cannot be examined rationally. Clearly a path as profound and exalted as this cannot suddenly become a public highway for the exercise of reason. And so if we cannot understand the resurrection in detail, let us thank God for the small amount that we *are* able to understand. We must therefore be extremely grateful that the Merciful Creator has, by means of His own mercy and through the radiance of the All-Wise Quran, bestowed on us the knowledge that we have gained about resurrection and the hereafter - and this in an age when imitative belief and blind acceptance are a thing of the past. For however much knowledge each of us has been able to gain, it is enough to save our faith. Let us be content with the amount we have been able to understand, and to increase our comprehension, let us reread the treatise as many times as we are able.

One of the reasons that it is impossible to attain a rational understanding of this subject is that the supreme gathering - the resurrection - occurs through the manifestation of the Greatest Name. And it is only through experiencing and demonstrating the great deeds evident in the maximum manifestation of God's Greatest Name, as well as His other Names, that it is possible to prove the hereafter and resurrection as certain. That is the only way that one can reach absolutely unshakeable belief that the resurrection will be as simple as the creation of spring. This is how things are, and this is how they have been shown in this *Tenth Word*, thanks to the radiance of the Quran. Were it not for this radiance, and had our intellects been left to their own devices, we would be powerless, condemned to accept the resurrection on blind faith and imitation alone.

Addendum to the Tenth Word

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

So [give] glory to God, when you reach evening and when you rise in the morning; Yes, to Him be praise, in the heavens and on earth; and in the late afternoon and when the day begins to decline.

It is He Who brings out the living from the dead, and brings out the dead from the living, and Who Gives life to the earth after it is dead: and thus shall you be brought out [from the dead].

Among His Signs is this, that He created you from dust; and then, - behold, you are men scattered [far and wide]!

And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your [hearts]: In truth in that are Signs for those who reflect.

And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: in truth in that are Signs for those who know.

And among His Signs is the sleep that you take by night and by day, and the quest that you [make for livelihood] out of His Bounty: in truth in that are Signs for those who listen and take heed.

And among His Signs, He shows you the lightning, by way both of fear and of hope, and He sends down rain from the sky and with it gives life to the earth after it is dead: in truth in that are Signs for those who are wise.

And among His Signs is this, that heaven and earth stand by His Command: then when He calls you, by a single call, from the earth, behold, you [straightway] come forth.

To Him belongs every being that is in the heavens and on earth: all are devoutly obedient to Him.

*It is He Who begins [the process of] creation; then repeats it; and for Him it is most easy. To Him belongs the loftiest similitude [we can think of] in the heavens and the earth: For He is Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom.*⁴⁵

In this Ninth Ray there will follow an exposition of a supreme point from these sublime heavenly verses, which demonstrate one of the ‘poles’ of belief, together with an explanation of some of the mighty, sacred proofs concerning the resurrection of the dead. It is thanks to a most subtle manifestation of God’s lordly grace that, some thirty years ago, at the end of his work entitled *Muhakemat* (Reasonings), which was an introduction to his commentaries on the Quran, the Old Said wrote the following line:

“Second Aim: Two Quranic verses alluding to the resurrection of the dead will be expounded. *In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate...*”

It was at this point that he lifted his pen, unable to write any further. Now, may my Compassionate Creator be thanked and praised to the number of signs and indications of the resurrection, after thirty years he has allowed me finally to succeed. Yes, approximately a decade ago, he bestowed on me the gift of the *Tenth* and the *Twenty Ninth Word* – two brilliant, powerful

⁴⁵ Quran, 30:17-27

proofs which expound the Divine decree, *So look to the signs of God's mercy, how He raises to life the earth after its death; He it is Who will raise the dead to life, for He is powerful over all things* (Quran, 30:50), which was the first of the two verses. The truth in these Quranic words is enough to silence those who deny the resurrection. Now, nine or ten years after those two impregnable fortresses of belief in the resurrection of the dead were given, he has bestowed with the present treatise a commentary on the second of the two sublime verses above. This *Ninth Ray*, then, consists of nine sublime 'stations' – indicated by the above-mentioned verses – as well as an important introduction.

Introduction

[This consists of two points, each comprising a concise explanation of one comprehensive result of the numerous spiritual benefits to be had from belief in the resurrection, as well as the consequences of that belief. Each point is a demonstration of how essential this belief is for human life, and especially for human social life, and as such forms one out of numerous proofs of the tenet of belief in the resurrection. It is also a statement of how evident and undoubtable that tenet of belief really is.]

First point

We shall indicate here only four out of the hundreds of proofs that belief in the hereafter is fundamental to man's personal and social life, and that it is the basis of human happiness, prosperity and achievement.

First proof: For children, who form almost half of mankind, death can seem a most grievous and frightening thing. And so for these weak and delicate beings, it is only the thought and promise of paradise which can strengthen their morale and help them come to terms with all of the deaths that they see around them. The thought of Paradise gives hope to their vulnerable, tearful spirits, helping them to cope with death and live on happily. For example, one may console oneself on the death of a beloved brother or friend by saying, "My loved one has died and is now a bird in Paradise. He is flying around there and living much more happily than we are." If there were no Paradise to console them, the frequent deaths of adults or other children would destroy their morale and weaken their resistance, causing their subtle faculties – their spirits, hearts and minds – to weep along with their eyes. Without the consolation of paradise, they would either decline completely or become like crazy, wretched animals.

Second proof: It is only through thoughts of a life in the hereafter that the elderly, who also form a large percentage of mankind, are able to endure the proximity of the grave and find consolation at the thought that their lives will soon be over. After all, death means an end to the lives to which they have been attached so firmly for so long, and so it is only the hope of eternal life that can help them respond to the terrible despair that the thought of impending decline and death brings to their emotional, childlike spirits. Those noble, anxious mothers and fathers are deserving of compassion and in need of tranquillity and peace of mind. Without the promise of eternal life, they would suffer untold spiritual distress and turmoil in their hearts. This world would become a dark

prison for them, and the very life to which they are so attached would become a source of terrible torment.

Third proof: Young people constitute the most vibrant and robust section of the community, but their emotions are often volatile and their dispositions prone to excess. It is only the thought and fear of hellfire that is able to check the turbulent emotions of the young and restrain them from aggression, oppression and self-destruction, thus allowing social life to continue peacefully. Were it not for the fear of hell, the principle of 'might is right' would allow those who are drunk on the excitements and exuberance of youth to run riot, turning the lives of the weak and powerless into a kind of hell and transforming a society of noble human beings into one of abject animality.

Fourth proof: The most comprehensive hub of man's communal existence on earth is family life. Indeed, family life is humankind's chief motivating force; it is a refuge, a fortress of worldly happiness, and for many it is a kind of heaven on earth. Everyone's home is his or her world in miniature. And the life and happiness of the home and family are possible only through sincere, earnest and loyal respect, together with true, tender and self-sacrificing compassion. Such traits are achieved and strengthened by the belief that the members of the family will enjoy companionship and togetherness that are eternal. For often it is only through the belief that personal relationships – the paternal, the maternal, the brotherly, the sisterly – will continue for all eternity that such characteristics may be maintained. One says, for example, "My wife will be my constant companion in an everlasting world and an eternal lifetime. It does not matter that she is now old and her looks have faded, for in the life to come she will have an undying beauty." Consoling himself

with these thoughts, he will tell himself that he must be as kind and devoted to his partner as he can be, for the sake of that permanent togetherness. And this motivates him to treat his elderly wife as lovingly and kindly as possible, as though she were a beautiful houri.⁴⁶ Were human friendships destined to last for only a brief time before ending in eternal separation, the feelings underpinning those relationships would be forced, superficial and, in many cases, totally false. False compassion and artificial respect, born out of animalistic self-interest, would be the norm, prevailing over true respect and compassion and turning what could be a worldly paradise into a living hell.

Thus one of the hundreds of results of belief in the resurrection is connected to humankind's social life. Above we have outlined four proofs out of the hundreds of aspects and benefits of this single consequence, and if you compare them with the other proofs, you will see that the truth of the resurrection is made certain by the innate need that humankind has for it. Just as the existence of hunger makes certain the existence of food to satiate that hunger, the existence of an intense need for eternity and immortality makes the existence of resurrection and the hereafter an absolute certainty. It also goes to show that if the consequences of the truth of resurrection were to be absent from human consideration, humankind would fall from its position as a most noble and elevated creation and descend to being nothing more than a race of decaying corpses fed on by microbes.

The sociologists, moralists and politicians who lead humankind and who are concerned with its most pressing social and moral issues should be aware of

⁴⁶ Explain houri

this! If there is no resurrection and hereafter, how do they propose to fill the vacuum? With what can they dress humanity's wounds and cure its sicknesses?

Second point

This is a brief explanation of one of the many proofs which proceed from the testimony to resurrection provided by the other pillars of belief. It is as follows:

All of the miracles that indicate the messengership of Muhammad (PBUH) and provide evidence for the truth of his prophethood are themselves, when taken together, proof for the occurrence of the resurrection. For after Divine unity, the subject emphasised most by the Prophet was the resurrection of the dead. Furthermore, all of his miracles and proofs which affirm all of the previous prophets bear witness to the same truth. The testimony of the phrase, 'and in His Scriptures', which makes crystal clear the testimony of the phrase, 'and in His Prophets', also testifies to the same truth. It is like this:

All of the miracles, truths and proofs which bear witness to the truthfulness of the miraculous Quran also bear witness to the reality and the occurrence of the resurrection. For almost a third of the Quran deals with this subject, and at the beginning of most of its short chapters there are verses which allude to it. It expresses and proves the same truth both implicitly and explicitly in thousands of its verses. For example:

*When the sun is folded up.*⁴⁷

*O men, fear your Sustainer; the trembling of the Hour is an awesome event;*⁴⁸

47 Quran, 81:1

48 Quran, 22:1

*When the earth is convulsed;*⁴⁹

*When the heavens are torn asunder;*⁵⁰

*When the heavens are torn apart;*⁵¹

*Concerning what they dispute;*⁵²

*Has the story reached you, of the overwhelming event?*⁵³

At the beginning of thirty or forty chapters, the Quran demonstrates with complete certainty that the resurrection is the most important and necessary truth in the universe. However, in other verses it also sets forth various persuasive arguments for this truth. All in all, the truth of the resurrection emerges like the sun from the thousands of declarations and statements in the Quran. Is there any possibility, then, that belief in the hereafter should be false? We have looked here at only a single indication in one of its verses, which has yielded before our eyes the fruits of numerous learned, cosmic truths in the Islamic sciences. Is it possible to deny the sun? Is it possible to deny the existence of the universe? Would this not be impossible and absurd? Is it possible for the thousands of words, promises and threats issued by that most proud and serious Monarch to be false? Is such a thing even likely? That glorious spiritual monarch has for fourteen centuries ruled over innumerable spirits, hearts, minds and souls. It has, within the bounds of truth and reality, raised, sustained and trained them. As such, then, even a single sign of His should be enough to prove the resurrection. Instead of a single sign, however, we have thousands of clear, explicit statements confirming the reality of resurrection and

49 Quran, 99:1

50 Quran, 82:1

51 Quran, 84:1

52 Quran, 78:1

53 Quran, 88:1

the hereafter. Is the torment of hellfire not necessary for the fools who do not recognise this most obvious truth? Would such punishment not be pure justice?

All of the revealed scriptures and sacred books which came before the Quran have proven the reality of resurrection and the hereafter in a manner befitting their own times and contexts. The Quran, which prevails over all times, proves repeatedly, and in detail, that which these other scriptures have outlined in a less clear and systematic fashion. It may be said, therefore, that these other scriptures endorse with a thousand signatures that which the Quran has taught and elucidated so comprehensively.

At the end of the *Third Ray*, there are passages in which the testimony to belief in the resurrection and the hereafter given by the other pillars of faith is outlined. The principles of belief in the prophets (*rusul*) and in the Divinely revealed scriptures (*kutub*) are given particular emphasis, and since these passages are relevant to the discussion in hand, I would like to revisit them here. Together, both principles offer convincing proof of the resurrection, which is offered in the form of a succinct yet extremely powerful, doubt-dispelling supplication. It is as follows:

“O my Compassionate Sustainer!

“I have understood from the teaching of Your noble Messenger (PBUH) and from the Quran that they – that is, the Quran and the Messenger – and all of the other prophets and scriptures have testified unanimously to the manifestations of Your attributes of perfection. They have borne witness to the reflections of those Names related to Your beauty (*jamāl*) and Your glory (*jalāl*), examples of which can be seen in this world and which will continue to shine ever more radiantly in the

world to come. They have borne witness to the fact that Your bounties, samples of which can be observed in this transitory realm, will persist eternally and with increasing resplendence in the everlasting realm of bliss. And they have attested to the fact that those who long for Divine perfection and bounties in this world will reach them in the next world and accompany them for all eternity.

“Also, relying on hundreds of evidentiary miracles and clear signs, Your most noble Messenger (PBUH) and the All-Wise Quran have, more than anyone or anything else, brought to both human beings and jinn the good news of eternal happiness for those who believe and hell for those who persist in their misguidance. And all of the other prophets with their radiant spirits have brought this news too, as have the saints, who are spiritual ‘poles’ with light-filled hearts. The purified scholars with their enlightened minds have also delivered these glad tidings. For all of these bringers of news have relied on those repeated threats and punishments of Yours that can be found in all of the sacred scriptures. And they have trusted in Your sacred attributes, believing in Your power and Your mercy, Your favour and Your wisdom. They have had faith in Your functions, in the dignity of Your glory and the sovereignty of Your lordliness. And the news they have brought, they have brought as a result of their illuminations (*kaşfiyât*), visions and beliefs, all of which are at the level of ‘knowledge of certainty’ (*‘ilm al-yaqîn*). Their belief in this truth is firm and all of them testify to it unanimously.

“O All-Powerful and All-Wise One! O Most Merciful and Compassionate Lord! O Generous One Who is True to His Promise! O All-Compelling One of Glory, Dignity, Grandeur and Wrath! You are elevated and exalted

above any possibility of dealing in falsehood; You are totally and utterly above lying to Your countless loyal friends or going back on Your promises. It is unthinkable that, in not keeping Your word, You would act against Your own attributes and functions, or deny that which the sovereignty of Your lordliness demands. It is utterly unimaginable that You would fail to answer the endless prayers and supplications of those innumerable servants whom You love and who love You, and Who attract Your love and acceptance by believing in You and obeying You. Furthermore, You are totally and utterly above confirming the people of unbelief and misguidance in their rejection of resurrection. Indeed, why would You confirm them, given that with their disbelief and rebellion, and their denial of Your promises, they offend the magnificence of Your grandeur and impugn Your dignity, Your glory and the honour of Your Godliness? Why would You confirm them – they who sadden the compassion of Your lordliness? We declare Your justice, beauty and mercy to be totally and utterly free of such boundless tyranny, such ugliness. We believe with all our might that the testimony given by the prophets, the saints and the purified scholars to the reality of the hereafter is true beyond all doubt. For they are Your truthful envoys and the heralds of Your sovereignty, with knowledge that has passed through the levels of ‘knowledge of certainty’ and ‘vision of certainty’ (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*), finally reaching the level of ‘absolute truth of certainty’ (*haqq al-yaqīn*). They have attested to the existence of the treasures of Divine mercy in the hereafter and to the stores of Divine bounty in that everlasting realm. And they have borne witness to the wondrously lovely manifestations of Your Beautiful Names, which will be manifested totally in the abode of bliss. We believe that the testimony they give is absolutely true and in

conformity with the reality which we experience. And we are sure that the events which they foretell are true and will most definitely occur. They believe that the supreme ray of Your Name 'Truth', which is the sun-like source and protector of all realities, is this truth of the resurrection and the 'great gathering', and they teach this reality to Your servants.⁵⁴

"O God! For the sake of what they teach, and in veneration of it, grant us and all students of the *Risale-i Nur* perfect belief and an easy, peaceful and happy death. And allow us to receive their intercession. Amen!"

All of the proofs that demonstrate the veracity of the revealed scriptures, together with all of the miracles and evidences proving the messengership of God's Beloved (PBUH), provide us with indirect proof of the reality of the hereafter, which is what the prophets, saints and scholars teach above everything else. Similarly, most of the evidences for the existence and unity of the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*) also provide indirect proof of the existence and opening up of an eternal realm of bliss, which will be the supreme manifestation of lordliness and divinity. As the following paragraphs explain and prove, the existence of the Necessarily Existent One, together with most of His attributes, functions and names – lordliness, Godliness, mercy, grace, wisdom, justice and the like – necessitate with utmost certainty the existence of the world to come. Furthermore, they demand the resurrection of the dead, a final judgment, and the existence of eternal realms of reward and punishment.

⁵⁴ The 'great gathering' is the bringing together of all human beings and jinn who have ever existed, in order to be questioned for their deeds at the Great Tribunal on the plain of resurrection.

Since there is a God Who is both pre- and post-eternal, most certainly there is a hereafter – the everlasting place of manifestation for the sovereignty (*salṭana*) of His Godhead (*ulūhiyya*).

It is clear that in the universe as a whole, and in living beings in particular, there is a wise, compassionate and majestic lordliness at play; it is absolute in nature and can be seen everywhere. Since this is the case, it is certain that there will be an eternal realm of bliss which will save that lordliness from being impugned and belittled. It will deliver the wisdom that is experienced here from accusations of purposelessness, and the compassion that we witness from claims of cruelty. There can be no doubt that such a realm exists and that it shall indeed be entered.

Furthermore, we see all around us unlimited bounties, favours and gifts, together with innumerable instances of absolute grace, mercy and generosity. This must surely show all whose minds and hearts are not dead that behind the veil of the Unseen is One Who is All-Merciful and Compassionate. The absence of a hereafter – an eternal realm with the promise of eternal life – would make a mockery of all of the bounties and bestowals in this world. It is only the existence of the world to come which makes the bounties in this world truly bountiful, or the acts of bestowal and generosity we see here truly generous. The absence of a realm of bliss would turn Divine bounties into acts of deception, and Divine favours into the blows of an enemy. It would turn Divine mercy into torment and Divine giving and bestowing into acts of treachery. Such a thing is utterly unthinkable.

Each springtime, a pen of power inscribes a hundred thousand books on the narrow page that is the face

of the earth; this it does tirelessly, without error and in full view of all eyes. The One Who holds that pen has promised a hundred times that He will write a fine, immortal book on a much broader page – a book far more easy to write than this book known as ‘spring’, which is written on the narrow page of this realm in letters and words that are often confused and intermingled. And He has promised to let us read it. He mentions this book in all of His decrees. To be sure, most of the book has already been written; the resurrection and the Final Judgment are footnotes yet to be added, together with the notebooks of people’s actions.

There are many truths which necessitate the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead. From among them, those mentioned below are of supreme importance.⁵⁵

First there is the earth. It is not difficult to see why the earth is given such importance. For it is home to a multiplicity of creatures. It is a dwelling-place, a source, a factory and an exhibition centre for hundreds of thousands of constantly changing kinds of living beings and beings with spirits. It is the heart and hub of all things; one might say that it is the summary and result of the entire universe, and the reason for its creation. No wonder, then, that it is held in such high esteem. Despite its smallness, it is always presented

⁵⁵ This sentence, which does not appear in the original, was interpolated by the translator for ease of understanding. The original Turkish talks of six ‘sinces’ – i.e. paragraphs beginning with the word ‘Since’ – which comes across as rather unwieldy in English. The translator has thus chosen to rearrange the passages slightly in order to render the translation coherent and flowing. The meaning of the original has not been disturbed in any way.

as an equal to the mighty heavens; in the Divinely revealed decrees, we always read, 'Sustainer (*rabb*) of the heavens and the earth...'

And then there is humankind. The human race rules over the earth, which is as we have described above, and in doing so is able to subject most of the living beings on earth to its own authority. Human beings list and enumerate each remarkable species, which they order and display, attracting the attention and admiration not only of other humans and jinn, but also of the residents of the heavens and the whole universe. And they attract to themselves the appreciative gaze of the Owner of the universe, thus gaining great importance and worth. Human beings show through their arts and sciences that they themselves are the reason that the universe was created; the human being is the universe's most important result, its most precious fruit. Humankind is nothing less than God's representative (*khaliifa*) on earth. And since human beings have ordered and displayed most excellently the miraculous arts of the world's Maker, the punishment they brought on themselves by their original disbelief and rebellion against God has been postponed, and they have been allowed to live on earth and achieve a certain degree of success...

And then there is an extremely powerful, wise and compassionate Disposer, Who creates the mighty earth as a treasury of every kind of metal and mineral imaginable, thus attending to the needs of humanity in a way that surpasses humankind's own strength and will. He does so because humans, who are weak and needy by creation and disposition, have innumerable needs and are subject to innumerable pains and injuries. And He makes the earth a storehouse of every kind of food, and a shop that stocks everything pleasing

to humankind. This is how He cares for the human race, nurturing it in this way and giving it what it desires...

Now this Sustainer, Who loves humankind and Who causes humankind to love Him, is absolutely just and carries out everything with absolute wisdom. And He is enduring: He has eternal realms at His disposal, for the pre-eternal and eternal splendour of that Sovereign's rule cannot possibly be displayed in full in the limited confines of this brief earthly existence and in the short lifetime of human beings during their temporary stay in this transient realm. Now the wrongdoing and rebellion that occur among humans are excessive and totally at odds with the universe's order, justice, balance and beauty. But the denial and disbelief of certain human beings, and the treachery they commit against their Benefactor, Who nurtures them tenderly, go unpunished in this world. Cruel oppressors pass their lives in ease, while the wretched oppressed live in hardship. Absolute justice – traces of which are visible throughout the universe – is utterly opposed to the idea that cruel tyrants and those they oppress should be equal in death, and would in no way allow this...

From all of the creatures in the universe, the Owner of the universe has chosen the earth, and from all of the creatures on earth, the earth's Owner has chosen humankind, and has bestowed on the human race high rank, esteem and importance. And out of the whole of humankind, He has chosen the prophets, the saints and the purified ones – true human beings who conform to the aims of His lordliness. He has taken them as friends and addressees, for through their belief they make Him love them. He has bestowed on them miracles and other signs of success, and He has punished their enemies with blows from the heavens. And out of these worthy and lovable friends He has

chosen their leader, their source of pride, Muhammad (PBUH). For long centuries, He has illuminated half the earth and a fifth of humanity with the Muhammadan light, which, together with Islam and the Quran, has made the purposes of the universe apparent. It is as though the whole universe was created for him. Now although he deserved an infinitely long life in return for his infinitely valuable service, he lived for no more than sixty-three years – a brief life that was filled with striving and great hardship. Given that this is the case, is there any possibility that he should not then be resurrected together with all of his friends and peers? Is it possible that they should not at this moment be alive in spirit? Is it possible that they have been annihilated for all eternity? God forbid, a hundred thousand times! The whole of the universe and the reality that is the world demand that he be resurrected. Indeed, they implore the Owner of the universe that he should be alive...

In the *Seventh Ray*, also known as *The Supreme Sign*, thirty-three powerful instances of consensus have proven that the universe emerged from a single source and is the property of a single proof. Those proofs, each of which is as strong as a mountain, have demonstrated clearly His Unity and Oneness. They have shown the means of the Divine perfections and how, through unity and oneness, all beings are like soldiers or subservient officials, acting under order. They have shown, too, that with the coming of the hereafter, Divine perfections are saved from decline, absolute justice is saved from being a cruel mockery, and universal wisdom is rescued from being seen as foolish absurdity. In proving the hereafter they have shown, too, that all-embracing mercy is truly mercy and not foolish absurdity, and that power is truly

power and not base impotence...

The truths in the six passages above – six out of hundreds of truths connected to belief in God - necessitate the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead. They show that abodes of reward and punishment shall be thrown open so that the importance, centrality and value of the earth, and of humankind, may be realised in full. God is the All-Wise Disposer, Creator and Sustainer of the earth and of the human race, and those abodes will be opened up so that His justice, wisdom, mercy and sovereignty may be established in all their absoluteness. Those true friends of the Eternal Sustainer who long for everlastingness will thus be saved from eternal annihilation, and the most eminent and worthy friend of all (PBUH) will receive recompense for all of the sacred services he has performed, which have pleased all beings and made them indebted to him. Furthermore, the existence of those eternal realms, whose doors will be flung open at the end of time, will demonstrate the perfection of all of the Eternal Sovereign's attributes: His power will be rescued from accusations of impotence, His wisdom from accusations of foolishness and His justice from accusations of tyranny.

In short, since God exists, the hereafter exists. And it exists beyond any shadow of a doubt.

The three pillars of belief mentioned above – Divine unity, prophethood and scriptures - bear witness to the reality of the resurrection. But the remaining pillars of belief – namely angels and Divine determining – also necessitate resurrection and provide powerful testimony to the existence of an eternal realm.

For example: All of the evidence which points to the existence of angels and their duties of worship,

including the witness borne by people who have seen and spoken with them, is also indirect proof of the existence of the hereafter. That is to say, it confirms indirectly the existence of the world of spirits, the world of the unseen, and the eternal realms of the world to come, including paradise and hell, which will in the future be populated by humans and jinn. For angels are able, with Divine permission, to see these worlds and enter them. Furthermore, all of the high-ranking angels who on occasion have met and conversed with humans – Gabriel is an example – have asserted unanimously that these worlds exist, and that they have seen and visited them personally. Just as we can be sure that America exists even though we personally may not have been there, we can also be sure – thanks to the information provided by angels – that the hereafter exists. The word of the angels has the strength of a hundredfold consensus, and so we have no reason to doubt the reality of the eternal realm, of the hereafter, and of heaven and hell. And this is why we believe in them.

As for Divine determining, all of the evidences which prove this pillar, and which have been included in the *Twenty-Sixth Word*, also bear witness indirectly to the resurrection of the dead, the reckoning of humankind's deeds on the supreme scales at the final judgment, and the publishing of the pages of these deeds. For before our very eyes here on earth, the appointed courses and trajectories of all things are recorded on the 'tablets' of order and equilibrium. Similarly, the life-stories of all living beings are inscribed in their memories or in their seeds. And we believe that the deeds of all beings with spirits – humankind in particular – are being recorded and preserved continuously on the 'Preserved Tablet'. Now this comprehensive recording and preserving

cannot be without wisdom and purpose. Indeed, one must conclude that deeds are being inscribed and preserved in order to be accessed at the supreme tribunal that is part of the final reckoning, where permanent reward and punishment will be meted out when the human race finally stands before Divine judgment. Otherwise such extensive and precise acts of inscribing, recording and preserving would be meaningless, without purpose and totally at odds with wisdom and reality.

Furthermore, if there were no resurrection, all of the sound meanings of the 'book of the universe', written with the 'pen of Divine determining', would become null and void. And such a thing is impossible. In fact it is as impossible as denying the existence of the universe itself. And that would be sheer lunacy.

In short, these five pillars of belief demand, through the strength of their combined proofs, the existence of the sixth pillar, namely the resurrection and the final judgment. They demand also the existence and opening up of the realms of the hereafter, and they bear witness to these with absolute certainty.

It is thus because there are so many unshakeable supports and proofs for the reality of the resurrection and the hereafter that almost one third of the miraculous Quran deals directly with this pillar of faith. In fact, it makes this pillar the foundation stone for all of its truths, and it constructs everything on that basis.

Part Two of the Addendum

The first of nine 'stations' comprising the nine levels of proof of the resurrection are indicated miraculously in this Quranic verses:

*Glory be to God in the evening and at dawn, and praise is His in the heavens and earth at nightfall and when the day begins to decline. It is He Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living, and gives life to the earth after it has died; thus, too, shall you be brought forth.*⁵⁶

The clear and most brilliant evidence of God's decree with regard to resurrection that is contained in these verses will now be explained, God willing.⁵⁷

In connection with the twenty-eighth 'property of life' it was explained that life indicates the six pillars of faith and provides evidence for them.

The most important reason for the creation of the cosmos is life. Indeed, since it is the very essence of the cosmos, there is no way that it can be restricted to this world, which is transient, painful and lacking in so many ways. And so the purpose of the tree of life, the splendour of which can be understood from its twenty-nine 'properties', is the eternal life of the hereafter. Indeed, eternal life is the only fruit of that tree which is worthy of its magnificence. The cosmos was created for the sake of life in the eternal realm, where even stones, trees and soil will be alive. Were this not the

⁵⁶ Quran, 30:17-19.

⁵⁷ Although the 'station' is incomplete, Nursi included it in this treatise because of the relevance of the subject of life to the resurrection. Furthermore, he points out, it contains a subtle and profound allusion to Divine determining at the end of the section on life.

case, the tree of life in this earthly realm, decorated as it is with so many meaningful means and mechanisms, would be a tree without fruit: it would yield no benefit or truth for animate beings in general, or for human beings in particular. Now humans are, in their essence and with all their faculties and abilities, far superior to other living beings; indeed, they are the most elevated and important of all creation. Were the tree of life to be fruitless, however, humanity would descend to a level far lower than all other creatures, its happiness totally destroyed. Humankind would become the most wretched and humiliated of all creatures.

Were the tree of life a fruitless tree, human intellect – the most precious of God’s gifts to humankind – would become like a knife, tearing through the human heart with each memory of the pains of the past and with every fear of the future. When life is seen as purposeless, human reason mixes nine pains with every pleasure and thus ends up becoming humanity’s own sworn enemy. Clearly, then, the notion that the tree of life is a fruitless tree can never be anything but false. The life we experience in this world is itself decisive proof of the pillar of faith that is belief in the hereafter, in a life and a world yet to come. Every springtime, the life of this world displays before us more than three hundred thousand examples of resurrection.

Consider this: the All-Powerful Agent Who provides you with all of the means and mechanisms, all of the tools and instruments that you need for your life, does so with wisdom, mercy and tender concern. He sees to all of your needs, whether it is in your body, your garden or your homeland. He is the One Who hears and answers the private supplication that your stomach makes for sustenance when it is hungry and in need. The prayer that your stomach offers for the

sake of its life and survival is one that He accepts by providing you with numerous delicious foods. Now, bearing in mind that He answers your stomach's supplication, is it at all likely that He would fail to be aware of you, or hear you, when you ask Him for eternal life? Is it at all possible that He would not provide you with the means to everlastingness, which is, after all, the supreme goal of the human species? Is it possible that He would refuse to accept the greatest, most significant, most universal prayer for eternity offered up by humankind? Is it possible that He would not heed this most insistent invocation made by the human species, the most important creature in the cosmos, the ruler of all earth? After all, this is a prayer so forceful that it resounds throughout the heavens. Is it at all imaginable, then, that He would not pay this prayer the same attention that He pays to the petty little prayer made by the human stomach? Is it at all thinkable that He would answer and gratify this one, but not that? For if this were the case, His perfect wisdom would no longer be wise; His infinite mercy would no longer be merciful. Is such a thing possible? I would have to say no, a hundred thousand times, no!

Again, consider the concern that He shows to the most minute of beings, hearing its tiny voice, remedying its pains and answering its cries. You see how He nourishes it with the utmost care and consideration, motivating creatures far greater than that being to rush to its aid. Now, is it at all likely that He would listen to the almost inaudible cries of the tiniest of His creatures and yet not hear the thunderous voices of those who supplicate for eternal life - the greatest, most precious, most delicate kind of life that there is? Is it possible that He would pay no attention to these powerful prayers and invocations for everlastingness?

It would be like taking the utmost care to equip a single soldier while ignoring a vast and obedient army! It would be like paying attention to a speck of dust while overlooking the sun! It would be like hearing the buzz of a wasp and yet remaining deaf to the roar of the thunder! No, such a thing is absolutely unthinkable.

The All-Powerful, All-Wise Being, Whose mercy, love and concern are infinite, loves His own artistry and causes Himself to be loved by those for whom He has unending love. Given that this is the case, can human reason accept that such a Being would annihilate forever, through death, a life that loves Him so much? Life is itself lovable, worshipping its Maker instinctively. Would that Maker extinguish this life and destine it to eternal nothingness, along with the spirit, which is the jewel and essence of life? Is it at all imaginable that He would offend and insult His lover and beloved for all eternity, injuring His lover's feelings and denying Himself – and causing others to deny – the mystery of His mercy and the light of His love? No, this is simply impossible.

An absolute beauty that decorates the cosmos with its own manifestation, making all creatures rejoice at its absolute mercy, is without a doubt above such ugliness, such pitilessness. An absolute beauty is exempt from such abominable behaviour.

The result is that those human beings who consider the existence of life and truly understand its purpose will themselves become manifestations of eternal life in the everlasting realm of the hereafter, in the eternity of paradise. This is what we believe. To illustrate this, consider the shining of brilliant objects on earth that reflect the sunlight. Bubbles glinting on the surface of the ocean as the light hits them, and their replacement

by other, similar bubbles once they have departed, are like mirrors held up to a whole series of imaginary suns. Yet those flashes are clearly the manifestation, through reflection, of the one supreme sun. With their many immaterial tongues, those bubbles speak of one sun alone, and they point to it with their radiant, immaterial fingers.

Similarly, the Name 'Giver of Life' (*al-Muhyī*) has its supreme manifestation on all of the animate beings on the face of the earth and in the depths of the oceans. Through the power of that Living (*ḥayy*) and Self-Subsistent (*qayyūm*) Creator, all of those animate beings display the attribute of life briefly, then disappear behind the veil of the unseen, saying, 'O Eternally Living One!', thus making room for those who are to follow them. This process represents a series of testimonies and indications to the life and necessary existence of the Living, Self-Subsistent Being.

Similarly, there are traces of Divine knowledge visible in the way that all beings are ordered, and there is a power that works its will throughout the whole of the creation. And there is a volition and a purposefulness that dominates the ordering and administration of the cosmos. Now, all of the proofs and evidences which bear witness to Divine knowledge, Divine power, Divine volition and Divine purposefulness are also proofs and evidences indicating the reality of that Living, Self-Subsistent Being. Add to these the signs and miracles that attest to the messengership of the prophets - who are the means of lordly speech and Divine revelation - and the indications that attest to the existence of the seven essential attributes of God, and you will see that these too testify unanimously to the existence in unity of the Living, Self-Subsistent Creator. For if vision exists in a being, there must also

be life. If there is hearing, that too is a sign of life. The existence of speech also points to the presence of life, as does also the existence of will and the ability to choose.

Similarly, there are attributes in the cosmos such as absolute power, all-embracing will and comprehensive knowledge whose existence is self-evident: one knows they are there because one sees the traces that they leave. These attributes also provide ample evidence for the life and necessary existence of the Living and Self-Subsistent being. They bear witness to His everlasting life, one iota of whose radiance is enough to illuminate the whole of the cosmos. And one manifestation of that life is enough to give life to the hereafter with all of its unimaginable vastness. For the most important goal of the cosmos is life, and animate beings constitute the most prevalent form of creation. The sheer superabundance of animate creation is a reflection of its value and living beings animate the hostel that is this world with the incessant coming and going of their trains and caravans. Furthermore, the earth, which is filled with a vast multitude of animate beings, is constantly being emptied and replenished as the various species are renewed and increased in number. This adds up to nothing less than a continuous resurrection of microbes!

Finally, consciousness and intellect, which form the distilled essence of life, together with the spirit, which is life's subtle and stable core, are also created all over the earth and are increased and multiplied unceasingly. It is as if the earth itself were animated and exhilarated by life, intellect, consciousness and spirit.

If we take all of the above into consideration, it becomes clear that it is unthinkable that the heavenly

bodies – which are greater, more luminous, more significant and yet more subtle than the earth – should be dead, inert, lifeless and dumb. Consequently there must exist living, conscious beings who animate the skies, the suns and the stars, imbuing them with their own vitality and manifesting the result of the purpose behind the creation of the heavens. And it is clear that these beings must also have been in receipt of Divine revelation. These creatures, who are created in a way that makes them suited to existence in the celestial realms, are none other than the angels.

Similarly, the innermost essence of life proves symbolically the pillar of belief in prophets. This is because the cosmos was created for the sake of life, and life is one of the supreme manifestations of the Living, Self-Subsistent and Eternal Being. Life is one of His perfect designs, one of the most beautiful examples of His artistry. And the eternal livingness of God shows itself predominantly through the sending of messengers and the revelation of scripture. If there were prophets but no scripture, God's eternal livingness would remain unknown. When a person speaks, it is clear that he or she must be alive. Similarly, it is the prophets and the revealed scriptures that make known the words and decrees of the Being Who speaks and issues commands and prohibitions from behind the veil of the unseen – from a world that is veiled from us by the cosmos itself. Just as the life which exists in the cosmos bears certain witness to the necessary existence of the Living and Eternal One, it also points indirectly to the pillars of belief that are the sending of messengers and the revealing of Divine scripture. For the sending of prophets and the revealing of God's word are rays and reflections of that eternal life. The messengership of Muhammad (PBUH) and the

revelation of the Quran are of particular importance, for they are like the very mind and spirit of life, and their veracity is as indisputable as the existence of life itself.

Life, then, is the very essence of the cosmos, and consciousness and feeling are the very essence of life. Similarly, the intellect is the very essence of consciousness and the spirit is the pure, untainted essence, the stable and autonomous core, of life itself. Furthermore, the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is, in both its inner and outer aspects, the quintessence of life and the spirit of the cosmos, while his messengership is the very essence of the feelings, consciousness and intellect of the cosmos. And Muhammad's prophethood is the very light and essence of the consciousness of the cosmos. The revelation, too, is the spirit of the life of the cosmos and the intellect within its consciousness.

If the light of Muhammad's messengership were to depart from the cosmos and disappear, the whole cosmos would crumble and die. If the Quran were to leave us, the cosmos would go mad; the earth's uncomprehending head would lose its senses and it would grow dizzy and lose its sanity. It would be nothing short of the end of the world.

Life also looks to the pillar that is belief in Divine determining, evidence of which it provides, albeit indirectly. For life is the light of the manifest world; life dominates material existence, of which it is both the aim and the result. Life is the most comprehensive mirror of the Creator of the universe; it is in a sense like an index or sample of Divine activity. Now, the mystery of life necessitates that the creatures in the unseen realm – the past and the future – who have

been and who will come are predisposed to conform to order and regularity, to being known and observed. It also necessitates that their individual lives be specified, ordered and regulated in line with the creative commands which, in one sense at least, make up their lives. This is how life provides indirect proof of Divine determining.

The original seed and root of a tree, as well as the seeds contained in the fruits it gives as its final outcome, all manifest a sort of life: they are in fact no less living than the tree itself. Indeed, they bear witness to laws of life working within their own selves that are more subtle than those of the tree. Similarly, the seeds and roots left by the preceding autumn, as well as the seeds and roots that will be left to subsequent springs after this spring has departed – all of these are places in which life is manifested. Spring itself is a vast manifestation of life, and subject to life's laws. In the same way, each of the branches and twigs of the vast tree of the cosmos has a past and a future. They form a chain consisting of past and future stages and conditions. The multiple stages of existence of each species, and each member of each species, exists in God's knowledge, where they form a chain of being. In both its external existence and its existence in the knowledge of God, each being is a manifestation of universal life that draws all aspects of its livingness from these meaningful, vital 'tablets' of Divine determining.

The world of the spirits is part of the world of the unseen, and it is full of the essence of life, the matter of life and the spirits, which are in turn the quintessence of life. Now, the world of the spirits demands most certainly that the past and the future – which are themselves forms of the unseen world – should also receive the manifestation of life. In addition, when a

thing exists within God's knowledge, it exists there with perfect order and meaning: the vital stages of its life, its trajectory and the fruits that it will produce are all in a sense present. And because of this we may say that it demonstrates the manifestation of life in a way. Such a manifestation of life, which is the light that shines from the sun of eternal life, cannot be limited to this manifest world, this present time, this external existence. On the contrary, each world receives the manifestation of that light in accordance with its receptive ability, and the cosmos together with all of its worlds, realms and domains are alive and illumined because of it. Were this not the case, it would be as the misguided imagine it to be: beneath its temporary and apparent life, each world would be nothing but a vast and terrifying corpse, a ruin of decay and darkness.

The mystery of life, then, helps us to understand one broad aspect of the pillar of belief that is Divine determining, and indirectly bears witness to it. Just as the life and vitality of all the existent, visible objects in the manifest world become apparent from their orderliness and the consequences of their existence, so too do past and future creatures, which reside in the unseen world, have an immaterial existence and a sort of life, as well as a spiritual presence in God's knowledge. Traces of this life and presence are made known to us by means of the Tablet of Divine Determining and Decree, as well as by the various stages and circumstances of their external lives and existences.

Part Three of the Addendum

This concerns a question regarding the resurrection of the dead:

The frequently repeated Quranic verse *It will be nothing but a single cry* ⁵⁸ and the verse *The command of the Hour will take place in the twinkling of an eye* ⁵⁹ together show that the resurrection of the dead and the ‘great gathering’ will occur in a single instant. At the resurrection, spirits will return to their bodies and those bodies will then be revived and reconstructed. This extraordinary and altogether awesome occurrence may be difficult for human reason, with all its limitations, to accept. For those who are in doubt, and who may need tangible examples by way of illustration, there are three aspects that need to be covered and they are as follows:

The first aspect

An analogy for the return of spirits to their bodies may be found in the example of a military bugle call, which assembles the members of a well-disciplined army after they have dispersed. The ‘bugle’ of the archangel Israfil is no less powerful than an army bugle. The spirits, too, are exceedingly more subjugated, disciplined and obedient than the soldiers of an army: this much can be understood from their reply, in post-eternity, of “Yes, we accept!” to the question, “Am I not your Sustainer?”, which was asked of them by God in pre-eternity. In the *Thirtieth Word* it has been demonstrated with decisive proofs that not only spirits but also all particles form a Divine army, acting as soldiers under His command.

58 Quran, 36:29, 49, 53; 38:15; 54:31

59 Quran, 16:77

The second aspect

The revivification of bodies may be likened to the switching on, from a single source and in a single instant, of a hundred thousand bright electric lights to illuminate a city on festival night. If that is possible – as it is – then it is also possible to light up, in exactly the same way, a hundred million lamps scattered over the face of the earth. Electricity is one of God's creatures, and as such is trained and instructed in regularity and obedience to orders. Now if electricity, as the servant and candleholder in the Divine guest-house, can accomplish this, then surely it will be possible for the resurrection of the dead to occur. Furthermore, it will occur in the twinkling of an eye and within the bounds of the regular laws which stem from Divine wisdom – something which thousands of luminous servants such as electricity represent.

The third aspect

The reconstruction of bodies, also in a single instant, is analogous to the perfect reconstruction, within a space of a few days, of all of the trees in springtime. The trees revived in the spring, which are far more numerous than all of mankind together, are, along with all their leaves, reformed each year in exactly the same way as they were reformed the previous spring. In a very short space of time, all of the blossoms, fruits and leaves of the tree are brought into being. Uncountable numbers of seeds, grains and roots – the very source of spring – are suddenly reawakened, unfolding as they are raised to new life and reflecting the meaning of 'resurrection after death'. At a single command, the leafless, skeleton-like trees are raised to life, while innumerable members of the animal kingdom are likewise reanimated after their long

winter sleep. Numerous kinds of flying insects are similarly revived, among them those tiny creatures which, constantly cleaning their faces, eyes and wings, remind us of cleanliness and our ablutions as they caress our faces. The resurrection of vast sections of the animal and vegetable kingdoms before our very eyes, in the space of a few days every spring, provides not one example of the possibility of resurrection but many thousands. And this despite the fact that their numbers are far greater than the number of all human beings since the time of Adam.

Since this world is the realm of wisdom and the world to come is the realm of power, numerous Divine names such as All-Wise, Arranger, Disposer and Nurturer require, as reflections of lordly wisdom, that the creation of things in this world take place gradually, over time. In the world to come, however, power and mercy will predominate over wisdom. Consequently there will be no need for time, matter or waiting: things will be created instantaneously. The miraculous Quran alludes to the fact that things which are made here in a day or a year will be made in the hereafter in an instant:

The command of the Hour will take place in the twinkling of an eye, or more quickly still ⁶⁰

If you want to be as certain about the likelihood of the resurrection of the dead as you are about the arrival of next spring, study the *Tenth Word* and the *Twenty-Ninth Word* and you will see.

60 Quran, 16:77

The fourth aspect

This concerns the death of the world and the event known as doomsday. The sudden collision of the earth – our guesthouse – with some other celestial body could, at God's command, wipe out this dwelling-place of ours. Just as a palace which has taken ten years to build could be destroyed in a few minutes, our earth too could be destroyed quite easily.

Part Four of the Addendum

He said: "Who shall give life to decaying bones?" Say: "The One Who first gave them life will give them life (again); and He has absolute knowledge of all creation."⁶¹

As illustrated in the third comparison of the Ninth Truth of the *Tenth Word*, imagine that some individual one day summons a vast army before your eyes. Now, if you were told, "Once those troops have dispersed and returned to their bunkhouses, the individual who summoned that army originally will be able to gather them together again and arrange them in battalions", you would have to be a lunatic to deny that such a thing is possible. Why, then, should anyone deny resurrection after death? The All-Powerful, All-Knowing Being, Who, with the command of "Be!", put in place all of the particles and subtle faculties of the bodies of all animate beings, gathered them together as though they were an army, with the utmost orderliness and wise equilibrium. And He did this apparently from nothing. And now, each spring, He creates or re-creates the hundreds of thousands of different groups and species of animate beings that populate the face of the earth, each like an obedient, well-ordered army. Surely, then, such a Being is able to gather together, at one blow of Israfil's bugle – all of the original, fundamental particles and components that enjoy mutual acquaintance through their joint submission to the order of the body, like soldiers in a battalion. To question the possibility of this is nothing short of sheer lunacy.

The Quran sometimes mentions the wondrous deeds that God Almighty performs in this world as a way of readying the mind and the heart for acceptance of the

⁶¹ Quran, 36:78

wondrous deeds that He will perform in the world to come. And He sometimes mentions future deeds that He will perform in the hereafter in order to convince us of their reality through analogies drawn from deeds that we observe in the here-and-now. One example can be found in the verse below:

*Has not man seen that We created him from a drop of sperm? And then he becomes an open disputer.*⁶² Other verses in that *sūra* contain similar examples.

The All-Wise Quran thus proves the reality of the resurrection in seven or eight different ways. It first draws the human race's attention to its own origins. It says, "Do you see how you advanced from being a drop of sperm to being a drop of blood, then a formless lump of clinging flesh, and then a fully human form? How, then, can you deny that you will be re-created after you have died? That creation is as easy for God as the original creation, if not easier." God Almighty also refers to the great bounties He has gifted man with phrases such as,

*He Who made fire for you from the green tree*⁶³

He says to humankind, "Will the Being who gave you so much bounty in this way leave you to your own devices, allowing you to enter the grave to sleep without rising again?" He also hints: "Do you see how dead trees wake and become green with life again? Your bones, which are like dry wood, are no different, and yet you refuse to see the parallel. Why do you think such a thing is improbable? Do you think that the One Who has created the heavens and the earth does not have power over the life and death of humankind, the very

62 Quran, 16:4

63 Quran, 36:80

fruit of the heavens and the earth? Do you think that He would leave the tree of creation, a reflection of His absolute wisdom, barren and fruitless? Do you think He would abandon the supreme result of that tree's existence?"

The Quran continues: "The Being Who will restore you to life at the resurrection is such that the whole cosmos is an obedient soldier of His. And when it hears the command, 'Be!', it bows its head meekly in submission." ⁶⁴

It is easier for Him to create a whole spring than it is to create a single flower. And to create the whole of the animal kingdom is as easy for His power as it is to create a fly. None may belittle Him and challenge His power by asking,

Who will give life to the bones? ⁶⁵

Then, from the verse, *Glory be to Him in Whose hand lies the sovereignty of all things*,⁶⁶ we see that the reins of all things lie in His hands; the key to all things is in His possession. He rotates day and night, winter and summer, as though He were turning the pages of a book, for He is All-Powerful, All-Glorious. He is the One Who closes the door on this world and opens it onto the hereafter as though they were two 'stations'. Since this is so, as a result of the evidences provided here, the Quran declares that, *To Him you shall return*.⁶⁷ In other words, He will bring you back to life from your sleep in the grave. And then He will take you to the plain of resurrection where you will be judged in His

⁶⁴ This is a reference to the Quran, 2:117.

⁶⁵ Quran, 36:78

⁶⁶ Quran, 36:83

⁶⁷ Quran, 10:56

majestic presence.

Through these parallels and analogies, these Quranic verses prepare the mind and ready the heart to accept the reality of the resurrection. As we have already mentioned, sometimes the Quran mentions God's deeds in the hereafter in order to draw attention to their parallels visible in the here-and-now, simply in order to dispel any niggling doubts or denials. Examples of such verses are the *sūras* which begin as follows:

When the sun is rolled up ⁶⁸

When the heavens are torn asunder ⁶⁹

In these *sūras*, God Almighty mentions resurrection and the vast revolutions and lordly acts that will take place at that time, and He mentions them in way that makes humankind think of their parallels in this world. Examples such as that of autumn and spring allow the human heart to accept more easily that which the intellect may refuse to take on board. To discuss the general meaning of the *suras* mentioned here would take too long, so let us concentrate on just one aspect as a reflection of the whole. With the word, *When the pages are spread out*,⁷⁰ God is expressing the following:

At the resurrection, everyone's deeds will be revealed on a written page. Now this may appear strange and somewhat irrational. However, as the *sūra* shows, just as the resurrection which occurs in spring has its parallels, the 'spreading out of pages' mentioned in the verse has a very clear parallel. Every fruit-bearing tree

68 Quran, 81:1

69 Quran, 82:1

70 Quran, 81:10

and every flowering plant has different actions and functions. It performs certain 'deeds' and can also be said to perform a certain kind of worship, depending on how it glorifies God through the manifestation of His names. All of its deeds – the record of its life, in fact – can be found inscribed in its seeds, which will emerge next spring in another plot of soil. With the metaphorical tongue of their shape and form, the seeds speak eloquently of the origins of those deeds, which they 'spread out' like pages in the form of branches, twigs, leavers, flowers and fruit. He Who says, *When the pages are spread out* is the same Being Who performs, before our very eyes, these wise and subtle acts of nurturing and preserving.

Compare other matters with this through analogy and, if you are able, deduce the truth. The verse, *When the sun is folded up* may help. This verse refers to a brilliant two-part analogy, which is as follows:

First: God Almighty has torn aside the curtains of non-being, the ether and the heavens in order to exhibit His treasury of mercy and show the world a jewel-like lamp illuminating the heavens and the earth – the sun. After closing up the world, He will enclose that jewel once more in His veils and remove it.

Second: The sun may be depicted as an official charged with the task of distributing the commodity that is light all over the earth, causing light and darkness to succeed each other. Every evening, the official is ordered to gather up the light. Sometimes his work is slowed down when he is hidden behind a veil of cloud; sometimes his work is hampered by the cover of the moon. Now, just as the official's stock and record books are gathered and taken for inspection, there will come a day when he will finally be relieved of his duties. Even

if there is no cause for his dismissal, there are two dark spots on the sun right now which will one day grow to the point that the sun will, by God's command, take back the light which it now wraps around the head of the earth and wrap it around its own head. It will then be told, "Come, your work on earth is done. Proceed to hell and burn those who have worshipped you. Burn those who have with their faithlessness mocked a sincere and obedient servant like you." And with its dark, scarred face it will pronounce the decree, *When the sun is rolled up...*

Part Five of the Addendum

The hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets who, according to explicit Traditions, are the choicest part of humankind, have borne certain witness to the reality of the resurrection. Partly on the basis of direct vision and partly on the basis of absolute certainty, they have reported unanimously that the hereafter exists and that all beings will be taken there, just as the Creator has firmly promised.

Similarly the one hundred and twenty-four million saints, who endorse the reports of the prophets through witnessing and unveiling the truth, have given testimony to the existence of the hereafter with certain knowledge. All of the Names of the All-Wise Maker of the cosmos also necessitate through their manifestation the existence of an eternal realm.

The existence of the hereafter is also necessitated by the infinite eternal power and the unlimited eternal wisdom which, every spring, revive the countless dead trees scattered across the face of the earth with the command, *Be!*, thus making them examples of the 'resurrection following death'. It is demanded, too, by the Divine wisdom and power that resurrect hundreds of thousands of plant and animal species, all manifestations of the supreme resurrection.

The existence of the hereafter is also necessitated by the eternal mercy and everlasting grace that sustain with such wondrous care and generosity all of those animate beings that stand in need of nurture and nourishment, displaying each spring, in the course of a few days, innumerable varieties of beauty and decoration. Finally, there is the self-evident proof given by the intense, unmoveable desire for immortality and the love of permanence that are innate to human

beings, the most beloved of God's creations and the one whose concern for all the beings in the cosmos is the greatest.

All of the abovementioned truths and realities prove beyond doubt that after this transient world there will be another world, an eternal realm of felicity. The proofs are so firm that we are compelled to accept the existence of the hereafter with the same level of conviction that we have with regard to the existence of the here-and-now.

One of the most important lessons that we can take from the All-Wise Quran is, then, belief in the hereafter. This belief is so firm, and contains within it hope and consolation so powerful, that it is more than enough to console those whose old age has plunged them into despair. Let the old among us rejoice in our advanced years and say, "Praise be to God for the perfection of belief!"

**The Life and Thought of
BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI**

The Life and Thought of BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI

Said Nursi (1878-1960) is a contemporary scholar and thinker who is best known for his monumental work, the *Risale-i Nur (Epistles of Light)*, a six-thousand page thematic commentary on the Quran. Born in Nurs, a tiny village in the province of Bitlis in eastern Turkey, Nursi spent his early and adolescent years studying the classical Islamic curriculum in various traditional madrasas in the area. He was an exceptionally gifted student who excelled in his studies to the extent that he was able to receive his 'finishing diploma' in 1892 at the tender age of fourteen. Later when he went to Van, a province in eastern Turkey, he also studied the natural sciences in the library of Tahir Pasha, governor of the province. By this point, Nursi was so renowned for his intellectual and academic acumen that he had been given the epithet 'Bediuzzaman' (Wonder of the Age).

Nursi realized that one of the shortcomings of the traditional madrasa education was its omission of the modern sciences, which meant that madrasa students were not able to establish harmony between these new sciences and the traditional disciplines. And so it became his ambition, even at this very young age, to establish a university where the modern sciences could be studied alongside the traditional, Islamic disciplines. When the Ottoman Empire collapsed and the Turkish Republic was established in 1923, Nursi was invited to Ankara, where a role in the new government was offered to him. However, he realised that given the turbulent circumstances there, it would not be possible to carry out his original plan. He

decided at this point to withdraw from all engagement with politics. He returned to Van in the spring of 1923, referring to himself now as the 'New Said'.

Nursi found that his life was being shaken at this time by the fast-growing current of aggressive secularism that was sweeping the country, and so during this period of his life, Nursi spent most of his time with his students quietly on Mount Ereğ, where he passed all of his private time in prayer and contemplation. In February 1925, however, his pastoral idyll was shaken by the Kurdish revolt – an insurrection which Nursi had warned everyone not to join and not to support. Despite his warnings, however, Nursi was implicated as a participant in the revolt and he was sent into exile as a result. This exile set an unfortunate precedent, for most of the rest of Bediuzzaman's life would be spent either in exile or in prison.

Following his exile to Burdur, Nursi was exiled to Barla, a village in the province of Isparta, where he lived under house arrest from March 1927 until July 1934. Most of the treatises that comprise the *Risale-i Nur* were written during these comparatively peaceful years in Barla. Along with his students, Nursi was brought to Eskişehir to stand trial, a process which began in May 1935 and lasted almost a year. The standard charge levelled against Nursi and his students, and indeed against anyone who read and defended the Qur'an at this time, was that of "violating secularism". Prison conditions at that time were horrendous, and Nursi tried to encourage his students to think of their incarceration as a kind of school, one which he called 'The School of Joseph' (*Medrese-i Yûsufiye*), in memory of the Prophet Joseph, who had also been imprisoned unjustly, and who taught his fellow prisoners, leading them to belief in God. When Nursi was released he was sent to Kastamonu, where he was detained under

house arrest from March 1936 until September 1943.

A significant change took place in May 1950 when the newly formed Democratic Party came to power. The new government was sympathetic towards religion and so Bediuzzaman was able to enjoy a certain amount of freedom, albeit still with a number of restrictions. The last ten years of his life was referred to by Nursi himself as the period of the 'Third Said' (September 1949–23 March 1960). The general amnesty of 14 July 1950 brought with it a relative freedom and so he decided to settle in Isparta, where he kept with him a small number of young students to assist him and to be trained. He referred to these years as the 'Third Said' years, when he continued to devote much of his time to issues related to the *Risale-i Nur*. He instituted the practice of communal reading (*ders*) of the *Risale-i Nur* that would later become the central activity of the Nur community, and each day would hold readings with the students who resided with him. But by the turn of the decade his health was failing. On 20th March 1960 he set off with three of his students for Urfa in south-east Turkey, where on the 23rd March he died.

Nursi was a passionate advocate of personal rights and freedoms, as exemplified by his saying "I can live without bread, but not without freedom." He objected to any association of Islam with oppression and tyranny, stating that Islam came to this world to end injustice and despotism. He defined despotism as "... the basis of tyranny. It annihilates humanity. It is despotism which reduces man to the most abject valleys of abasement, causing the Islamic world to sink into abjection and degradation, arousing animosity and malice, poisoning Islam... and causing endless conflict among Muslims."

Unlike many of his contemporaries who associated

Islam with politics, Nursi abstained from mixing religion with politics and remained distant from the notion of 'political Islam.' Instead, he focused on personal dimension of belief and religion, stating that saving the faith of even a single person is of the utmost importance. Despite all the injustices and harassment to which he was subjected, he lived by the principle of 'positive action' always, never advocating violence. He stressed repeatedly that Muslims must now in this age of enlightenment and civilization fight wars with the pen and not the sword. Moreover, he viewed aggressive atheism as the greatest threat to humanity, stating that Muslims and pious Christians must join forces to overcome this threat, which endangers the eternal life of the whole of humanity.

The hallmark of Nursi's teachings is his emphasis on belief – belief in God and belief in the hereafter, which are tenets shared by all of the Abrahamic faiths. After the formation of the new Turkish Republic in the 1920s and the imposition of aggressive secular policies, Nursi devoted himself to saving and strengthening belief in God and the other principles of faith that were at that time coming under attack. He argues that death is a new beginning and is "... not execution, or nothingness, or annihilation; it is not cessation, or extinction; it is not eternal separation, or non-existence, or a random event, or an authorless obliteration. Rather, it is a discharge from duty given by the One Who is All-Wise and All-Compassionate; it is a change of locations. It is a dispatch to eternal bliss, to your true home." For Nursi, attaining strong belief is like gaining an eternal world. Therefore, these two articles of faith are the foundation of human identity that gives humankind a responsibility in this world to be God's vicegerent on Earth in order to preserve order and prevent corruption (see the Qur'an, 2: 30f).

Nursi points out that human beings have desires and hopes that stretch to eternity, thoughts and imaginings that embrace the whole universe, together with an earnest desire for everlasting happiness and Paradise, and various innate capacities and abilities on which no limit has been placed. People are exposed to attacks from innumerable enemies and to blows from innumerable calamities, despite their countless needs, their weakness and their impotence. Under the constant threat of death, they live out their brief and turbulent lives in mostly wretched circumstances. Nursi believed that the main mission of humankind is “to progress through the acquisition of knowledge”, that is, “to aim at reaching perfection via knowledge”. But the highest aim of knowledge, and the thing which makes it valuable, is the knowledge of God (*ma’rifatullah*).

No matter what we say about scholars it is always best for them to speak for themselves. We thus leave you with this short work here and ask that you judge the tree by its fruit. For further reading we can recommend the following works about Bediuzzaman Said Nursi’s life and ideas: Colin Turner, *The Qur’an Revealed: A Critical Analysis of Said Nursi’s Epistles of Light*, Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2013; Şükran Vahide and Ibrahim M Abu-Rabi’. *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.

God's infinite generosity requires the giving of bounty, while His infinite mercy calls for the giving of favour. Now, in this brief, transient life, not even a millionth part of God's perfection establishes itself and is on display. There must, then, be a blessed realm elsewhere that is suited to the showing and giving of infinite generosity and mercy. If there is no future realm where the entirety of God's mercy is to be displayed and experienced, any mercy that we see while in this world can no longer be classed as mercy at all. If there were no eternal realm where God's infinite mercy is to be on show, the mercy that He shows now would have to be rejected as something wholly unmerciful – and this, clearly, would be like pointing to the sun at midday and denying its existence. For if there were no eternal realm after this, death, which is inescapable, would turn that mercy into disaster, that love into affliction, that blessing into vengeance, human intellect into an instrument of torture, and pleasure into pain. In the absence of an eternal realm, the very essence of God's compassion would disappear. Furthermore, there must also be a realm of punishment befitting God's glory and His dignity. For generally, oppressors leave this earthly realm while still in possession of their power, and the oppressed depart while still suffering humiliation. These cases – the case of the unpunished oppressor and the unavenged victim – are deferred for consideration by a supreme tribunal in the future; they are not ignored.

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi