

Muslim Women

Journey into the Light

2

Volume

Woman and the Pursuit of Happiness
Belief in God and in the Last Day

Abdessalam Yassine

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*Muslim Women:
Journey into the Light*

Volume 2

*Translated from the Arabic
by Farouk Bouasse*

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Volume 2

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Preface

Praise be to God, the Light of the heavens and the earth, Who has taken neither consort nor child. Exalted is He Who has created us from a single soul, and from him created his wife, and from them both propagated a multitude of men and women.

I bear witness that God – besides Whom there is no other god – is the Sovereign, the Bountiful, the Extensive in His favor and power, and the Severe in punishment. He has issued both warnings and glad tidings to His creation in the Qur’ān: “Whoever does an evil deed will not be recompensed except but by the like thereof. And whoever does a good deed, whether man or woman, while they are a believer, those will enter Paradise in which they will be given provision without account.” (40:40)

To Him I address the praises of a servant whose helplessness and powerlessness are manifest. I implore Him standing at the gate of His generosity and grace. I resort to Him through His beloved Muḥammad, the Master of the children of Adam, who alone will be able to mediate for us on a Day when no other bargaining or friendship will be of any avail. I seek His forgiveness for my bad manners and evil deeds. I worship Him in a state of sorrow for my negligence and inadvertence. I seek His aid so that He may show us the path of those whom He has favored: the people of perfection who are drawn near to Him.

Then, I pray to God to shower His blessings and peace on the Prophet of Mercy who came with the announcement: “And among His signs is that He created for you wives from yourselves that you might find quietude with them, and He has put love and mercy between you.” (30:21)

May God shower His blessings and peace on him, as well as on his pure and noble Family¹, his Companions² from the Emigrants and the Supporters, and his Brothers³ of old times and of later times.

I present my book as a modest gift to every righteous, devout woman who guards in her husband's absence what God has ordered her to guard, then to every humble person who turns constantly to God, and finally to every frivolous person beguiled by the charms of this world, for I pray that the Lord grant us all wakefulness and repentance.

The Lord (Exalted is He) has proclaimed: "Remain conscious of God in whose name you demand rights (from one another) and be dutiful to (your) ties of kinship!" (4:1)

My hope is that the glorified Lord make this writing a clearing

¹ [Translator's note:] *Āl al-Bayt*, literally "the People of the House." Besides his wives, the Prophet's Family comprises the descendants of his grandsons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and those of his uncle al-'Abbās and his paternal cousins, 'Alī, Ja'far, and 'Aqīl.

² [Translator's note:] *Aṣ-Ṣaḥāba*, the Prophet's Companions, are: the Emigrants (*al-Muhājirūn*), those who migrated from Mecca to Medina, leaving their kinsfolk and possessions for the sake of God and His Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace); and the Supporters (*al-Anṣār*), those who received and supported with their persons and possessions the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) and the Emigrants.

³ [Translator's note:] The Brothers of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) are, first of all, the Messengers and Prophets before him from Adam to Jesus (peace be upon them all) and, secondly, those who believe in his mission without having seen him or met with him. The latter include the second generation of Islam (*at-Tābi'ūn*) and the subsequent generations until the Day of Judgment as demonstrated by the following narration from al-Bukhārī and Muslim (*inter alia*) on the authority of Abū Hurayra (God be pleased with him): One day, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) entered a cemetery: "Peace be on you, O house of believing men and women! We will soon join you, God willing. Oh, how I wish I had seen my brothers!" The Companions who were present (God be pleased with them) said: "Aren't we your brothers, O Messenger of God?", to which he replied, "You are my Companions. My brothers are those who will come after."

away of the clouds, an illumination of the obstacles to be overcome, and a guide to those men and women whose aspirations are high and whose ambition is not satisfied with grazing among the human livestock on the slopes of defeat and capitulation.

I seek God's assistance, proper guidance, and strength to expound the issue of the Muslim woman in her ordeal and the ordeal of her *umma*.¹

This book looks to both the vast present and the ample future. Yet from the outset, the book seeks to direct the readers' minds and focus their sights on the mother of all issues that has otherwise been neglected: the fact that the servant is inevitably heading back to their Lord.

This book is not intended as a mere exercise in consciousness-raising (whether political, cultural, or artistic) about the plight of the Muslim woman: there is already a bevy of such works being dumped into people's brains and hearts, where these ideas further feed off each other and breed more such ideas. The problem with this discourse is that it has emptied educated minds and activist minds of any concern of the Hereafter. They have muffled that inner voice which is inquisitive about the meaning of our existence, the truth of our presence in this world, and the purpose of our passage through this extraordinary, bizarre life. For indeed, nothing is more extraordinary in this life than the mystery of our existence, and nothing more bizarre than our herd-like submission when we march rambling in the path of the herd which claims that everything in this world is utterly absurd.

I sincerely hope that this book will help to awaken the sleepy and stimulate the inert so that the believing seeker, woman or man, may seize their ego and passions by the neck and force their minds to ask that question which the ego in its wicked idleness furtively

¹ [Translator's note:] The *umma* refers to the Muslim community worldwide.

evades: What is the quality of our *īmān*¹? How do things stand between us and our Lord? Lost and forgotten amid the racket of activism, is there any way to salvage this spirituality? When we originally set out and eagerly claimed to be answering the call of God, supporting His *dīn*², and engaging in *jihād* for His cause, were we true or were our hearts empty and desolate?

It is my sincere hope that this book's candid message may satisfy the anguish of the believer, the ambition of the expectant, and the skepticism of the heedless. It is the hope of this book that a flame of regret, a blaze of ardor may light up in the depths of the soul of the reader - that servant of God, man or woman, who does not know who they really are. This book hopes to plant within the innermost part of the reader's heart concern for their destiny in the Hereafter, ardent grief for their heedlessness, and those questions which, while disquieting, help to prod us to salvation: How confident am I in my Lord? How sincere am I with Him? How honest am I in seeking His goodly-pleasure? Where am I in relation to the sincere servants who worship Him with love and reverence? How much certainty

¹ [Translator's note:] See following note.

² [Translator's note:] I retain the original Arabic and Qur'ānic term *dīn*, avoiding as much as possible the word "religion" owing to its ambiguous - and sometimes negative - connotations. Our *dīn* [that is, Islam] comprises three ascending steps, distinct yet inseparable: *islām*, *īmān*, and eventually *iḥsān*. As for *islām* (with a lower-case "i"), it is to testify that there is no god beside God and that Muḥammad is His Messenger, to do the prescribed prayer, to give the *zakāt* (the prescribed alms due each year for the purification of one's wealth and one's soul from niggardliness, if that wealth has reached the threshold of liability), to fast the month of Ramadan, and to make the pilgrimage to the holy precincts of Mecca and Medina if one has the means. *Īmān* is to believe in God, His angels, His Revealed Books, His Messengers, the Day of Judgment, and God's Predestination of both good and evil. Moral rectitude, achieved progressively through assimilating the branches of *īmān*, should accompany such beliefs. *Iḥsān*, the highest degree, is to worship God as if you could see Him, or to be conscious that if you do not see Him, He sees you. *Iḥsān* carries other significant connotations: to do the assigned duties proficiently and to be magnanimous, kind-hearted, considerate, and courteous to all living beings, not least one's family and neighbors.

do I have? How satisfied am I with God as my Lord, Islam as my *dīn*, and Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) as my prophet? How quick and steady is my pace among the servants who race to win the high ranks of Paradise near to Him?

Only after our hearts have been roused and our relationship with our Lord made the central issue will all the other issues of our life fall into their proper ranks of priority. For then, the means will serve the end, the branches will join the root, and the requisites will not eclipse the prerequisite.

This book aspires to awaken not only those who have been sleeping on the bed of indifference and withdrawal, but also those who have been engaged in activism: those who vie with each other for worldly things, those who vie with their despotic rulers for their usurped rights, and those who vie with their co-workers and neighbors over leadership and distinction.

The book's goal will be achieved if this spiritual awakening leads to self-criticism, self-evaluation, and follow-up.

If we have enough courage in the face of our ego, we will admit that our lives are little more than a series of jumps and starts and missed opportunities; similarly, if our negligence were a house, it would be a veritable fortress which we continually fortify with low-quality materials to please our arrogant selves in front of the crowd.

Seek perfection, O woman! Seek perfection, O man! Yes, but what is perfection? What are the means? What is the end? What have the more lenient jurists considered permissible? What have the more stringent Muslims judged as heretical? Is there any way to make the journey towards the greatest happiness of the Hereafter without complications and ordeals, without a dauntless resolve that braves all obstacles?

If you think so, sleep on, undisturbed!

The author prays to God that He spread the fragrance of His mercy

onto those readers whom He wills from among His female and male servants, for these fragrances can help lead them toward their perfection.

Yet be mindful! For the fragrances of the divine Mercy and the inner thoughts that seek to show you the right way may be scattered by the winds of passion and the storms of worldly attractions. The thorns of doubt and skepticism may snag the garments of your natural will. You may be confronted with obstacles set up by your ego and the Devil that aim to disable and confuse you and cause you to wander aimlessly in this life.

So either sleep on undisturbed or come along and follow the pages of this book patiently. My intention - God make it for His sake - is to enlighten the minds of the believing women and believing men with the knowledge about the purification of souls alongside, or ahead of, that activism that seeks to do justice to the woman. The aim is to incorporate into such activism a theoretical knowledge of purification as well as a practical system of purification for our soul and heart. For on the Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any use, only those with a heart free from evil will prosper.

O believing woman free from overt and covert *shirk*,¹ the flame of your *īmān* will falter and die out if your heart's inner feelings and your limbs' outer acts are not arranged in a luminous line that can show you through the darkness and that can raise you from the abyss of bestiality to the purity of the angels. Your *īmān* is fragmented and broken, for it is at odds with your passions and the devil's whisperings; sometimes you resist these, and sometimes you succumb. But once you have rolled up the sleeves of your resolve, restrained the evasive impulses of your ego with unflinching sincerity, turned your face toward God, and enjoined upon your

¹ [Translator's note:] Overt (or greater) *shirk* is to worship other gods or to associate other deities with God, for example claiming that God has begotten children. Covert (or lesser) *shirk* is to do pious acts not for the sake of God but to be seen and praised by others.

ego the observance of the *Sunna*¹ that His Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) has clearly presented to you as a model - only then will you know what is good for you and what is bad on the pathway to the Hereafter.

But if the waves of this concern have not yet struck your shores, then alright - sleep on undisturbed! Otherwise, let us leaf through the pages of *The Muslim Woman: Journey into the Light* to discover what kind of *jihād*² will be accepted from us, and how to proceed.

O Lord, You are the Companion on our journey! So make our journey a journey of the rightly-guided who in turn guide to Your Way, and show us the Straight Way - the way of those whom You have favored, not the way of those who earn Your wrath, nor of those who go astray. Amen.

¹ [Translator's note:] The *Sunna* refers to the teaching and practice of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) and includes his sayings, deeds, and tacit approvals.

² [Translator's note:] Throughout the book, the word *jihād* will not be used in the narrow sense of military effort. *Jihād*, as Imam Yassine sees it, is above all a striving for the liberation of the Muslim mind and soul from all kinds of moral and material subservience, and for the reconstruction of the shattered edifice of the Islamic *umma*. In his *al-Minhāj an-Nabawī* (The Prophetic Method), Imam Yassine lays out 11 pathways for *jihād*. In none of these pathways of *jihād* is violence to be used as an instrument of change.

*III. Woman and the Pursuit
of Happiness*

1. The Animality Postulate¹

The believing women are called such if they have chosen belief in God and the Last Day as a way towards happiness. I have given this chapter the title “Woman and the Pursuit of Happiness” because the believing men and women are constantly in need of greater *īmān*. We should recall that the Messenger Abraham (peace be upon him) once asked his Lord (Exalted is He) to show him how He gives life to the dead so that his heart would be filled with even greater assurance.

The believing women ought to invite their fellow women to *īmān*, for some Muslim women have fallen prey to the alienation of atheistic philosophy, while others see happiness only in those goods that the market incites consumers to purchase.

The believing women should be aware of the roots, the guises, and the intrigues of *jāhiliyya*: they should know its foundation, which is *ẓann al-jāhiliyya* - misbelief and skepticism about the Lord and the meeting with Him on the Day of Judgment - so that they can build their *īmān* on the solid foundation of certainty.

I have given this section the heading “The Animality Postulate” in reference to two verses from the Qur’ān: “Verily, the worst of beasts

¹ [Translator’s note:] The “Animality Postulate” refers to the prevalent assumption in agnostic and atheist circles that the whole being of man, his beginning and his end, can be understood and explained in terms of the spontaneous evolution of natural organisms over millions of years; this covers all categories of human effort and aspiration, including virtue, compassion, love, beauty, and the like. Ethics, morals, arts and crafts, even the disciplines and aspirations of religion, all are explained - from the perspective of the “Animality Postulate” - as an elaborate repertoire of psychological and emotional techniques useful to an animal that is social, i.e. lives in herds, and accordingly calculates its survival in terms of the herd and not just the individual.

in the sight of God are those who are bent on denying the truth and therefore do not believe” (8:56); and: “Verily, the worst of beasts in the sight of God are those deaf and dumb ones who do not use their reason.” (8:22) These kinds of beasts hold a postulate that underlies their philosophy of life. A postulate is a principle of a belief system the adherents of which uphold it as sound, although its soundness cannot be scrutinized or subjected to experimental verification.

Our human reasoning and instincts - our *fiṭra* - rely on self-evident postulates such as: that the whole is greater than any of its parts, or that two contradictory propositions cannot be joined together. Such postulates need no justification because the mind discovers them without experimentation. As for postulates such as those claiming that the world has no meaning, that man is the product of evolution and chance and has no real Maker, these are mere hypotheses and fabrications that the philosophizing mind has woven around its ego and proclaimed as “scientific” to convince itself of their rationality.

Among the most serious trials that God (Glorified is He) has set for us is man’s very creation. Man opens his eyes and finds himself fitted with perfect, complementary instruments which open up the universe to him, namely his limbs that govern his faculties of hearing, speaking, and understanding. In turn, the human mind looks at itself and wonders: Who am I? Where am I from? Where am I going and why? Who made me?

The rightly-guided mind, firm on the path of scientific rigor and endowed with an unspoilt *fiṭra*, acknowledges its inability to generate answers to such questions by itself and acknowledges that all avenues of understanding are blocked before it except its *fiṭra* and the self-evident proposition that any given creature must have a creator. And so it searches for one who does have the ability to answer these questions. When the mind sees how the prophets performed miracles that broke the laws of the universe, it realizes that they must have spoken on behalf of a higher authority. Hence, the mind bears witness to Revelation, which conveys the Lord’s

words that “It is We Who have created you. Why, then, do you not accept the truth?” (56:57)

As for the mind impervious to guidance, it keeps wandering in the horizons of knowledge, weaving around its ego a spider’s web of hypotheses and postulates that supposedly fill the gaps in its knowledge and understanding to convince itself that it alone is the true master and god.

In the nineteenth century, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck developed a theory of evolution which he inferred from observing living animals and the fossils of extinct animals. He judged that climate, food, and lifestyle shape the development of living beings, meaning that their bodies will grow appendages suitable for the changing environment they find themselves in.

Then Darwin came along and built up a theory of evolution that was without any sense or perspective because it merely described one theoretical possibility while failing to explain the root causes. Insofar as it did explain certain external causes, it said next-to-nothing about the internal causes that stimulate living organisms in the process of their evolution. Darwin merely adapted the theory of the British economist Thomas Malthus who had demonstrated that demographic increases are geometrical while food production increases are only arithmetical, i.e., the number of mouths to feed increases while the relative means of subsistence decreases, thus provoking a fierce struggle in which the strong survive and the weak perish.

Darwin thus added to Lamarck’s theory a dynamic of struggle, claiming that the world of organisms is a world of struggle for survival, a world where might makes right.

The theory of evolution explains man’s creation in terms of spontaneous evolution and constant struggle for survival. In the beginning, there was the unicellular amoeba which evolved into

a sea creature. That creature then further evolved when it crawled onto shore. From that amphibian creature stemmed the reptiles, the birds, and the mammals. Among the mammals, the ape managed to stand on its feet, thereby freeing its hands for offensive and defensive uses. Necessity then produced opposable thumbs. Starting with Grandmother Lucy three million years ago, humans were all black, whereas now they are of various hues, with whites at the top of the social food chain.

The Animality Postulate claims that man has evolved from generations of organisms that struggled against nature and against one another, finally triumphing when the man-ape developed a capacity in its skull called the mind.

It is true that God (Glorified is He) willed to create the universe in progressive harmony, and there are many similarities between man and animal: man has eyes like those of an animal, the ape's physique is similar to the human's, and blood is pumped by the heart into the arteries of man and animal alike, etc.

The Lord (Exalted is He) has elaborated some of the details of Adam's creation¹, further expounding how He then created from him descendants both male and female.

The women and men of faith believe in their Lord. As to the man whose heart is impervious to the truth, he obstinately holds to his hypotheses and postulates. But had he a touch of scientific rigor, he would be confounded by the absence of the missing link between ape and man.

Inspired by the Animality Postulate, opponents insist that the Islamists have an issue with the woman and oppress her. They plead their case in the court of liberties and vain pleasures, accusing Islam of confiscating their natural rights.

¹ [Translator's note:] See Qur'ān 23:12-14.

And this in turn is one of their most important pretexts to vilify the Islamic Call, perhaps even more so than their charge that the Islamists are the backward enemies of democracy - that institution which is allegedly man's savior.

In the first chapter, I set out the internal struggle between reality and the ideal. In the second chapter, I reflected on the major actors on the world stage. In this chapter, I intend to broach a more sensitive topic and say a few simple words to bring the issue of the woman, charged with so many sorrows, before the most competent authority to judge.

The most competent authority refers of course to the woman herself who alone can choose the best way to her happiness. If woman and man are nothing more than a couple of mating apes, if life is nothing more than a struggle for brute survival, an absurdity of the philosophers, then bestial freedom is the most precious thing in the world. For the ape excels at its reason for being simply by satisfying its sexual desires.

In that case to try to speak to the woman or man of ethics and chastity is to confiscate one of their basic rights, to puritanically stifle their freedom. If that were the case, the competent authority would judge in favor of libertinism, debauchery, and unbounded pleasure.

If man's existence has no meaning and there is no life after death, then pleasure becomes a flower and whoever fails to pick it when it is ripe is a miserable fool.

If that were really the case, then the woman's beauty and charms would be the highest manifestation of civilization, her dancing before men the spirit of art, the collective enjoyment of her body the foundation of justice.

But if the Maker exists, if there is life after death, if man's deeds in this life are his funds in the Hereafter, if the woman is the equal companion of man in this journey of trials, if she is his sister in

creation, if she is like him either rewarded among the blessed in the Gardens of eternity or punished among the wretched in the Fire of eternal misfortune, then woman's case must be treated differently.

The woman's case must be evaluated by the standards of *īmān*, not the Animality Postulate which is the basis for a society of vain desires and egoism. The woman will have to choose between *īmān* and Islamic Law or bestial freedom - keeping in mind that either way, she will be judged accordingly in the Hereafter. Choosing the Hereafter is best indeed. How excellent an abode for the pious!

2. Women of *Jāhiliyya*

Islam is definitely not based on speculative hypotheses, but is the Truth revealed by the Maker of all creatures; the Lord Who created man, fashioned him, gave him life, and provided him with the means to live; the Lord Who will then take man's life, raise him from the dead, and judge whether he deserves reward or retribution. Islam is not just some reaction to issues and problems particular to a certain time and place, nor is it merely a reaction against the ancient Arab *jāhiliyya*. Rather, Islam is a revelation from the All-Wise and Worthy of Praise, Whose law in the universe and in history is to test His creatures to see which of them is best in deed, Whose law is to send messengers (peace be upon them) whose mission was crowned with the coming of Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace), the Seal of the Prophets.

In this section, I discuss the condition of the women of *jāhiliyya* in Arab society, then of Greek and Roman society, and lastly of our present time, to draw a comparison between the aberrations of the women of *jāhiliyya* and those of the Muslim woman in periods of *fitna*¹, and also to draw a comparison between the Church's attempt to "reform" the corruption of women and men and the eternal Call of Islam. The peoples reeling under the yoke of despotism, which was backed by the Church, revolted against the old order; and so did the woman in the West revolt against the yoke that the Church put around her neck and against the low status which it relegated her to.

¹ [Translator's note:] When *jāhiliyya* mixes with Islamic values, that society is called a society of *fitna*. The period of *fitna* began with the Umayyad's usurpation of power and has continued until today.

Western men and Western women fled from the situation where the ruler governed arbitrarily and where the woman was despised, her dignity lost, her humanity denied. Those societies then found happiness in democratic rule and in the woman's emancipation from all shackles.

Similarly, the leading advocates of secularism in Muslim societies rebel against their past and their present, seeking a democracy that may take power away from Islam, which they view through a Western lens as a church content with despotism. In the same vein, Westernized women rebel against Islam, as they too view it as a church which seeks to humiliate women.

On the other hand, those Muslims who admire the old civilizations of the lofty palaces - with their hundreds of slave girls housed away for the service and pleasure of the kings and princes - still advocate a model of decadent Islam and try to dissuade Muslim women, sometimes with aggressive threats, against copying the emancipated women of *jāhiliyya* and instead accept a status inferior to the prestigious position held by the women Companions (God be pleased with them).

Had we shown to Muslim women the lofty role they could play in the *jihād* - that is, the same role played by the women Companions - they would not have thrown themselves into the arms of bestial freedom, preferring it to their *dīn*. After all, who would prefer libertine and suicidal "happiness" in this life with its accompanying torment in the Hereafter to the happiness whose reward is Paradise and God's pleasure?

The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) informed us that we would always be affected by certain features of *jāhiliyya* which we would never fully renounce. Let us look then at the *jāhiliyya* of the pre-Islamic Arabs to see if we still have those virtues of theirs approved by Islam, or is it simply that old vices attract new vices just as a magnet attracts iron?

The ancient Arabs, even in their *jāhiliyya*, were extremely scrupulous about their women who were as fearful of maintaining their honor as they were of death. Out of fear of such disgrace, some men even went so far as to bury their female newborns alive lest, when they grow up, they be captured and enslaved by future raiders: better to die than to suffer such humiliation!

But the Lord (Exalted is He) criticized this logic in the Qur'ān: "Whenever any of them is given the glad tiding of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens and he is filled with suppressed anger, avoiding all people because of the (alleged) evil of the glad tiding he has received (and debating within himself): Shall he keep this (child) despite the contempt (which he feels for it), or shall he bury it in the dust? Oh, evil indeed is whatever they decide!" (16:58-59)

Protection of women's honor and chastity is well entrenched among Muslim mothers and grandmothers. A natural disposition only reinforced through Islam, and a solicitude that is fundamental to the Islamic awakening's struggle against the dominant culture's shameless rejection of all modesty.

For the culture of *jāhiliyya*, the locus of honor was the tribe's male warriors, who achieved heroic status by either slaying the men of other tribes and carrying off their womenfolk, or by sacrificing their own lives in defense of their kinswomen.

A vice and virtue together: *jāhiliyya* is replete with such paradoxes.

Among the ancient Greeks, the woman was nothing more than a base commodity to be purchased and sold in the market. As Muṣṭafā Subā'ī (God have mercy upon him) noted in his *The Woman between Islamic Jurisprudence and Positive Law (al-Mar'a bayn al-Fiḥ wa-l-Qānūn)*: "At the peak of Greek civilization... adultery was so widespread that it was no longer considered an abhorrent practice. Brothels became the centers of politics and

literature. In the name of literature and art, the Greeks sculpted naked idols. Their religion itself condoned illicit sexual acts. Hence, among their goddesses was Aphrodite, who betrayed her husband and committed adultery with three other gods. Among her male lovers was an ordinary mortal with whom she bore Eros, the god of love! But even adultery was not enough to quench their desires, and so homosexuality became widespread. To celebrate this sinful practice, they made sculptures of Aristogeiton and Harmodius in homosexual intercourse.”¹

To add to what Mr. Subāṭ (God have mercy upon him) has described, even a reformist philosopher like Plato (author of *The Republic*) proclaimed woman to be the common property of all men.

And Demosthenes, one of their more illustrious orators, once noted that “mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children.”²

As for the ancient Romans, what was the condition of children and women in their law? The father was not obliged to recognize his own son, but if he did, the latter became his slave whom he was permitted to sell.

The daughter’s situation was even worse: when she married, she entered into a contract with her husband called a “contract of sovereignty” whereby she moved from servitude in her father’s house to servitude in her husband’s. Although Roman law subsequently elevated the woman from property to a subject

¹ “On Aristogeiton and Harmodius” from Thucydides’ *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, 6th. Book (Richard Crawley trans.): <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh/thuc6.asp>

² Demosthenes with an English translation by Norman W. DeWitt, Ph.D., and Norman J. DeWitt, Ph.D. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press: London, William Heinemann; section 59:122 of the online version (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0080%3Aspeech%3D59%3Asection%3D122>)

protected under the custody of her father or husband, it still did not grant her effective legal capacity. Thus she remained a minor along with maniacs, lunatics, and children.

These are the roots of Western civilization, immersed as we have seen in idolatry and the enslavement of the woman. These roots were then watered by the Judeo-Christian tradition, a distorted version of the message of Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them). Hence two forms of *jāhiliyya* were conjoined, albeit one claiming to set the other straight.

To this day, Christians read a corrupted edition of the Torah. Among the evidence for this are the following unjust judgments it renders against the woman: “And I found more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters; he who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her. [... While seeking an upright soul.] one man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found.”¹ The woman for the Jews is cursed because she had misled Adam; because of this, some of the sects allowed the father to sell his daughter.

Christianity began to grow within Roman society which, to its legal injustice toward the woman, had added the wantonness and dissoluteness of Greek civilization. Horrified by such debauchery, the monks blamed it on the woman and accused her of being the lieutenant of Lucifer. The priests and rabbis ruled that the woman was impure and unclean, that marriage amounted to wallowing in the mire of sensuality and vice, and that the celibate was more dear to God than the wedded man.

If the woman was hideous and old, she was regarded as a witch and an ally of Satan; if she was young and beautiful, she was considered a source of sin and shame.

¹ Ecclesiastes 7:26-28.

Saint Tertullian said the following in his address to his “beloved sisters in the faith”: “You are the Devil’s gateway. You are the first deserter of the Divine Law. You so easily destroyed man, who was God’s image.”¹ On top of which man is God’s image for them - God save us!

Similarly, Saint Chrysostom² said: “She is an unavoidable evil, a desired plague, a danger for the home and family. She is a fatal lover, a tragedy in disguise.”

In the sixth century of the Christian era, at the Synod of Macon, the assembled priests deliberated over whether the woman possessed a soul, concluding that - with the exception of the Messiah’s mother - the answer was no.

Over centuries of a literary florescence, Westerners courted the woman’s beauty and built up an idol of her as if she were a fetishized doll. At the same time, the woman continued to be treated like a slave. In chivalric literature, worshippers of the woman idol - heirs of the Greeks - granted her a place of distinction, yet when it came to law, the old Roman attitudes reigned supreme.

As recently as 1805, English law permitted insubordinate wives to be sold and exchanged in the markets of London like old utensils. An act promulgated in England in 1801 fixed the price of a woman at six pence but with an important condition - the woman must consent to the contract of sale.

The women of that *jāhiliyya* society grew angry and rebelled against their enslavement - and that rebellion is still going on. Yet once

¹ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Volume 4:14-15, Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885.

² [Translator’s note:] The translator has been unable to identify the said saint despite having searched all possible transliterations of the given name; hence, the quote has merely been back-translated from the Arabic.

they had discarded the humiliating and contemptuous authority of the Church, they - and their men - found the Greek way of life sublime, and so merely updated it. Although these women wrested from the law the right to employment and financial independence, they still yielded to the Animality Postulate. How evil the burden they shall be made to bear!

3. *Women of Islam*

Those women who had been frustrated for so long by the yoke of the Church returned to the roots of their culture's *jāhiliyya*. Will the women of Islam in turn allow themselves to become uprooted from their own soil and planted in the soil of others? If so, the resulting plant will definitely be a tree of Zaqqūm¹, irrigated by hellish water. Real salvation from Muslim women's current ordeals can only be found in the inspiration drawn from the wholesome model of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace), in breathing in its fragrance, in becoming embedded in an environment of *īmān* that will give this model a new lease of life.

How did the women Companions (God be pleased with them) become changed people? How were they spiritually trained and educated in the hardships of that period, remembering that the first martyr of Islam was a woman tortured to death? After they became Muslims, how did these women acquire those profound virtues that made their hearts transcend the vanities of this world?

The women of Islam should look to the women Companions to draw inspiration, not to abstract, vague rulings that the jurists formulated according to their particular circumstances.

We need to perform *ijtihād* to understand the circumstances that shaped the *ijtihād* of the honorable jurists during those historical periods when power had degenerated to rapacious and dictatorial rule.

The kind of *ijtihād* that is required from us is to imitate the Prophetic model within the parameters of our current environment and of our capacity to embody the Prophetic ideal. When we read the practical

¹ [Translator's note:] Bitter tree of Hell that God (Exalted is He) described in the Qur'ān, 37:63-65.

life of the women Companions (God be pleased with them), there is no room to interpret away the pioneering roles they played. They were the vanguard of Islam with whom God is well pleased just as they are now well pleased with Him. For them He has prepared gardens under which rivers flow.¹

We ought to read the history of the household of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) to draw from the source. The Qur'ān was the Prophet's code of ethics, as Lady 'Ā'isha (God be pleased with her) has noted. And so it was with the Qur'ān that he educated his family and refined their manners. It was with the Qur'ān's compassion and wisdom that he set them right. It was from mixing with him and from loving him with a love lodged deep in their hearts that they absorbed *īmān* and smelled the fragrance of *ihsān*.

We ought to read about our mother 'Ā'isha (God be pleased with her), the scholar who is mentioned along with such illustrious jurists as her father aṣ-Ṣiddīq,² 'Umar al-Fārūq,³ Imām 'Alī, and 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd.

We ought to read how she was a prolific reporter of the Prophet's ḥadīths who excelled some of the most distinguished Companions in compiling and teaching the Sunna. We ought to read how she was a mujāhida who raced with water skins on the battlefield to quench the thirst of the wounded at the Battle of Uḥud and comfort them. We ought to read how she enjoined what was good and condemned what was wrong, going so far as to publicly criticize the Commander of the Believers 'Uthmān. We ought to read how she led a rebellion against Imām 'Alī (God honor him), a decision which she reached through her own *ijtihād* at the time, but which she later recognized as a mistake and repented for.

¹ [Translator's note:] See Qur'ān 9:100.

² [Translator's note:] Honorific attached to the name of Abū Bakr, meaning "the most sincere."

³ [Translator's note:] Honorific attached to the name of 'Umar, meaning "the one who separates between right and wrong."

We ought to read how Gabriel himself (peace be upon him) extended his greetings to her.

What was the moral and spiritual education of that exceptional young lady whom the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) would hold on his shoulders to watch the Abyssinians gamboling around in the mosque for as long as she pleased? How did her *īmān* flourish? How did she react to the verses of the Qur'ān that were freshly recited in her house, and which sometimes gave her glad tidings and sometimes rebuked her? We ought to read the circumstances of the lived Revelation so that we may renew the *īmān* in our hearts, return to God in repentance, and take off from the base love of this world to focus on the Hereafter.

In Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, the Lord (Exalted is He) commands the Prophet to say to his wives: “If you desire [but] the life of this world and its charms - well, then, I will provide for your enjoyment and let you depart in a goodly manner. But if you desire God, His Messenger, and the Home of the Hereafter, verily God has prepared for the muḥsināt among you a great reward.” (33:28-29)

Lady ‘Ā’isha, who was then in the prime of her youth, chose God, His Messenger, and the abode of the Hereafter, as did her eight other co-wives (God be pleased with them).

The reason that the above verse was revealed was that the Prophet’s wives had been tempted by the bounties that God had bestowed on the poor Emigrants after the battle with Banū Qurayza in the fifth year of the hijra. Being humans, they had only wished that the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) would give them a share of that generosity. But because he was a model to be followed, his family had to be an example of abstinence from the allurements of this world. The Qur'ān granted them freedom of choice in this matter, and after this trial, their will was purified. This practical education cannot be gleaned from reading these verses from an abstract, general perspective.

One day, the Messenger stayed late in Lady Zaynab's chamber drinking some honey syrup that she had served him. Lady 'Ā'isha, whose turn it was to spend time with her husband, was seized by female jealousy. So she hatched a plot to prevent him from ever being lured away by this treat again, prompting Lady Ḥafṣa to ask the Prophet, who was very meticulous about how he smelled, "Have you been eating maghāfir¹ recently?", maghāfir being known to produce bad breath.

The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) then explained what he had been drinking, resolving not to touch the syrup again. Although he ordered Ḥafṣa not to mention this to 'Ā'isha, she disobeyed him. The Lord, Who knows all that is overt and all that is covert, informed the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) of what had happened. Revelation then came down upbraiding the two wives: "If you two turn in repentance to God, your hearts are indeed so inclined. But if you uphold each other against him, (know that) God Himself is his Protector, and (that therefore,) Gabriel, and (every) righteous among those who believe, and all the (other) angels will come to his aid." (66:4)

Angered by this on top of the demands for a greater spousal allowance, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) swore to not enter any of his wives' chambers for an entire month. Terrified by this news, the Companions sent 'Umar to reconcile them.

These are the scenes of daily life with people who err and then repent, who hatch plots, who quarrel and then reconcile. Such realistic scenes are more likely to touch us than talk of a lofty ideal detached from material circumstances.

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim relate the following account from 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (God be pleased with him): "In the period of *jāhiliyya*, we used to set little store in women until God revealed mighty verses about them. One day as I was deciding about a

¹ [Translator's note:] Gum drawn from a bitter plant of the mimosa family.

certain matter, my wife made a suggestion of what I should do: ‘It is none of your business!’ I said, ‘Why interfere in my affairs?’ ‘How strange you are, son of al-Khaṭṭāb! You are unwilling to debate your affairs while your own daughter goes on arguing with the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), making him angry the whole day!’”

Were the women Companions a neglected mass of flesh reduced to silence, placed under protective custody, and confined to the walls of the harem? Or did they have independent personalities and strong opinions after years of having the men of *jāhiliyya* attach little importance to them?

Prompted by his wife’s audacity, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb went to his daughter Ḥafṣa’s house: “My daughter, do you really go on arguing with God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) so that he spends his whole day angry?” “Indeed, we do argue with him!” ‘Umar then responded, “Then I must warn you of God’s punishment! My daughter, do not be tempted to imitate that young girl [Ā’isha], who thinks too highly of herself because of her beauty and the Prophet’s love for her.”

‘Umar then went to visit Lady Umm Salama (God be pleased with her) to discuss reconciling with the Prophet, but she reprimanded him: “How strange, son of al-Khaṭṭāb! You always interfere in everything, and now you dare to interfere between God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) and his wives!”

‘Umar continued his narration: “I came out holding my garment [downcast] and headed toward God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), finding him in his room... I told him what happened; when I reached what had happened to me with Umm Salama, he merely smiled. While listening, he was lying on a straw mat, while under his head was a leather pillow stuffed with palm fiber. Then I noticed the marks on his side left by the mat.”

A contemporary woman might imagine the Prophet's room as being sturdy, painted, and well-furnished, but actually, the walls were made of uncooked adobe and mud, the roof was made of palm branches, and the furniture was as we've already heard. The honorable tābiṭ¹, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who would grow up under the care of Umm Salama (God be pleased with her), said that when he was a young boy, his hand could touch the ceiling in the chambers of the Prophet's wives.

To continue with the narration: "I began weeping. God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) then asked what the matter was. 'Chosroes and Caesar live in luxury, while you are God's Messenger and live like this!' But he said, 'Will you not be content to have them enjoy this world while we win the Hereafter?'" In an alternative report, 'Umar says, "O Messenger of God! Pray that the Lord bestow His bounties upon your umma. For He has granted great bounties to the Persians and the Romans even though they do not worship Him." At that point, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) sat up: "Are you afflicted with doubt, son of al-Khaṭṭāb? They have already received the reward for their good deeds in this world."

'Umar was being given a moral and spiritual education just as Ḥafṣa, 'Ā'isha, and the other believing women were. This spiritual change was achieved through the hardships of Mecca and the *jihād* of Medina, not in isolated cloisters or in debates about abstract theory. The Qur'ānic training washed away the stain of sin with a daily therapy that involved suffering, quarrels, ups and downs, war and peace, agreement and disagreement. The women of Islam were active participants and an essential part of that nascent society; they were not in any way marginalized.² May the Lord prepare for them forgiveness and a great reward.

¹ [Translator's note:] A tābiṭ (lit., follower) is a student of the Companions, someone of the generation not born during the lifetime of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace).

² [Translator's note:] See Nadia Yassine's Full Sail Ahead. Justice and Spirituality Publishing, 2005, pp. 211-13.

4. *The Believing Woman and Consumerist Society*

Among the most difficult obstacles that waylay the believing women in their *jihād* to achieve greater *īmān* are consumerism and extravagance - the distinctive features of this age. Mutual rivalry between women and men, mutual boasting, and the love of display reflect an inward worship of the bounties of this world. In a society full of decadence, corruption, and falsehood, the woman inevitably prompts her husband to take bribes, incur enormous debts, or outright steal, with the result that, at the end of the day, men and women all together find themselves in a fine mess!

It is very hard to wean women and men off so rooted a habit and so widespread a disaster. It is perhaps even harder to persuade some women and men who are at the other extreme and believe that the Lord (Exalted is He) will not be content with them until they follow the Sunna to the letter: hence, no mattresses other than a straw mat that leaves marks on the skin, and no furniture other than a few leather pillows! Some of our women, in their repentance, turn to preachers who tout Islam as a *dīn* of nothing but prohibitions, restrictions, and hardships. They trust in such preachers and resign from the duty of *ijtihād* and of seeking the counsel of competent Muslim scholars. Hence, they end up putting unnecessary constraints on themselves and wear nothing but black rags and ghastly veils.

By mentioning the Prophet's straw mat, my intention was merely to promote disinterestedness in the vanities of this world and to remind ourselves that racing after consumerist "happiness" only causes wills to regress, hearts to perish, and *īmān* to die out. At the same time, we should not try to impose an excessively ascetic lifestyle on the rest of society. Understanding this balance is of

paramount importance for Islamic jurisprudence, since the most frequent cause of quarreling between men and women is the husband's financial maintenance of the family's costs of living. Hence, God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) would become angry whenever his wives asked him for expensive comforts which he would not accept in his house.

This balance is difficult to achieve for jurisprudence because the global environment is one of prolific production, selling, marketing, and advertising. And there are indeed limits beyond which the efforts of the individual woman or of the Islamic state simply cannot go.

On the other hand, poverty, an unfair distribution of wealth, and class inequality have to be dealt with. Therefore, the general *jihād* of politics and the private *jihād* of the believing women and men ought to make the connection between the unfair distribution of wealth and the consumerist habits that cause a minority to live above the *umma's* means while the majority live in abject poverty. The issue is global. In the world, there is a rich North and a poor South, with each country in turn having its own internal North and South.

It is quite hard to formulate a universal principle that captures this balance. We have seen how 'Umar wanted for the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) and the Muslim community the same comfort and well-being which the Persians and the Romans enjoyed. Now 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was no ordinary Muslim: he had emigrated from Mecca, leaving behind all his belongings, houses, and family. The Prophet himself (God bless him and grant him peace) gave him his moral and spiritual education. He was a paragon of virtue: when he became Commander of the Believers, his only dress had thirteen patches on it. In the year of epidemic and famine, he forbade himself meat so as to not favor himself to the detriment of the Muslims. The only thing harder than grasping this balance is trying to motivate people to take the pathway of

discipline and not that of indulgence. May God grant us power and might to surmount such obstacles!

Environment influences lifestyle habits even as it influences moral standards. A good environment begins with the believing women and men using moral pressure to build and perfect the rectitude demanded by Islamic Law.

In one of his accounts comparing the women of *jāhiliyya* with the women of Islam, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said, “Messenger of God! You should have seen how we, the people of Quraysh, used to dominate our wives in marital affairs and in decision-making. Yet, when we came to Medina, we found that the men were overwhelmed by their wives. Then our wives soon began to learn from their wives.”¹

The women Emigrants learned from the women Supporters how to argue with their husbands and defend their rights. This was a virtue that the Medinan women had been accustomed to and that Islam did not reject; on the contrary, the Lord (Glorified is He) accepted the well-known complaint of the woman who had pleaded with the Prophet concerning her husband.² Conversely, the women Supporters learned from the women Emigrants patience, perseverance through hardship, and *īmān*, since the latter had converted earlier and had already emigrated to Abyssinia, leaving their families and homes, before emigrating to Medina.

¹ [Translator’s note:] Because Mecca was a commercial city, Qurayshī men monopolized trade, were the exclusive providers of their families’ livelihood, and therefore had the upper hand over their wives in marital affairs, decision-making, and management. Exceptions were few, among them Mother of the Believers Khadija (the wife of God’s Messenger, God bless him and grant him peace), who was a successful trader. Medina, on the other hand, was an agricultural city, and both men and women worked their lands. Women therefore had a say, indeed even a decisive say, in marital affairs, decision-making, and management.

² [Translator’s note:] See Qur’ān 58:1-4 and the translator’s note on *ẓihār*.

‘Ā’isha and Asmā’, Abū Bakr’s daughters, took part in preparing the Prophet’s emigration (God bless him and grant him peace). Then they themselves emigrated, along with Umm Rūmān (their mother), Fāṭima and Umm Kulthūm (the daughters of the Prophet), and Sawda (the Prophet’s wife). Zaynab, another daughter of the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), came to Medina, leaving behind her then-pagan husband; on her way, she was intercepted by Habbār Ibn al-Aswad, who waved his spear at her, causing her to fall in fright from her camel and miscarry.

A virtuous environment was formed between the Emigrants and the Supporters. Women learned from women and men learned from men. All of them helped each other in doing pious deeds. The Supporters comforted the Emigrants with their love and hospitality. The Emigrants, men and women, in turn taught the Supporters the *īmān* they had acquired from thirteen years of steadfast training and education in Mecca.

The Lord of glory and grace praised such coming-together in the Qur’ān: “(Some part of the spoils is due) to the indigent Emigrants, those who were expelled from their homes and their property, while seeking Grace from God and (His) Good Pleasure, and aiding God and His Messenger. Such are indeed the sincere ones. But those who before them, had homes (in Medina) and had acquired *īmān*, show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though they are needy. And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls, they are the ones that achieve prosperity.” (59: 8-9) They give them preference over themselves, even though they are needy.

The women Emigrants did not learn from the women Supporters only how to argue with men and overwhelm them; they also learned lessons in generosity and altruism. Al-Bukhārī has reported how once, God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) had a guest. He sent someone to bring food from his wives but found

nothing. One of the Supporters, Abū Ṭalḥa (God be pleased with him), offered to host the guest. His Supporter wife told him that for dinner she had only enough food for her children. She put them to sleep and then devised a scheme with her husband: she served dinner to the guest and then, pretending to attend to the lamp, blew it out so that the guest would eat his fill thinking that she and her husband were eating with him. There were no matches or electricity back then, and kindling a fire was a slow operation.

Those saved from the covetousness of their own souls are the ones who achieve prosperity. God's Messenger never ceased to warn his Companions and the *umma* against profligate expenditure. For when a woman slides down the slippery slope of consumerism, trying to abstain from keeping up with the Joneses becomes virtually impossible.

One day, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) received some monies from Bahrain. When the Supporters came to ask for their share, he said, "By God, it is not poverty that I fear for you. What I truly fear is that the bounties of this world might pour forth on you even as they have poured forth on those before you, that you might vie amongst each other for them even as they have vied amongst each other, and that they might cause your demise even as they have caused their demise." [Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of al-Miswar Ibn Makhrama (God be pleased with him).]

Fearing that they would be persecuted and tempted into disbelief, the Emigrants, men and women, fled Mecca, leaving behind their money, close friends, and tribes, severing the ties that linked them to their people, their childhood memories, and their past. They were welcomed by a generous people, to whose hearts they brought an *īmān* which they had been graced with first.

For some time, this virtuous environment resisted the flood of wealth and the temptations of this world. During his rule, the

Caliph ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb preserved the purity of Medina’s environment and did not allow any of the Companions to leave the capital. But the worldly pleasures that invaded the Prophet’s city also attracted people of the stripe of Abū Lu’lu’a, who would later stab ‘Umar to death.

‘Umar was strongly inclined to keep the Islamic environment free of female foreigners, fearing that the women of Islam might learn from them practices that were incompatible with their *dīn*. Thus he forbade Muslim men to marry Jewish or Christian women, even though Islamic law authorizes such a union. This was ‘Umar’s *ijtihād* (God be pleased with him).

Let us now move on from the period of Revelation to the present, and ask the following questions: How can the believing women live their *īmān* in an age of satellite dishes and that devilish box that displays worldly pleasures and temptations night and day?

Where can they emigrate to? To whom can the believing women and men flee for shelter?

The believing women and men, alone in the midst of a materialist civilization and an environment of flagrant consumerism and blatant misery, are similar to a feather flapping in a violent wind. Therefore, the believing women must join a community whose members help each other in doing pious deeds so that the individual woman can resist the storm.

As for the Muslim nation-state, it is similar to an ark floating amidst a fleet of nuclear destroyers. Again, Muslims must unite to weather the storm.

Islam naturally urges mutual aid in the accomplishment of pious deeds. Furthermore, *īmān* requires that the believers sit and mix with each other. ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and his neighbor (a Supporter) would alternate attending the sessions of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) so that one could inform the other of the teachings that he had missed.

Hanzala, a Supporter, once complained to Abū Bakr, an Emigrant, about the weakness of his *īmān*: “When we are with God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), he keeps reminding us of Hell and Paradise until we almost see them with our own eyes. Yet when we come out of the assembly and we attend to our wives, children and business, we forget much of that.” Abū Bakr responded, “By God, I feel the same as you!” They then proceeded to convey their concern to the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace).

We will indeed be like a feather facing a windstorm in the absence of that coming-together and cooperation that can turn the *umma* into a strong and influential entity that the present apathetic, dispersed masses do not represent.

When the believing man meets with the believers and the believing woman attends the sessions of God’s remembrance, the angels lay their wings over them and the Lord (Exalted is He) fills their hearts with the light of *īmān*. Al-Bukhārī has reported that Mu‘ādh Ibn Jabal (God be pleased with him) once said to another Companion: “Let us sit together for a while to fill our hearts with *īmān*”; in other words, “Let us sit in a small environment of *īmān*.”

Imām Aḥmad has reported that whenever Abdullāh Ibn Rawāḥa, a Supporter, would meet with a Companion, he would tell them: “Let us sit for a while to acquire *īmān*.” Once, a man became angry, thinking that Ibn Rawāḥa was questioning his level of faith, so he expressed his discontent to the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace): “Messenger of God, don’t you know that Ibn Rawāḥa prefers an hour of his ‘*īmān*-time’ to your *īmān*?!” But the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) only replied, “God have mercy on Ibn Rawāḥa; he loves these sessions of remembrance which the angels are proud of.”

That is how our pious ancestors were; may God be pleased with them and have us join them as believers. Āmīn.

5. *Happiness of the Body*

Is there any room in the Law of God and the Sunna of His Messenger for the women and men of Islam to enjoy each others' bodies? Or is Islam a *dīn* that considers the woman impure and devilish and views carnal pleasure as an obscene act?

In this section, my intention is to explain in detail how the male body may enjoy the female body, how the man may dwell in tranquility with the woman and she with him, and how the body may be a vehicle and expression of love and mercy.

Among the most important fronts from which the animality culture attacks us is sexuality. Consumerist culture tempts us into adultery and debauchery through art and the media, displaying the woman's body in scantily-clad clothing on the "decent" channels and in complete nakedness on the blatantly devilish channels.

The Lord (Exalted is He) says: "And fight the Pagans all together as they fight you all together. But know that God is with the pious." (9:36) Commenting on this verse, ar-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (God have mercy upon him) noted: "The meaning can either be 'fight to deter them as they fight to deter you' or 'fight as a group as they fight you as a group.'"

We will combine these two meanings and link this section with the previous one to underline the imperative of the *umma* to marshal its efforts, establish a righteous environment, and unite. God (Glorified is He) has commanded this; in any case, this bestial attack on us from all fronts can only be deterred by coming together, pooling efforts and adopting a comprehensive approach.

Still, it is not enough to deter our enemies and have them retreat from the battlefield, like in a martial war. For *jāhiliyya* has invaded the innermost parts of our being and therefore the most successful battles are those that enable us to uproot the evil tree and plant the goodly tree in its place. This challenge can only be confronted by a strong alliance of the believers, as expounded in the concluding verses of Sūrat al-Anfāl. The believing women should read these verses and dwell in particular on the passage that says, “Unless you [protect each other], there will be disorder on earth and great corruption.” (8:73)

If we do not consolidate the ties of mutual protection and assistance, then how will we stand up to our enemies who, despite being corrupt, still protect one another? Just look at how Russia, Europe, and America all conspired to kill off two-hundred fifty thousand Iraqis, to destroy Baghdad, and to arm the barbarian Serbs so that they could murder the Bosnian Muslims and rape their women. And look at how Russia and America supported the Christians of South Sudan. The front lines are stretched far around the globe. In other words, we can’t just turn away from what’s happening; but how could we anyway, since in the digital age, we are all but one small village?

Battles must be conducted to plant and tend to the Islamic alternative on all fronts. The Lord (Exalted is He) has not proscribed any evil thing except to put another lawful, good thing in its place. Hence, we are enjoined to espouse generosity toward our spouses and children in place of wasting our money in extravagance and avarice. The Lord (Exalted is He) enjoins the believers to “Eat all good things and do good” (23:51) and forbids eating bad things and causing corruption on earth. He commands them to enjoy nice dress in place of devilish attire; trade in place of usury; and marriage in place of fornication and adultery.

In a forthcoming section (God-willing), we will come back to rebut the traditional Orientalist attack on God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), whom they stigmatized as inordinately erotic for having nine wives.

These enemies have attacked him claiming he had feelings of love toward Zaynab while she was still married to his adopted son Zayd.¹ Actually, he only concealed the fact that the Lord had informed him that she would one day be his wife, being apprehensive of how the Arabs would react, given that they did not condone marrying the ex-wife of one's adoptive son. But Islam did not recognize the rules of adoption particular to *jāhiliyya*.

With the sincerity of a prophet and the candor of the people of certitude, the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) once told us that the Lord had endeared to him of the worldly pleasures women and perfume, and that his greatest delight was in prayer.

God-willing, we will come back to the sunna of enjoying sexual pleasure after first looking at the theoretical foundations of the sexual revolution that turned sexual ethics in the West upside-down a quarter of a century ago.

Eighty years ago, the Austrian physician Freud conducted a PR campaign to convince the West of his psychoanalytical theory. After seventy years, this campaign has succeeded, producing the wildly-rampant animality that we witness today and whose excessiveness has not been curbed even by the epidemic disease (HIV) that the Lord has inflicted on the adulterers.

In the pool of Freudian philosophy are gathered the streams of Greek dissoluteness, European wantonness, and Darwin's theory of struggle which was inspired by Malthus.

In Freud's philosophy, the symbols of the totem and the taboo replace the Greek symbolism that drew upon the adultery of their gods.

According to Freud, all the foundations of mankind's social constitution are traceable to eroticism. The crisis of civilization is due to the struggle between the animal desire of individuals and the oppressive social system. Freud based this on Darwin, who thought

¹ [Translator's note:] See Qur'ān 33: 37-40.

that the first human groups lived the life of ape groups led by a strong male that appropriated all the females for himself.

Freud then enriched this theory by adding the Greek Oedipus myth. For him, all of life is made up of eroticism, desires, and complexes - an incessant war, a cauldron of whims seething inside the man and the woman. He described woman as a 'dark continent'. The daughter falls in love with her father in childhood and then suffers a complex when older; similarly, the son falls in love with his mother and becomes subconsciously jealous of his father.

Let us dispose of such intellectual garbage and return to the healthy environment of the Prophetic Sunna. When Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh married an older woman, the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) told him: "Why didn't you marry a young girl so that you may play with her and she with you?!" When 'Uthmān, the Commander of the Believers, ran into 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd in Mina during the pilgrimage, he told him, "Shall we marry you to a young girl who will make you remember your past days?" Whenever a Companion would meet his brother in faith, he would ask him jovially, "Did you enjoy yourself last night?"

Lawful pleasure was a known and cherished right for those *mujāhidūn* and *mujāhidāt*. The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) used to urge young people to get married. Revelation ordered the Muslims: "Marry those among you who are single, and the virtuous among your slaves, male and female." (24:32) The Qur'ān instructs Muslims to form a Muslim family and break up with the unbelieving women and men: "Do not marry unbelieving women until they believe. A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she might please you. Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe. A slave man who believes is better than an unbeliever, even though he might please you." (2:219)

The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) taught the courtesies of sexual intercourse, what is allowed and what is prohibited. The pure Islamic Law strictly forbids sodomy and bestiality. The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) told the husbands, “Whoever goes to see a fortune-teller and believes them or has intercourse with a woman through her anus has denied what has been revealed to Muḥammad.” Authentic *ḥadīth* reported by Abū Dāwūd on the authority of Abū Hurayra.

The Quraysh used to enjoy having intercourse with their wives from behind but when they emigrated to Medina, they found the Jews with their particular practices: as Jābir (God be pleased with him) related, “Since the Jews used to claim that whoever has intercourse with a woman through the vagina but on her back will have children born cross-eyed, God (Exalted is He) revealed: ‘Your wives are a tilth for you, so come to your tilth however you will.’” (2:221)

The Qurān teaches sexuality because it is a part of Islam. The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) taught the invocation to be said before the sexual act. He also said that “In having intercourse with your wife, there is an act of charity for which you will be rewarded.” Hence, it is a pious and sacred act in addition to being a source of happiness for the body. The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) urged the husband to give the wife her right in sexual pleasure. He forbade a woman divorced three times from returning to her former husband until she marries another who will “taste her sweet honey even as she will taste his sweet honey.”

Such “sweet honey” does not come by the male pouncing upon the female, but by the foreplay legislated in the sexual conduct of the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) with his wives who disclosed such intimate acts to the *umma* because they are part of Islam and are enjoined by the Lord.

In *Zād al-Ma'ād*, Ibn al-Qayyim (God have mercy on him) said: “Among the preliminaries of sexual intercourse are flirting with one’s wife, kissing her, and sucking her tongue. The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) used to flirt with his wives and kiss them. In his *Sunan*, Abū Dāwūd reported that the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) used to kiss Lady ‘Ā’isha and suck her tongue. Jābir Ibn Abdullāh has added that “The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) forbade a husband to have intercourse with his wife before flirting with her.”

The joy of the soul, the satisfaction and physical happiness of the spouses are complemented by courteous understanding, sweet words, and choosing the most suitable moment and the loveliest gestures. So long as the man and the woman are in a licit relationship, they may creatively use all modes of coquetry on the part of the wife and gentleness on the part of the husband.

Ibn al-Qayyim has also related that Lady ‘Ā’isha once asked the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace), “Suppose you passed by a tree that had been grazed and another that had not been: on which would you have your camel graze?” He replied, “On the one that had not been grazed.”

These are the words that lovers exchange. Lady ‘Ā’isha was reminding him that she was the only virgin among all the women he had ever married.

The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) used to encourage prospective husbands to choose a wife who is pious, loving, and fertile.

Pious because piety guarantees the well-being of both spouses in this world and in the Hereafter. Loving so that life with her may be one of compassion and the journey in her company toward the Hereafter may be one of pleasure. And fertile so that she may raise up new generations of Muslims.

The Lord is indeed the Compassionate, the Loving.

6. The Believing Woman and the Love of Amusement

In his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī reports on the authority of ‘Ā’isha (God be pleased with her) that when God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) stopped to let her watch the scene of the Abyssinians gamboling about and dancing in the mosque, her cheek was on his cheek, while he encouraged the Abyssinians, saying “There you go!” In another *ḥadīth* reported on her authority by Imām Aḥmad, the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) explained his encouragement by saying “So that the Jews may know that Islam is a faith wherein there is ample room for entertainment.”

The Mother of the Believers, a believing woman and a paragon of virtue in the bloom of her youth, loved to play. The affectionate husband, the kindest and most merciful Messenger, indulgently waited until she had her fill of the show. In this vein, her intimate friends used to come to play with her. One day, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) raced with her, and she won the race. On another day, he raced with her again, and this time he won the race, prompting him to exclaim: “We’re both square now!”

What is the “ample room” afforded by our *dīn*? What are the legal boundaries of this vast space?

At-Tirmidhī reported that the Companions once remarked in surprise that “Messenger of God, you joke around with us,” and he explained, “But I never say anything but the truth.” For instance, he (God bless him and grant him peace) was once joking with a woman who asked him to give her a camel to ride: “I will mount you on the child of a she-camel!” When the woman wondered aloud what she was supposed to do with such a puny creature, he told her:

“Isn’t it the case that all camels are the offspring of she-camels?!” On another occasion, an elderly woman heard the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) mention that “Old women will not enter Paradise.” “What did they do?” the woman asked frightfully. “Have you not read in the Qur’ān, ‘We have created them (the women of Paradise) of special creation, and made them virgin, pure, (and undefiled) - beloved (by nature), equal in age - for the People of the Right Hand.’” (56:35-38)

In his *The Forest Lions (Usd al-Ghāba)*, ‘Izz ad-*Dīn* Ibn al-Athīr reported how the Companion Nu‘aymān was a prankster. Once, he was traveling to Syria under the command of Abū Bakr. At one point, he asked Suwaybiṭ, who was in charge of the supplies, for some extra food, but the latter refused. So Nu‘aymān told some people in the area that he had a slave he wanted to sell for ten she-camels; the buyers proceeded to lasso a rope around Suwaybiṭ’s neck and take him away had it not been for Abū Bakr, who remedied the situation. When the band came back to Medina, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) came to know what Nu‘aymān had done; he and the Companions were greatly amused by this prank for a long time.

On another occasion, a Bedouin came, tied up his camel outside, and went to see the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace). Some of the Companions egged Nu‘aymān on to slaughter the camel for them, as they desired to have some meat. When the Bedouin came out and saw his camel slaughtered, he began to yell. The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) went to search for Nu‘aymān, finding him hiding in the house of Ḍubā’a Ibn az-Zubayr Ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Nu‘aymān came out and said, “Messenger of God: Those who have shown you where I was hiding are those who told me to slaughter the camel in the first place!” The Messenger

¹ [Translator’s note:] Second category of the People of Paradise after those Nearest to God.

(God bless him and grant him peace) began to wipe Nu'aymān's face¹, laughing; he then reimbursed the man for his camel.

Islam, by the grace of God, has reached us through the veterans of Badr, that symbol of *jihād* and the source of all virtue until Judgment Day. Nu'aymān and Suwaybiṭ were both among the men of Badr, heroes of Islam.

Drama, humor, pleasantry, and pranks! Even as the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) resisted the killjoy Talmudic culture by legitimating entertainment and recreation in Islam, so too must our age - the age of satellite dishes, nakedness, and rock music whose devilish rhythms pluck the deep chords of our animal instincts - promote an Islamic art.

This is a controversial subject, a hot issue that has been burning for centuries, with regard to music and musical instruments. The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) listened to slave girls sing and beat tambourines; that is his Sunna. On the other hand, he is reported to have prohibited stringed instruments.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya (God have mercy upon him) claimed that the four imāms unanimously prohibited all musical instruments except the tambourine. But Imām ash-Shawkānī (God have mercy upon him) demonstrated that there is in fact no consensus on the matter and that many Companions, tābi'ūn, and subsequent generations of scholars and virtuous people listened to women singers playing on lutes, mandolins, and flutes. I would encourage the believing woman to specifically refer to ash-Shawkānī's *Attaining the Lofty Goals* (Nayl al-Awṭār).

Imām al-Ghazālī (God have mercy upon him) broached the subject of the chants and songs (*samā'*) practiced by the Sufis. He came

¹ [Translator's note:] According to the most authentic reports of the story, when Nu'aymān went into hiding, his face had become dirty because he had put palm leaves and fronds to cover up his head.

close to outright authorizing musical instruments whose purpose was to invigorate the souls, but shrank from doing because of the large number of ḥadīths which seem to prohibit musical instruments.

Ibn Ḥazm on the other hand judged the ḥadīths against musical instruments as false. Thus, he criticized the *ḥadīth* reported by al-Bukhārī on the authority of the Companion Abū Mālik al-Ash‘arī as inauthentic owing to the absence of some narrators in the ḥadīth’s chain of narration. In his opinion, the purpose of the performance is the only criterion for judging the lawfulness or unlawfulness of musical instruments.

To future scholars qualified to do *ijtihād* we will leave ample room for further investigation. For now, let me quote the great Mālikī jurist Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī: “Songs are not unlawful, for the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) listened to them in his house and elsewhere. As for the use of stringed instruments, when Abū Bakr saw two slave girls performing music in ‘Ā’isha’s room and denounced them as ‘The flute of Satan in the House of God’s Messenger,’ the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) replied, ‘Leave them! For today is a holiday.’”

Al-Qādī Ibn al-‘Arabī has also said that “If a mandolin is used as musical accompaniment, it does not affect the music’s lawfulness. For those with a weak faith feel a strong attachment to such instruments which give relief to their souls and revitalize their bodies.”

The above quotes are drawn from Aḥmad Muṣṭafā ‘Alī al-Qudāt’s *Islamic Law and the Arts (ash-Sharī‘a al-Islāmiyya wa-l-Funūn)*.

This fatwa, from a brilliant jurist and disciple of al-Ghazālī, indeed provides “ample room” for those weak in faith. Then let us place this issue in its proper framework. Let us acknowledge that it is impossible to silence the flutes of Satan in the world. Let us recognize that the future Islamic government cannot close down

the media and art institutions just as it cannot close down usury-based banks overnight and abstain from dealing with the usury-operated global capitalist economy. It cannot do this, despite the fact that usury is indisputably condemned by the Qur'ān as the most outrageous of offences. By contrast, songs and musical instruments are subject to wide controversy.

Art in its various forms (music, literature, cinema, theater, etc.) is the air breathed by a wild, boisterous, and devilish life. In rock music, they interpolate devilish insinuations that incite to obscenity, fornication, and homosexuality. Such insinuations, flashing in the song for a split second, are not consciously captured by the eyes or the ears, yet they settle deep in the brain where they play on just as the animal rhythm plays with the body.

What are the limits of recreation, the limits of an alternative Islamic art that will vie with the hallucination-inducing devilry that absorbs man's ears, eyes, brain, hands, feet, and blood, electrifying him wildly, keeping him captivated?

Fostering an Islamic alternative in the field of arts is indispensable. "To avert a greater evil by a lesser evil" is a solid maxim devised by the scholars of the fundamentals of jurisprudence. Our reality is different from that of our medieval jurists; we will inevitably die if we look at Islam with the eyes of the dead and think of it with their minds (God have mercy on them). They themselves drew our attention to the reality that fatwas must change according to time, place, and circumstances.

Dispensations should be sought for the weak just as more lenient positions should be searched for in times of dire need.

Education - social, moral, and spiritual - will then do its job. God forgive me! Rather, it is the light of *īmān* which the Lord (Exalted is He) will fill the hearts of His servants with. *Īmān* will gradually grow in the heart of the believing woman who loves play so avidly

so that the love of God will oust the love of amusement. The soul will then be emancipated from the shackles of passion. The melody of the Prophets and the Sincere¹ will then become the song which the ears are most pleased with and which the heart most aspires to. The melody of the Prophets is, of course, the Qur'ān. When the believing men and women chant it, their emotions ascend and transcend.

What do the believing women and men think of a melody which the Lord Himself (Glorified is He) listens to? Muslim and others have reported on the authority of Abu Hurayra that the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Never has God listened to anything better than to a prophet who chants the Qur'ān melodiously." Al-Bukhārī's narration of the *hadīth* is as follows: "He will not be one of us who does not chant the Qur'ān melodiously." Abū Dāwūd and an-Nasā'ī have reported on the authority of al-Barā' Ibn 'Āzib that the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Adorn the Qur'ān" - that is, make the Qur'ān sound beautiful - "with your voices."

The Qur'ān is the best melody that believing men and women can chant. God forgive me for comparing the Word of God with human words, even favorably - a slip of the pen.

The soul aspires to Absolute Beauty, that is, to God (Exalted is He). The soul longs for its original homeland in the presence of God (Glorified is He). The intact *fiṭra* yearns for God and ascends to the higher stations of *iḥsān*. The Word of God becomes the balm of life and the joy of the heart. As for those whose hearts are impervious to guidance, their natural aspiration to absolute beauty shatters against the rocks of harsh-heartedness. No sooner does it ascend a little than it is captivated by bestial instincts, attracted by passions,

¹ [Translator's note:] In the Qur'ān, 4:69, God (Glorified is He) mentions four classes of His friends [*awliyā'*, sing. *waliy*] in order of preeminence: the Prophets, the Sincere, the Martyrs or Witnesses, and the (broad category of) the Righteous.

and infatuated by whims and vagaries. Such noble aspiration then finds itself in the grip of dissolute art.

A divine aspiration is one whose perspective, nourishment, and melody is the Qur'ān.

That is the spiritual alternative to the worldly arts wallowing in the mire of earth-bound concerns. If ordinary Muslims, overwhelmed by the concerns of livelihood, may find amusement and recreation in ordinary songs, then the sacred song for the believing women and men is the one by which they solemnly invoke their Lord at least seventeen times throughout the night and day: "Praise is due to God, the Lord of all creation, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment. You alone we worship and You alone we seek for help. Show us the right way - the way of those You have favored, not that of those who earn Your wrath, nor of those who go astray."¹

¹ [Translator's note:] Opening chapter of the Qur'ān, al-Fātiḥa.

7. Complementariness of Believing Women and Believing Men

In a previous section, we read ‘Umar’s account of how the Emigrants - accustomed to the traditions of Quraysh - were used to “overwhelming” their wives but when they arrived in Medina, they found that the Supporters were “overwhelmed” by their wives and how the women Emigrants then learned from the women Supporters how to “wrestle” their rights from their husbands, debate their opinions, and lodge their complaints with the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace).

In that virtuous age, when the believing women and men were being educated - socially and spiritually - such argumentation did not cause animosity. Rather, it was refined by education and by the Qur’ān prescribing for men a “degree” above women, which they practiced with gentleness, indulgence, wisdom, love, and compassion. In her husband’s house, the believing woman was held in respect and dignity. Her rights were recognized. She could courageously voice her opinion and plead for her rights in all freedom. Her Lord (Glorified is He) would hear her plea, and her Messenger would decide her case with justice in the event that her oppressor was not a magnanimous man who would hasten to do good deeds and give the fairer sex her due in full.

But then the Islamic societies declined. The woman suffered humiliation after having been held in dignity. She resorted to silence - or, rather, was forcibly silenced - after having been able to voice her opinion and was bridled after having been given free reign. She was restrained by an ossified and overly-stringent jurisprudence. She was humiliated and muzzled by arbitrary men who misused their “degree” of responsibility which they turned into a “degree” of privilege and supremacy.

Today, the woman is downtrodden in the weakly-religious Muslim society just as she is in godless society. Hence Muslim women, who don't know their rights in the *dīn*, call for equality with men just as those women whose ideology and lifestyle are linked to an irreligious *jāhiliyya*.

The believing women and men are complementary before God's Law which came down with the balance of justice. No man or woman may outweigh another except by piety. She - and he - will find the merit of such superiority in the Balance of Good Deeds on Judgment Day. As to complementariness in rights and obligations here in this world, it is prescribed by a Law that has been elaborated in detail and that is as immutable as the other universal laws. So if a change should occur, either by degeneration or aberration, *ijtihād* should adapt reality to the requirements of the Law through a progressive approach.

While the explicit Qur'ānic text apparently gives superiority to men over women by granting the former a "degree" over the latter, in fact, it only adds to the responsibilities of the men while alleviating the burdens of the women, which are already significant.

The "degree" is a position of leadership in the social, marital, and political caravan without which disorder would spread, thereby allowing enemies to come and attack and rend the caravan apart.

Because Muslim men abused this "degree," Muslim women seek equity while the irreligious women seek to snatch the leadership of the caravan from the Muslim men to pass it to their lovers or to themselves. They want equality between men and women, a kind of democracy that expels Islam from the social and political sphere, and laws open to change that should not be prevented from walking in the wake of the bestial caravan.

What is it about the rights which Western women have acquired that allure Muslim women, even though Western women are still

chasing after financial independence - which, granted, would be a remarkable achievement? Let us suppose that this independence has been achieved: then at what price? If the Western woman has, through struggle, wrested some measure of equality in wages and opportunities for education and social progress, the price she pays out of her humanity is nevertheless exorbitant. For the sexual revolution has turned her into a vulgar toy. Due to her psychological weakness, men have spirited away from her whatever gains she had made on paper.

On the woman's global activist billboard is inscribed in blazing letters: "Equality." Believing women: if you want to see how this equality has turned out in reality, you only have to see the condition of this fetishized doll. If a woman apostate argues with you, then ask her what the hairdressers do with the hair of the Western woman, what cosmetic manufacturers do to her face, what modeling does to her body's symmetry, what advertising does to her self-image, what music composers do to her voice, and what all those men do with her salary. What independence and what equality? This is enslavement and exploitation!

In her deep instincts, the woman has an emotional fondness for the man. She wants to attract his attention by any means, win his admiration, fascinate him, and charm him. If the call of Islam does not channel and refine those instincts, if the woman does not find physical happiness with one man, then the door is wide open for the struggle between men and women over wealth, beauty, and worldly pleasures. The victory in the ring - whatever may be the woman's craftiness, culture, or academic attainment - will belong to the man thanks to the law. And even should her activism prevent him from this victory, her psychological weakness will do her in anyway.

Either an illusory equality that rejects Islam or a comprehensive renaissance in the fields of education, *ijtihād*, economy, and politics: that is the decisive choice to be made by the believing women and men.

The illusory path of beastliness is strewn with ever-changing variables: whatever is favored by public opinion polls, that is publicized by advertising campaigns, and that is embellished by the Devil, is taken as a token of human progress.

In our *dīn*, we have the invariable principle of believing in God and adhering to His prophet's Sunna, and we have the variable principle of flexible *ijtihād*. Is it then proper for the human mind to be convinced by the postulates of wandering beasts that do not know why they were even created? Is it proper for someone who respects their humanity to disregard the havoc they wreak?

Among the principles established in the Islamic Law of marriage is the complementariness between the two spouses. How is such complementariness gauged? What is the criterion used? If we keep the Qur'ān and the Sunna on the shelf, look at our present reality with the eyes of the dead, despair of ridding ourselves of the residues of *jāhiliyya*, and fail to remedy the damage it has caused, then the criteria should be wealth and social status: hence, the *walī*¹ should marry his young daughter to a rich, influential old chief. Thus, the family leads the young woman to the marital grave which she dwells in until her rich husband is escorted to his tomb and she inherits his money and land.

But if we read the Qur'ān and examine the Sunna carefully, then the criteria of the Hereafter will become preeminent in our calculations. Then the marriage of the middle-aged Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) to the young 'Ā'isha is a sheer triumph for 'Ā'isha - an eternal triumph that cannot be grasped by those body-obsessed women who think she lost her worldly happiness. The same criteria apply to any pious man who marries a pious woman: the criteria of

¹ [Translator's note:] Waliy, mistranslated as male guardian, means a friend or a supporter. Contrary to the chauvinistic view that makes him a guardian of the woman, the waliy is expected to act as a counterbalance to the woman's future male in-laws and to assist the woman in her choice, not decide on her behalf or without her consent.

age, wealth, and social status diminish while the criterion of eternal happiness prevails. The true criterion of marital complementariness has been specified by the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace): “When someone whose *dīn* and character you are satisfied with asks to marry your daughter, comply with his request. For if you do not do so, there will be corruption and great evil on earth.” Reported by at-Tirmidhī on the authority of Abū Hurayra (God be pleased with him).

The leading advocates of Westernization loudly voice their complaints about Islam’s alleged injustice to the woman for making her share of inheritance half that of the male heir.

Granted, if you extract this ruling from its comprehensive context, it appears blatantly unjust and unequal. But actually, Islamic Law treats the woman generously by allowing her to save this share for the vicissitudes of time, to invest freely in times of need, or to spend for the cause of God. As for the expenses related to her subsistence, clothing, and accommodation, they are the responsibility of her father when she is not married or of her husband when she is married.¹

The Arabs of *jāhiliyya* used to not allot any share in inheritance to women - not a single penny. At the other extreme, the laws of modern *jāhiliyya* authorize the rich man to bequeath millions of dollars to his dog. The dog then lives a life of luxury with a bevy of attendants at its service and treated like royalty.

The malicious opponents of Islam then protest that Islamic Law sets the blood money for a murdered woman as half that of a man.

But that too is a fallacy because this is payable in case of second-degree murder; in the case of first-degree murder, the blood money is the same for the man and woman alike: full equality because

¹ [Translator’s note:] In other cases, it is her family, and in the last resort the State, which undertakes the woman’s financial responsibility.

a human's soul and worth are one and none is worth more than the other. In the case of second-degree murder, the family of the murdered man suffers heavily on account of the loss of his earnings, as opposed to a woman killed without premeditation, whose male family members can step in to provide needed financial support.

The allotted shares of inheritance and the allotted amounts for the blood money indicate that it is the man who assumes the family's financial duties so that the woman may dedicate herself to bearing children in her womb, raising them, and making them fully human. If she is compelled to financially care for herself because of the misery arising out of a world divided into a starved South and an obese North, then she is a victim of the world's corruption.

If she is forced to earn her living for fear of her husband's capriciousness and arbitrary repudiation, then she has been driven out of her tower by a perverted and immoral man. *Dīn* and noble manners are the criteria of marital complementarity: if either is lacking in the man or the woman, the family and the society will lose their balance and fall into disorder. And God does not like the transgressors.

8. *The Rights of Woman in Islam*

The principle of specialization and division of labor is both a natural and rational one. Any factory that does not apply it is bound to close its business since productivity will decrease, causing it to lose its market share. Any institution that does not train specialists and technicians to do their jobs with competence and expertise as well as managers responsible for supervision and coordination is bound to go bankrupt.

Despite this, the advocates of “women’s emancipation” deny this principle and insist that the woman must measure up to the man shoulder-to-shoulder and contend with him in his own fields even though his own physical and psychological constitution do not enable him in turn to vie with her in her own natural fields of specialization. They deny the need for complementariness and the possibility of a life in harmony different from the lifestyle of competition between the man and the woman - one that eventually, after a bitter struggle, turns the woman into an exploited, fetishized doll.

These people generally disavow the rulings of Islamic Law because they are alienated from the *dīn*, although the women hypocrites among them teach their herds of women activists to always open their speeches with “In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful” and to bless the Prophet whenever his name is mentioned. Perhaps you will find them, once Islam’s stock has gone up in the political market, wearing abayas and covering their heads to claim their place as the vanguard of the Islamic demonstrations. But hypocrites, men and women, are naturally disposed to hatching schemes and intrigues.

In general, they disapprove of the rulings of Islamic Law and in particular abhor the idea that man should have a “degree”: this word must be rescinded from the Qur’ān since men have arbitrarily used it. The caravan is led by a captain who schedules the itinerary of the group; the caravan may include scholars and virtuous women who surpass the captain in certain fields, yet no one can dispense with the captain given his expertise and inherent skills.

To repair the damage occasioned by those who have applied Islamic Law arbitrarily and to restore the rights which the woman has renounced out of ignorance cannot be done by trying to change the immutable Law. It is human beings who deviated from the Sacred Law, hence it is they who must be brought back to its observance through exhortation and having the fear of God put in their hearts. Exhortation entails educating people, inviting them to repent, and endearing Islam to them. This is the duty of the believing women and the first thing they owe their fellow women in general. After exhortation - which is mentioned first because of the need to move progressively, not because it holds precedence - the State must surround the garden of *īmān* (planted by the Call¹) with an awe-inspiring and protective fence of punishments and rewards.

Islamic Law is not a code that should be imposed on people by the authority of the State. That is why the need for the Call’s educational mission can never cease. Inviting people to God through teaching and exemplary conduct is the only means to make people observe the ethics of Islam and hasten to give all men and women their due rights. God forgive me! It is more proper to say that it is the Exalted Maker who guides the hearts. Nevertheless, education and exemplary conduct are indispensable.

¹ [Translator’s note:] Throughout the book, the Islamic Call (*Da’wā*) is used to mean both the general call to Islam as well as the Islamist movements’ call to their Islamic project. Sometimes, as in this context, it refers to the Islamist movements themselves.

An educational field ought to be prepared wherein the plants fertilize each other and the fruits of revering God can grow. A healthy space ought to be built wherein souls can receive therapy. A sound environment ought to be fostered whose soundness pervades its visitors, incoming and outgoing. Sessions of *īmān* ought to be organized wherein the Lord (Exalted is He) is remembered and revered, wherein the Qur'ān is recited, and wherein the believing man and woman can turn to God.

In the land of *īmān*, with the soil of the Lord's reverence, the fertilizer of love for Him and His Messenger, and the moisture of boundless generosity for His sake, the plants of pious deeds will be cultivated. In such an environment, the believing man and woman will assume their own charge. They will embark upon righteous enterprises and abhor repulsive undertakings.

In the ideal sound environment, the disparate elements of our society merge and cohere. By contrast, in the mindset that classifies man as an ape, you find rights separated from duties, politics divorced from religion, and ethics divorced from public affairs.

In the follow-the-leader mentality inherited in our countries from centuries of underdevelopment, Islamic jurisprudence has set high objectives¹, but no one has claimed them as their responsibility. You find an abundance of imitative knowledge that stands between the masses and the source of their guidance: the Qur'ān and Sunna. You find knowledge without resolve. You find resolve without knowledge.

In the battlefield where good fights evil, there reigns the specter of killer soldiers who proclaim the modern religion: democracy, human rights, and women's rights. But never ask who you are, where you come from, or where you are going!

¹ [Translator's note:] Islamic Law's high objectives (*Maqāṣid ash-Sharī'a*) are five: the preservation of *dīn*; the preservation of life; the preservation of property; the preservation of reason; and the preservation of offspring.

Surely you came from somewhere and surely you will move on to somewhere! In reality, you were brought to this world without having been consulted. Similarly, you will be taken back at a time and place hidden from you.

Islam informs you about who you are and where you will go in the Hereafter and enlightens you about your rights in this world so that you can mobilize your fellow Muslim women and strive against the apostates, men and women.

The Muslim woman is not obliged to take part in the military *jihād* unless there is a general mobilization because the enemies have invaded our lands. In the modern age, they did indeed invade and occupy our lands before departing and leaving their protégés. So a general mobilization is for a *jihād* where the believing women occupy the front lines. But the *jihād* that is required now is one of knowledge whose weapon is wisdom, not daggers. Daggers can only kill individuals who will soon be replaced by a large reserve of tyrants.

It is a twofold *jihād*: Firstly, you have to wrest away from the man's arbitrariness the rights that Islamic Law has guaranteed you and acquire knowledge so that he does not monopolize *ijtihād* and make arbitrary use of his "degree." Secondly, you have to repel the campaigns against Islam from your own fronts.

The women apostates accuse our *dīn* of being unjust because of the rulings on the woman's share in inheritance and the amount for her blood money. They raise doubts about a faith that made the testimony of one man worth the testimony of two women. Therefore, believing woman, you have to acquire the instrument of knowledge and the weapon of wisdom to testify boldly and firmly that Islam did not make the testimony of one man equal to that of one woman because the woman is the pole of compassion, affection, and tolerance and is not used to quarrels or trying to figure out the underlying causes of disputes in the marketplace.

By your dauntless stance as you undertake the duty of *jihād*, you will attest to how the women Companions were not absent from the decisive battles of Islam, but were there in the army reserves ready to take part. And so should you teach and mobilize the illiterate and idle among your fellow Muslim women. And so should you refute the women apostates, for God may guide them to the straight path.

Islamic Law guarantees you the right to human dignity, the right to use your money freely, and the right to work in case of need. Islamic Law grants you all the rights necessary to fulfill your major social mission. The other rulings that have prescribed separate duties to the man or the woman ought to be construed as a matter of a division of labor according to the specialization of each - they should absolutely not be viewed as an abasement of the woman by Islam.

Islam allotted to each Muslim man and woman their respective rights and shares. When the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) saw that the Companion ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Amr used to fast every day and offer long supererogatory prayers at night, he advised him: “Fast some days and eat on other days, and sleep some nights and offer the supererogatory prayers on others, for you owe your body its rights, your eyes their rights, your wife her rights, and your visitors their rights.” Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

Once, when Salmān visited his brother Abū ad-Dardā’, he noticed that the latter’s wife Umm ad-Dardā’ was looking somewhat disheveled: “Your brother Abū ad-Dardā’ has no interest in this world!” She complained about how her husband failed to maintain her rights as he fasted every day and offered supererogatory prayers every night. Salmān then proceeded to counsel his friend to give his worship and his wife their respective rights. Reported by al-Bukhārī and at-Tirmidhī on the authority of Abū Juḥayfa.

If we take a look at the Prophet’s household - a household of knowledge, virtue, and exemplary conduct - we will discover the

most shining example of the solidity of the Islamic household, the cohesiveness of the Islamic family, and the mutual cooperation between a husband and wife who endure the most intense hardships of life.

In his *Musnad*, Imām Aḥmad reported that when the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) married Imām ‘Alī (God honor him) to the Best of Women¹ - i.e., Fāṭima (God be pleased with her) - her trousseau consisted of a woolen blanket, a leather pillow stuffed with palm-leaf fiber, two hand mills, a waterskin, and two jars. That was all her share of worldly belongings.

Lady Fāṭima (God be pleased with her) used to grind cereals with a hand mill until her hands swelled and blistered. Once, when the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) received some monies, ‘Alī sent her to ask for a servant to help her out. But when she saw him, she was too embarrassed to broach the subject with her father, so ‘Alī went to him himself and said, “Messenger of God, I’ve drawn buckets of well water until I had a backache” - in reference to the fact that he used to work as a day laborer, and he once worked for a Jewish landowner, earning one date for each bucket.

‘Alī (God be pleased with him) then related how Fāṭima’s noble hands had swelled and blistered on account of turning the flour mill so much. But the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) declined to give them anything given the pressing needs of *Ahl aṣ-Ṣuffā*², some three hundred poor Muslims who had no shelter other than the mosque. Instead, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) went to Fāṭima’s home and taught them, just as Gabriel

¹ [Translator’s note:] God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) said: “The best women of Paradise are: Khadīja daughter of Khuwaylid, Fāṭima daughter of Muḥammad, Āsiya daughter of Muzāḥim (wife of Pharaoh), and Mary daughter of ‘Imrān (God be pleased with them).” Reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās (God be pleased with him).

² [Translator’s note:] Literally, “the people of the stone bench.”

had taught him, to say after each canonical prayer: *subhānallāh* (Glory be to God) ten times, *alḥamdulillāh* (Praise is due to God) ten times, and *allāhu akbar* (God is Supremely Great) ten times. He also taught them to say, before going to bed, *subhānallāh*, *alḥamdulillāh* thirty-three times each and *allāhu akbar* thirty-four times. They had asked him for worldly belongings and worldly help, but instead he guided them towards heavenly assistance.

9. Justice and *Ihsān*¹

The spiritual transcendence that gave the paragons of virtue, Lady Fāṭima and Imam ‘Alī, the strength to bear the hardships of life (she ground cereals until her hands swelled and blistered while he drew buckets of water from the well until he had a backache) is not within the reach of ordinary mortals. That was the Prophet’s household that had to be a distinguished model in the firmament of virtues. The believing women and men ought not to literally believe that the straw mat, the leather pillow stuffed with palm fibers, and extreme austerity are the secret behind those who have prospered in the Hereafter. If the heart is devoid of attachment to the Lord (Exalted is He), the equality of the man and the woman in hardship is no different than their equality in prosperity. Neither hardship nor prosperity in themselves bring about eternal bliss in the Hereafter.

The world is a divine trial. The burden of worldly trials is alleviated when the believing woman and man join forces to confront adversities and overcome obstacles by a fair distribution of their profits and losses, as well as by *ihsān*, affectionate assistance, love, and compassion. The woman supports the man and, in case of need, renounces some of her rights out of generosity. Similarly, the man recognizes her virtues and vies with her in *ihsān*.

If the husband feels that his wife is a solid and reliable person and if the wife is assured that her companion in the journey towards the Hereafter is a loyal and trustworthy person, the foundational brick

¹ [Translator’s note:] As stated earlier, *ihsān* carries the same connotation in three areas: the spiritual *ihsān* is to worship God with full presence of mind and heart; the social *ihsān* is to be kind and generous to all God’s creation; the professional *ihsān* is to excel in all works and undertakings.

of the social edifice is well established. But more important than building a society is building the woman and the man's future in the Hereafter. The building material of the Hereafter is righteous deeds. Some Islamist writers speak of the Islamic society, the Islamic state, Islamic justice, without speaking of my future and yours, my Hereafter and yours.

The efforts I and others have exerted to spread the Islamic message and establish the Islamic state are of no interest to me except insofar as such efforts will be accepted by my Lord. On top of that, I hope that such righteous deeds will bring me closer to Him so that He grants me His love and resurrects me in the company of those He has favored - the Prophets, the Sincere, the Martyrs, and the Righteous.

This attachment to God and this perpetual doing of righteous deeds is *ihsān* in its spiritual dimension. *Ihsān* means to worship God as if you could see Him - as the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) has said.

The Lord (Glorified is He) has commanded justice and *ihsān*. The first Islamic society was held together by justice and then *ihsān*. *Īmān* and the aspiration to the station of *ihsān* lifted the believing women and men away from the land of altercations and disputes over their rights. *Ihsān* then crowned justice. Thus, the wife was tolerant regarding the absence of some of her rights out of *ihsān* and the anticipation of God's reward, while the husband strove to give her all her rights out of fear of Him and aspiration for His nearness.

If justice balances two opposite scales on a human level, *ihsān* raises the husband and the wife to the heights.

People are not equally disposed to *ihsān*. When they are involved with their family and their properties, worldly concerns soon bring them down from the summit of *ihsān* to the reality of daily

disputations. The most fortunate among them are those who return, transcend, and seek out someone to remind them of God, just as Abū Bakr and Ḥanzala did.

It is justice that holds the edifice of the Muslim family together. Yet justice alone is like a dry machine whose parts cause friction at every movement unless they are lubricated. The remedial oil in marital life after justice, prior to justice, and along with justice is *ihsān*.

There is a linguistic and technical meaning to *ihsān* of the heart. The first connotes benevolence, generosity, and affection. The second denotes perfection in every endeavor and labor. Perfection as far as intention is concerned so that God may accept it, for He accepts none but the works of the righteous. Perfection as far as execution is concerned so that individual acts of worship and collective acts of worship (the political, economic, and social *jihād*) have a propitious outcome. *Ihsān* in the sense of perfection ought to seek out the knowledge of God and His Law - otherwise, it will be just like the work of the unbelievers that is born and buried right here in this world.

The Lord (Exalted is He) gave the man, as husband and leader, a degree over the woman. He ordered the man to be just and practice *ihsān*, just as He ordered the woman to do likewise. The arbitrary man and the arbitrary woman stuck on the lower step of *islām*¹ have their evil deterred by justice. But if the relationship declines to the point where they need to constantly seek arbitration, then the edifice of the relationship has already been undermined.

In the bosom of Islam, the woman is honored and treated generously. She must be treated with *ihsān*. Man's spiritual *ihsān* sheds on her

¹ [Translator's note:] The ascending steps of Islam are *islām*, *imān*, and then *ihsān*.

gentleness and affection. On her side, she forbears and endures and rewards *ihsān* with *ihsān*.

Only a man lacking *murū'a*¹ and having an imperfect *dīn* would treat the woman harshly. Thus, when the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) saw the camel-driver Anjasha hurrying along a caravan that was carrying a group of women, he said to him kindly: “Be careful with your [fragile] bottles.”

When the woman is a child, Islamic Law protects and honors her in the lap of parental affection; as a wife, it commends the husband to take care of her; and even more so as a mother, it urges her sons and daughters to treat her reverently and kindly.

The birth of a female child in the pre-Islamic family was a disaster. The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) hence proclaimed that “Whoever has daughters and treats them with *ihsān* [that is, kindly and generously for God’s sake], they will be a protective cover for him against the Hellfire.” Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of the Mother of the Believers ‘Ā’isha (God be pleased with her).

As to taking responsibility for them, the Prophet was even more emphatic: “Whoever takes charge of two daughters [or: girls] until they come of age, he will be as close to me on Judgment Day as one finger is to another.” Reported by Muslim on the authority of Anas (God be pleased with him), who added, “[The Prophet] then joined his fingers [to indicate this closeness].”

In another report, he said, “Whoever has three daughters or sisters, or two daughters or sisters, and treats them with *ihsān*, his reward will be Paradise.” Reported by Abū Dāwūd and at-Tirmidhī on the authority of Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī (God be pleased with him).

¹ [Translator’s note:] In the sense of magnanimity, valor, and chivalry.

As for the woman as wife, the Lord gave men a special counsel: “And treat your wives with *ma‘rūf* [praiseworthy conduct]; for if you dislike them, it may well be that you dislike something which God might yet make a source of abundant good.” (4:19)

In this verse, the word *ma‘rūf*, according to our eminent linguists, means any act that is regarded by reason or by Islamic Law as good and praiseworthy.

In the countries of freedom, women’s rights, and bestial egoism, when the woman becomes old and weak, she is thrown into the hospices for the elderly, along with the man: two ghosts that are cast in the last days of their life into a sort of concentration camp where they are left to slowly die.

In a proper Muslim society in which justice is crowned with *ihsān*, Islamic Law hastens to rescue the mother and the father: “Should one of them [your parents], or both, attain old age in your life, never say ‘Uff’ to them or scold them, but [always] address them in terms of respect. And spread over them humbly the wings of your kindness, and say, ‘My Lord, have mercy on them even as they cherished me when I was a child!’” (17:23-24)

Islamic Law distinguishes the mother in particular for the highest filial duty. When a man asked the noble Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) which of all the people was best entitled to kind treatment and good companionship from him, he said, “Your mother.” The man asked, “Then who else?” “Your mother.” “Then who else?” “Your mother.” “Then who else?” “Then your father.” What a big difference between this counsel and the selfishness of our contemporary societies!

Thank God, there is still in the Muslim countries a trace of the *dīn* that prevents sons and daughters - notably in the popular classes - from neglecting the rights of their parents. It is a basic virtue that is not to be underestimated.

In popular memory there is still an echo of the generous women who built mosques, schools, hospitals, and orphanages. That is *ihsān* in the sense of sympathy for the weak that you find in both the Muslim and non-Muslim woman. Similarly, you find in the Western NGOs signs of that *murū'a* that is shared by all humans, a *murū'a* and *ihsān* that we should all open our arms to so that we too may take part in giving, instead of forever receiving donations from others when Somalia is struck by famine or when Bangladesh is struck by floods.

This natural disposition of the woman to this *ihsān* ought to be crowned in an Islamic society with *ihsān* in its spiritual dimension to fill the gaps of a state that lacks those human sentiments that ache with the wretched in times of crisis.

This woman neighbor, that male relative, and those people in your vicinity deserve your best care and attention. You should know their names and homes and keep abreast of their problems and needs. For such missions, the believing women should mobilize human and material resources, raise funds, knock at doors, and comfort broken hearts.

The person who first deserves the woman's *ihsān* is her husband. She should not charge him with what he cannot bear, but should let her benevolence stream over him. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim have reported on the authority of Zaynab, the wife of Ibn Mas'ūd (God be pleased with them both), that the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) said, "Give charity, O women, even from your jewelry." Zaynab then asked, "May charity be given to husbands and relatives?" The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) replied that such charity had a double reward: one for kinship and one for general charity.

The woman may give charity from her husband's household in times of material comfort: such charity will be a good deed for herself and her husband to be stored up in the Hereafter. The Prophet (God

bless him and grant him peace) said, “If a woman gives, without extravagance, from the food of her home, she will be rewarded for what she gave, as will her husband for what he earned [to buy that food], as will the storekeeper. No reward of one will reduce the reward of the other.” Reported by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Abū Dāwūd on the authority of Lady ‘Ā’isha (God be pleased with her).

To disable the Devil from sowing discord between husband and wife regarding giving gifts beyond one’s comfortable means, the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) commanded that: “No woman should give charity [from her husband’s money] unless with her husband’s consent.” Reported by Abū Dāwūd and an-Nasā’ī on the authority of ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Amr. Most fortunate indeed are the wife and husband who are saved from the covetousness of their own souls and the disease of egoism.

10. The Good Life

God (Exalted is He) has said: “Whoever does good, whether man or woman, while they are a mu’min, We will surely make them live a good life, and We will surely reward them according to the best of their deeds.” (16:97)

Between the man and the woman, the one who has the highest degree of *īmān* is the one who does the best of deeds. Indeed, God accepts none but the deeds of the righteous.

What kind of happiness does this verse give hope of? What do men and women expect from believing in God and in the reward of the Hereafter? Some long for Islamic rule, expecting it to bring them immediate happiness, solve their problems, and provide them with material comfort and prosperity. Some Islamist politicians, in their election campaigns, promise people that Islam is the solution to all their problems. It is as if Islam were a magic incantation. It is as if when people elect the representatives of the Islamic project, they will be exempted from the duty of exerting further efforts.

But those who rally around Islam in the hope of receiving gifts are excused so long as they have not been taught that the proof of their sincerity is self-sacrifice, boundless giving, and the endurance of hardships.

On the other side are those disinterested in this world, who believe that *īmān* and righteous deeds should be confined to establishing the ritual prayers, leading an ascetic life, reciting the Qur’ān, and staying aloof from this world’s trials and tribulations.

In this chapter, I have expounded on the pursuit of happiness from the bestial perspective and from the perspective of *īmān*; now I

wish to make a distinction between the happiness of the *muḥsinūn* who engage in *jihād* and the happiness of ordinary Muslims. The *muḥsinūn* only expect their reward in the Hereafter and arm themselves with steadfastness in times of fortune and misfortune. As for ordinary Muslims, they expect Islam to provide them with the happiness of food and welfare. They will rally around you as long as they can hope to receive what you have promised them either directly or indirectly, otherwise they will scatter away from you.

Some men and women will answer the Islamic Call out of an overwhelming burst of enthusiasm, or out of a transient feeling of repentance that is soon forgotten, or yet out of a political motivation to participate in a strong movement. By joining the Call, such people expect to get something in return. They may spend their entire life in the shade of the Call without giving, perhaps because no one told them right from the start that joining the Call requires a readiness to give.

The believing men and women are divided into a spiritually-distinguished elite that hoists the banner of leadership and bears with patience the inevitable trials and hardships on the one hand, and on the other hand a following of ordinary believers. While the elite's ambition is attached to God and the Hereafter, as they believe that this world is nothing more than a series of trials, the ordinary believers are mostly concerned with receiving their rewards right here in this world.

For each of these ordinary believers, there is a reward and a good life promised in this world and in the Hereafter, so long as they do righteous deeds. Nevertheless, they do not attain the *iḥsān* of those who worship God as if they could see Him, the *iḥsān* of those who excel in their works, or the *iḥsān* of those who defeat their selfishness and covetousness. The further the community of ordinary believers is from the rank of *iḥsān* in all its dimensions, the less their reward will be in this world, even though none of

the deeds of any of them will be wasted in the Hereafter. Each will be rewarded according to his or her own *ihsān*, not that of the community he or she lived among in this world.

The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) once said: “God never fails to reward a believer for every single good deed they do. He will reward them in this world and in the Hereafter. As for the unbeliever, they will be rewarded for their good deeds in this world (which they did not do for the Lord’s sake) so that when they go to the Hereafter, they will find no good deed to be rewarded for.” Reported by Muslim on the authority of Anas Ibn Mālik (God be pleased with him).

This *ḥadīth* substantiates the verse where the Lord (Exalted is He) says: “And on the day when the unbelievers will be exposed to the Fire. (It will be said to them), ‘You received your good things in this (fleeting) world, and you enjoyed them for a while. But today you will be rewarded with a penalty of humiliation. For that you were arrogant on earth without just cause, and you were defiantly disobedient.’” (46:19)

Not all people can be asked to disregard their portion of this world and be content with the minimal necessities of living. Some people do not love Islam unless it reconciles their hearts with gifts. Even the sincere believing *mujāhidūn* cannot dispense with a modicum of well-being, particularly in a society of consumerism and wealth- accumulation.

Yet in extraordinary circumstances, just like the ones we are living at present, the *umma* is forced to choose between two options: either to engage in *jihād* on all fronts or to perish. Hence, the elite and vanguard must give practical - not merely verbal - evidence of their detachment from egoism, covetousness, and worldly pleasures.

In the Battle of the Trench, the armies of Quraysh and her allies laid siege to Medina, causing terror to spread among its inhabitants.

The elite of the Emigrants and the Supporters rallied around the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace). He himself was digging the trench and hitting rocks with his pickaxe, and they were digging with him to defend the bastion of Islam. They were exhausted, and their life in this world was menaced, yet their strong *īmān* and their *ihsān* found expression in a song they chanted while digging the trench:

It is we who have pledged allegiance to Muḥammad

That we will engage in jihād with him forever and ever.

The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) answered them, saying:

By God, the real life is the life of the Hereafter!

O Lord, grant Your pardon to every Emigrant and Supporter!

Al-Bukhārī reported on the authority of Anas that the Companions (God be pleased with them) were supplied with a handful of barley that was cooked with some old and rancid cooking butter. Although it was evil-smelling and disgusting in the throat, it was served to the Companions who were smitten with hunger.

We saw in the household of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) the issue he had with his wives when they asked him for material things he did not like. We also saw in the household of Lady Fāṭima (God be pleased with her) how her husband Imām ‘Alī pulled buckets of water from the well until he had a backache while her own hands swelled and blistered on account of grinding flour with a hand mill.

How can a woman stand firm in times of trial if she does not enter the Call from the door of sincere repentance, does not worship the Lord until she attains a state of unshakeable belief in the Hereafter, and does not come closer to Him until He loves her and raises her ambition to look forward to see His Exalted Countenance?

I will recall a story that is reported about one of our pious ancestors; it is a symbolic story that contrasts the psychology of one who has trust in God and exerts all their efforts in God's cause and of one who is lazy, awaiting others to bring them their livelihood, like a helpless person: Al-Fuḍayl Ibn 'Iyāḍ, the Shaykh al-Islām for the second century ah, had a friend who was a fervent worshipper. One day, this friend decided to go out of town to do trade, and so said farewell to the Shaykh. But he was soon back home again. Al-Fuḍayl asked him what happened. The friend said, "On my way, I saw a blind skylark. I wondered what that skylark fed on. Then I saw another skylark bring food and put it on the other's beak. I realized that God (Exalted is He) sustains whomever He wills in whatever manner He wills. So I came back with the conviction that my means of living will come to me with or without trade."

It is good for the believers to have the strong belief that it is God Who is the Provider. Actually, those who lack a firm conviction of this have no *īmān*. However, whoever disbelieves in the natural laws that God has established in the universe is like the first skylark - if not blind, then at least one-eyed. The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) explained to us that real trust in the Lord is to be like the resolute and firm birds which leave their nests early in the morning before sunrise to search for their subsistence with diligence and energy.

So what did al-Fuḍayl say? Al-Fuḍayl (God have mercy upon him) was one of the leaders of asceticism.

He told the fervent worshipper: "Brother! It is just as you said. But how can you accept to be like the blind skylark which accepts the donations of others and not want to be like the sighted skylark which brings subsistence to both itself and others? How can you be content with the rank of the weak if you are able to sustain yourself?"

It is a story I have retold to serve as an analogy for two groups of Muslims: one group that enthuses about Islamic rule and expects

the Islamic government to bring them their livelihood on a silver plate, and a second group - the few elite - who read the *sīra* and then read the Lord's universal laws in the horrible capitalist system under whose yoke the world of our age lives.

Believing women: Will you choose to be blind skylarks, or resolute skylarks seeking diligently to sustain yourselves and your umma? God-willing, we will review the case of the woman who works outside her home and the reasons that compel her to earn a living. The woman whose horizons are dimmed by egoism, greed, and narcissism is deaf and blind. While others are building their eternal nest, she is accumulating fleeting worldly gains in her drawers and boxes. The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) used to marvel at the magnanimous act of the couple from among the Supporters who served their guest instead of their children, remarking that "The Lord (Exalted is He) has indeed marveled at that man and woman." Reported by al-Bukhārī.

How wonderful are that couple who remained hungry - and kept their children hungry - so that the guest could eat. They did not content themselves with such wondrous altruism, but even resorted to a ruse to achieve this.

That is asceticism, that is *ihsān*, that is altruism, and that is the destruction of selfishness and covetousness!

The highest rank of *ihsān* is reserved for those who spend from their money and prefer others to themselves even though they themselves are needy.

Imām al-Fuḍayl was the model of asceticism in his time. The Abbasid "caliph" Hārūn ar-Rashīd once remarked in wonder: "How ascetic you are!" Al-Fuḍayl replied: "Actually, you are more ascetic than I am. I have renounced the pleasures of this fleeting world whereas you have renounced the bounties of the everlasting Hereafter." He also remarked to ar-Rashīd on another

occasion: “O handsome man! The affairs of the *umma* are in your hands and around your neck. You have indeed assumed a serious responsibility!” Ar-Rashīd shed tears and gave the attending scholars ten thousand dirhams each. Al-Fuḍayl declined the king’s gift, however. The great scholar Sufyān Ibn ‘Uyayna reproached him: “You acted wrongly! You could have spent that money in charitable undertakings!” But al-Fuḍayl said, “You are the chief jurist of this city and yet you still would make such a mistake! Were that money pure [i.e., lawful] for those people, I would have taken it.”

God is pure and accepts none but what is pure. And He accepts none but the works of the righteous.

IV. Belief in God and in the Last Day

1. An Arrogant Mind and a Restless Soul

In the first chapter of this book, we looked at Islamic society and attempted to highlight its inner and outer diseases. We came to the conclusion that the inner dimension is decisive in the equation between us and our external enemies, meaning that we must first purify ourselves from our traditional maladies and from the germs that have recently affected us from the outside. We also focused on the importance of the Prophet's promise about the advent of a second *khilāfa* that would rule according to the Prophetic Method, and on the importance of the motivation of *īmān* and *ihsān*.

In the second chapter, we surveyed the world we live in - a world full of crusading animosity, colonialist intrigues, and capitalist destruction. We came to the conclusion that the *jāhiliyya* besetting us has polluted our Islamic character; that describing our societies as societies of *jāhiliyya* only leads us to despair or violence; that we must understand *fitna* in both its senses¹; that *rifq* (kindness, tolerance, and flexibility) is the best method of change; and that the *rifq* of progressive change - not impatient hastiness - accompanied by the revivalist *ijtihād* represents the open gate towards success and prosperity.

In the third chapter, we reviewed the temptations of the world of pleasures, consumerism, and libertinism, a world wherein the believing women find themselves strangers, where they cannot even find peace in Islam because their minds have been pervaded

¹ [Translator's note:] The first meaning of *fitna* is of divine trial and the other one refers to the historical ordeals which the *umma* has gone through after the Prophet's passing away.

by extremist views that ban everything - as if this world were a place of torment, not one of tests and trials.

But the truth is that the Lord has facilitated the worldly trials for the believing women and men by providing lawful things as substitutes for unlawful ones along with a wide space for recreation within Islam so that the believers may have their portion of worldly pleasures. We then closed the third chapter by talking about the parable of the blind skylark.

From this chapter onward, God-willing, we will talk of how to build a believing personality and of the specifics of belief, the obligatory acts of worship, and the pursuit of perfection. Then we will explore the conditions of the believing women in their homes as wives and mothers, their ordeals as workers outside their homes, their right to education, their duty in the *jihād*, and their irreplaceable role in raising virtuous generations and making their *umma's* future.

On their path, the believing women will encounter poor-sighted skylarks affected with different types of mental and intellectual blindness, various layers of ignorance about Islam, or blatant animosity toward the *dīn*.

To such skylarks, we should not start with the generalities stated in previous chapters. Rather, we should, in appropriate language and courtesy, pose to them questions that - for those who still have a pulse of life - will shake their innermost recesses. The woman who is not shaken by such questions, even after a whole lecture or a convivial talk or repeated signs, is but a wandering ghost, a lifeless body - even should she be a writer, a poet, or a doctor. Let the believing women not waste their time addressing those deaf-mutes who are incapable of reasoning.

What are you in the field of humanity: a thorn or a promising flower? Where did you come from? Where are you going? What is life? What is death? What comes after death?

These are the questions which the Call should begin with. The woman who is lost in heedlessness and is satisfied with a rote understanding of Islam enveloped by ignorance should be asked these questions in a kind and considerate manner and by means of reminding and preaching. With such people, philosophical argumentation is useless. If we can only brush off the dust of heedlessness and repent from the heaps of our past sins, then we will be back in our pristine state of *fiṭra*.

Then there are women who argue obstinately out of ignorance, prisoners of the materialistic, rationalist culture; with such women, the believing women need longer sessions of dialogue with rationalist argumentation that is mixed with existential questions and softened by acts of love, kindness, and generosity.

Then there are those women who are obstinate out of unbelief: “And there are among them some who believe in this (Qur’ān), and some who do not believe in it. And your Lord knows best those who are out for mischief. And so, (O Prophet,) if they give you the lie, say (to them) ‘To me (shall be accounted) my doings, and to you, your doings! You are not accountable for what I am doing, and I am not accountable for whatever you do!’ And there are among them some who (pretend to) listen to you. But can you cause the deaf to hear even though they will not understand? And there are among them some who (pretend to) look at you. But can you show the right way to the blind even though they cannot see? Verily, God does not do the least wrong to men, but it is men who wrong themselves.” (10:40-44)

The Lord seals the heart of the one who wrongs himself and plunges into unbelief and hypocrisy: they do not listen to preaching with their heart nor do they see the signs of God with their heart. Hence, rational argumentation with them is useless.

Nevertheless, the believing women still need to arm themselves with intellectual arguments, if not to persuade, then to protect themselves and others from the borderline-blasphemous ideas of

those oblivious women entrenched in the culture of *jāhiliyya*. The believing women must master how to express their faith gently, sensitively, and beautifully since people are diverse, and not everyone will respond positively to conventional proselytization.

In our age, the instrumental mind - which is shared by believers and disbelievers alike - prevails because of its scientific and industrial achievements. Its authority is visibly manifested in its inventions, manufactured products, and advanced weaponry. This authoritative presence fills people's senses and haunts their souls.

But this scientific rationality is hijacked by a philosophical rationalism that utilizes it as a sledgehammer in its arguments to persuade man that he is human purely because he thinks, invents, and manufactures.

There is no room in the lands of philosophical rationalism for asking about the meaning of existence or the purpose of life. The noise produced by that kind of rationalism hushes the whispers of the *fiṭra*, muzzles its voice, and plunges its questions into oblivion.

Within the awful progress of scientific and industrial rationalism there hides an incurable disease: blindness and deafness to the Truth. The scientific and materialistic mind does not know God, does not want to know, and has no time to listen to someone who poses the questions of the *fiṭra*.

That mind is busy with the social, environmental, and economic problems which it itself has caused in the world and to which it can find no solution. Industry pollutes the environment. That is the problem! Automated labor causes unemployment. That is the problem! Yet this mind has forgotten - or tries to forget - the central problem of its existence: Where did it come from and where is it going?

Arrogantly proud of its achievements, such rationality declares, with its implicit philosophy and its weighty presence, that it is God, just as Pharaoh proclaimed: "O chiefs! No god do I know for you

but myself.” (28:38) But the fact is that this sort of rationalism is but a manifestation of the devilish passions and of *jāhiliyya*.

Practical rationality is an instrument which we ought to - must, even - acquire through a *jihād* in which the believing women will take part. This is a *jihād* to acquire and adapt such rationality in a way that serves the truth and not falsehood, justice and not injustice, a rationality that is kind to man and not debasing to him.

Though armed with rationality, the souls of *jāhiliyya* rebelling against the Lord are nevertheless fragile, restless, and confused. Because they have repudiated faith, morality and compassion have rebuffed them in turn. They have ousted faith, closed their ears to the questions of the *fiṭra*, and closed their eyes to the contemplation of God’s signs in the universe. They wander about in the company of devils, wallow in their constantly-changing consumerist pleasures, plunge into the mire of erotic vices, and turn to satanic sorcery and childish illusions to fill the gap that was once occupied with belief in God.

Even the CEOs of multinational corporations, the heads of state, and the most prominent members of society consult fortune-tellers to determine the most appropriate time to make a deal, run for election, purchase stock market securities, or open a factory.

These evasive souls are agitated at the least sign of restlessness, influenced by the most generic government declaration, and alarmed at events in the world’s most remote parts, leading to the values of securities to drop, capitalist empires to collapse, banks to fall into insolvency, and economic wars to break out.

Then a new leader comes along with inflated election promises, causing market funds to regain vigor, usury rates to fall, and a new hope of better living standards to arise.

The Lord (Exalted is He), Who best knows His creatures, has described man both in his state of rebellion against Him and in his state of return to Him: “Verily, man is born with a restless

disposition. (As a rule,) whenever evil touches him, he is filled with self-pity; and whenever good comes to him, he selfishly withholds it (from others). Not so, however, those who consciously turn towards God in prayer, (and) who incessantly persevere in their prayer, and in whose possessions there is a due share for the beggars and the needy, those who believe in Judgment Day, and those who stand in fear of their Lord's chastisement - for, behold, of their Lord's chastisement none may ever feel (wholly) secure - and those who guard their chastity, except with their wives and those women whom they rightfully possess - for (then) they are free of all blame, whereas those who seek to go beyond that (limit) are truly transgressors - and those who respect their trusts and covenants, and those who stand firm whenever they bear testimony, and those who guard their prayers (from all worldly intent). These will dwell in Gardens, honored." (70:19-35)

If man believes in God, turns his face towards Him, and meets the conditions of emancipation, God will lift the veils over his heart's sight and over his ears so that he may listen to the Truth and convey it. The Lord (Exalted is He) will honor him with a sensible heart that contemplates His creatures, meditates on His wisdom, marvels at His perfect creation, understands His messages, and obeys Him.

God honors the believing men and women with the light of a reasonable heart that grasps His signs in the Qur'ān, in their psychological universe, as well as in the external universe. Thus, the believer comprehends God's twofold address: one that invites them to contemplate the realm of the heavens and the earth, and another that invites them to ponder what the Lord has predestined for humans when He created them from a sperm, then from a clot of congealed blood, and then in diverse stages¹ until they came out from the darkness of the womb² to the world of trials. God shows all these signs to the person liberated from the grip of passions and restlessness so that they may know that they have an appointed time with Him in the Hereafter.

¹ [Translator's note:] See Qur'ān, 22: 5.

² [Translator's note:] See Qur'ān, 39: 6.

2. *Divine Honor, Divine Trial*

The Lord (Exalted is He) has laid on the human mind the responsibility of choosing between unbelief and belief, misguidance and guidance: “So whoever chooses to follow the right path follows it but for their own good, and whoever chooses to go astray goes but astray to their detriment.” (10:108) He has further informed us that He never causes man the least wrong, but that it is man who wrongs himself. God (Blessed is He) has set as a condition for *īmān* the belief in the predestination of both good and evil, and has informed us in the Qur’ān that He has created both us and our deeds.

The mind finds itself before a difficult examination when it attempts to comprehend this seeming contradiction in belief, since responsibility means freedom of will. In this trial, the mind asks itself the following question: If my deeds were created and predestined by God, then where does my responsibility lie?

The Lord (Exalted is He) has created things that befit the human *fiṭra* and the mind’s sense of logic in things like fertility, health, prosperity, security, and safety. But He has also created things that shock the mind’s logic and arouse its objection and confusion in things like drought, child diseases, extreme poverty alongside extreme wealth, wars, and natural disasters. The mind wavers between *īmān* - rooted in a *fiṭra* which intuits that this well-ordered universe must have a Maker - and the universe’s contradictions.

Among the fundamental truths that the mind recognizes and that the *fiṭra* finds firmly entrenched deep within itself is the balance of good and evil.

So why all this evil?

The human mind cannot unravel the mysteries of the universe and of history so long as it is separated from Revelation, and so long as the scope of its contemplation does not go beyond this life, beyond the testimony of what it senses and understands by logic and experimentation. But when the mind opens onto Revelation, its eyes will be able to harmoniously assess all the facts of creation and it will have the necessary instruments to weigh these contradictions and place responsibility and freedom of will in their proper places. Beyond all that lies the Lord's wise plan which He alone knows and manages.

The human mind is on trial from the moment it comes into this world to the moment it departs from it - or rather, from the moment when God brings it into this world to the moment He takes it from it. Indeed, among the signs of the heedless mind's arrogance is that it ascribes to itself what it is forced to undergo.

The individual human mind is on constant trial. In this world, man wavers between what is convenient and what is disagreeable. But the real good is indeed that of the Hereafter for the one who passes the examination and for whom God has predestined eternal bliss.

Nations as collectivities are also on constant trial. God causes days of fortune and days of misfortune to alternate among the people. The four quarters of the world shake from the fighting among the nations. But their ultimate fortune or misfortune is contingent upon their passing the examination.

The laws governing the divine trial which the nations undergo are expounded in the following verses: "And, indeed, We sent (Messengers) to many nations before your time, (O Prophet,) and afflicted them with misfortune and adversity so that they might humble themselves. Yet when the suffering decreed by Us befell them, why then did they not humble themselves? On the contrary, their hearts grew hard and Satan made all their doings seem goodly to them. Then, when they forgot the warning they had received, We

opened against them the gates of all (good) things, until - even as they were rejoicing in what they had been granted - We suddenly called them to account and they were plunged in despair! And (in the end,) the last remnant of those folk who had been bent on evildoing was wiped out. For all praise is due to God, the Lord of all creation.” (6:43-46)

The Lord (Glorified is He) has related to us the stories of the nations that insolently opposed the command of His Messengers. He called them to severe account in this world and imposed on them a great punishment. They tasted the evil outcome of their conduct, and their end was perdition.

The results of this examination are announced in this world. They earn what they deserve and receive punishment in proportion to their deviation from God’s *dīn*: “Corruption has appeared on land and in the sea as an outcome of what men’s hands have wrought. And so He will let them taste (the evil of) some of their doings so that they might return (to the right path).” (30:40)

As for the examination of individuals, the results will not appear until the Hereafter, when the man and the woman may either be in Hell with the wretched or in Paradise with the Blessed.

The Lord extinguished the people of Noah with the flood when they rejected faith. As for ‘Ād, the people of the Prophet Hūd, He opened over them the gates of prosperity so that they built fortresses and fine buildings. But then they assaulted the neighboring nations with brute force and rejoiced arrogantly in the bounties they were given, so that God (Exalted is He), applying His custom to the trial of the nations, sent against them a furious wind on a day of violent disaster.

As for Thamūd, the people of the Prophet Šāliḥ, He opened onto them gardens, springs, fields, and luxurious dwellings carved into mountains which the travelers to Jordan can still take warning

from. Having opened before them these bounties, the Lord then tried them by sending Ṣāliḥ (peace be upon him) to ask for the right of watering for the Lord's she-camel.¹ But Thamūd rejected his mission and hamstringed the she-camel, so their Lord sent against them a single mighty blast that obliterated them, leaving them like the dry stubble used to feed penned cattle.

This is what He does, Glorified is He, to the transgressing nations that give the lie to His Messengers.

In the previous section, we talked of the arrogant mind proud of its achievements and might. We will complement this perspective with lessons from history and the proper place of responsibility and freedom in our continuous examination.

Today, Western civilization is in the examination room, just as 'Ād, Thamūd, the people of the Prophet Lot, the Companions of the Wood, and the people of Tubba' were. The skillful scientific minds He has granted to its people, the apparent bounties He has heaped upon them, the might and wealth He has provided them with, are all questions manifesting the divine trial.

On the other hand, the woes that the Islamic *umma* suffers from - underdevelopment, oppression, poverty, and disunity - are so that the Lord may give us a taste of some of our deeds in order that we may turn back from evil. We ask Him (Exalted is He) forgiveness and mercy.

In the Noble Qur'ān, there are two verbs that express the act of opening: *fataḥa 'alā* (to open over/against) by which God gives the unbelievers in the transgressing nations a taste of this world's well-being and might before He punishes them; and *fataḥa li* (to open to) by which He grants bounties - and this is used exclusively with His beloved and pious servants. Hence, when the Lord (Glorified is He) addressed His Messenger: "Verily, (O Muḥammad,) We

¹ [Translator's note:] See Qur'ān, 91:13.

have opened to you (the city of Mecca) and granted you a manifest victory (*innā fataḥnā laka fathān mubīnan*) so that God may forgive you all your faults, past as well as future, and (thus) bestow upon you the full measure of His favors, guide you on a straight way, and grant you His powerful help.” (48:1-3)

If the *umma* does not stand upright on the path of Islam, it will be swept away by the flood of materialist civilization like so much scum. The junction between “to open over/against” and “to open to” is the line by which the human mind is guided. Contemporary *jāhiliyya* is guided by animality and the command of rationalistic philosophy to “Worship your own ego, for you are extraordinary!”

The pride of the mind of its sciences and technologies is a trial that God has opened over it in both the material and psychological worlds. Its freedom of will has escaped from it in directions it does not even perceive. Technology drives it against its will in directions it cannot avoid. Its products immerse it in trivialities and its skills have swaddled it in a dense cobweb which unleashes a destructive power against us and the other oppressed nations.

The man of *jāhiliyya* is excessively pretentious on account of his ever-increasing power. Inattentive - or, rather, feigning inattention - to the moral and psychological decline of Western man, he appoints himself a defender of human rights in the world while marshalling armies to oppress other nations. His injustice has reached the extreme and it is time for God’s custom to be applied to him. It is time. Yet the Lord alone knows the Unknown. His custom with nations is to prolong their life, grant them respite, and plot against them. But His custom never defaults.

The junction between “to open against” by which God tries the arrogant tyrants of earth and “to open to” which He has granted exclusively to the *umma* of Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) only needs our willingness to be honored by Him in

order for us to cross it. The Lord has predisposed the children of Adam to honor.

Among the children of Adam are those who stood with the Messengers (peace be upon them) and to whom the Lord granted victory in both this world and in the Hereafter. But also among them are those who went astray and denied the truth, on whom God inflicted exemplary punishment in this world and in the Hereafter.

The great honor which God has granted to the children of Adam is the wonderful gift of the mind. Those who turn away and do not answer the call of the Messengers have bestial minds that only understand how to eat, drink, and enjoy pleasure.

But among the children of Adam are those who answer the Call of God and whose minds and hearts He has opened the gates of guidance to. Such people are on the Way of Adam (peace be upon him), whom the Lord fashioned in due proportion, breathing into him His spirit, making him His successor on earth, and instructing the angels to prostrate before him. In the same way does He fashion us from a sperm and create us in the best of forms. That is the honor of the earthly creation in whose bonds the soul must dwell for a while.

Bestial individuals search for man's essence in a body whose countless wonders include a perfectly balanced construction and precise fashioning of its limbs, organs, brain neurons, nerve networks, and blood vessels.

But they are caught between a mind that does not hear Revelation and a body that is a puzzling riddle in the absence of a metaphysical explanation.

After the first creation of our body, the Lord (Glorified is He) will recreate us after death. He has bestowed upon us gifts to test whether we are grateful believers or ungrateful unbelievers. These gifts are the provisions by which we should seek the eternal well-being of

the Hereafter. And then the Lord will recreate us either to spend eternity living in Paradise and gazing upon His Countenance, or abiding in the Hellfire. “So will God produce a later (and eternal) creation. For, verily, God has the power to will everything.” (29:19)

3. Belief in the Exalted Lord

Armed with its scientific theories and instruments, the investigating mind asserts that the human creature is the product of an evolution that began from the nucleus of a living cell which then developed into a complex organism until chance and the need to struggle with nature and other species for survival completed this transformation into an aquatic creature which then crawled out of the sea and developed into a reptile; in turn, some of those reptiles began to walk on all fours and evolved into mammals, then apes, and eventually humans.

And in the opinion of the scientific mind, the origin of all this evolution is mere coincidence that formed life after nothingness spontaneously burst open and became a cosmic existence.

But the scientific rapture that so intoxicated the searching and discovering mind throughout the nineteenth century began to fade in the middle of the twentieth century as a result of increasing doubts. The resourceful, arrogant mind began to delve into the boundaries of the infinitely large and the infinitesimally small, and realized that it was insignificant. Meanwhile, the servile imitators and admirers of this civilization in the underdeveloped world continued their adoration of the arrogant mind.

In the past, that mind thought that it was the creator of its discoveries: hence, it thought that it had formed the nucleus, the planets, and the human body. But now the arrogant mind has begun to retreat and doubt its capacities before the divine wonders of creation which the Lord (Glorified is He) has disclosed to it. And yet, the servile and underdeveloped imitators remain intoxicated.

The astronomical sciences gathered pace after Kepler and Galileo, or perhaps more accurately, after the great Muslim scholar Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen). Today, man can mathematically measure the universe's diameter as about twenty billion light years, that is, the distance that light can cover after twenty billion years traveling at a speed of 300,000 kilometers per second. In one minute, light covers a distance of 300,000 kilometers sixty times, that is, 18 million kilometers. So imagine, O sister in faith, the distance that light covers in an hour, a year, a thousand years, a billion years.

About seventy years ago, the inquiring mind, armed with its scientific theories and instruments, advanced the Big Bang theory. This extraordinary and perplexing theory states that the immense universe, which human imagination cannot even comprehend, began from quasi-nothingness.

The Big Bang was first devised by the Russian Alexander Friedman in 1922 and confirmed seven years later by the American Edwin Hubble, who adjusted its calculations.

The essence of this idea is that the vast universe is expanding at high speed, drawing the stars and galaxies apart just as fragments of an exploded bomb move away from each other. All such expansion originated from an object whose size was millions of times smaller than the core of a nucleus, with a temperature millions of times higher than the sun's center and a mass heavier than what the mind can imagine.

Then, in a single moment, the object exploded, bursting in a billionth the fraction of a second - to be precise, ten to the power of negative thirty five seconds, which is one followed by thirty five zeros.

Cosmologists reckon that, after one-hundredth of the first second, this object expanded to the size of a bean seed; after a full second, the mass became as big as the sun. And it was at that moment that were formed the particles known to us today: photons, electrons, positrons, neutrons, etc. Three hundred thousand years later, the nucleus was formed, and with it, the force of gravity that holds the

universe's disparate parts together, to some extent counterbalancing the force of the initial explosion which is drawing them apart.

This amazing theory is complemented by another theory that the universe, after this continuous expansion, will one day shrink back to its original size, that is, a mass infinitesimally smaller than the core of a nucleus.

Studying the universe's laws, the rationalistic mind thus imagines, calculates, and measures the universe's nothingness in the beginning and in the end. Yet it does not call it nothingness because it does not like to believe in a Maker other than the self-made matter that explodes, expands, and eventually shrinks. Even though the inquiring mind has retreated from some of its arrogance, it still lives off the Animality Postulate of unbelief. Verily, God has extinguished and sealed up certain hearts, made some ears deaf to the truth of Revelation, and made some eyes blind to the signs they observe in creation.

The Lord (Exalted is He) grants respite to the unbelieving mind, whose mathematical equations stand in helpless wonder at the dizzying approximations that scientific instruments present to the bewildered human imagination. In 1989, Americans launched a space shuttle whose giant listening devices were able to eavesdrop on the Big Bang which, according to calculations, occurred fifteen billion years ago.

Most recently, these gigantic space devices have been able to film clouds in the heavens produced by the first bang. Aware of their Lilliputian nature and admitting their perplexity and smallness, these minds are now engaged in studying what they call the "Space Egg."

In other fields, the inquiring mind is busy examining the essence and origin of life. It has doubts about its knowledge, but it inevitably needs to devise hypotheses and theories. Lest the shame of doubt and ignorance appear in its research, it disguises it with the scientific veneer of probability.

Extremely bright but bereft of insight, this mind assumes that the amino acids, from which living organisms were built, were randomly fashioned in the depths of the sea and that the primary proteins which emerged from them then formed the first living cell.

The blind mind ascribes to its new god of chance the miracle of assembling the thousands of acids necessary to form the simplest protein. It invites the science of doubt - that is, probability - to prove with astronomical figures what the human imagination cannot even confront. It computes the chances of the random formation of a single protein to be one in ten to the power of two thousand, which is one followed by two thousand zeros.

Hence, we would need to activate all the particles of the vast universe and join them together as many times as the above astronomical figure in the hope that a single protein is formed. As to the primary original cell, it would require 100,000 types of proteins different in size and formation, varying from those composed of 1,000 amino acids to those composed of 100,000 amino acids.

In short, according to that mind which is cognizant of the universal phenomena but blind to the Truth, all the organic substances of the universe must be shaken millions of times, struck against each other, and joined together before the chance-god may attain his objective of assembling a single cell having the characteristic components of life.

How can this mind not bow down before the Omnipotent Creator (Exalted is He)? How can the arrogant mind not learn humility and be reconciled with the *fiṭra*, which is what the Messengers directly address? How true are the words that “Verily man becomes grossly overweening whenever he believes himself to be self-sufficient.” (96:6-7)

The inquiring mind deluded itself into thinking it was self-sufficient with its research tools, scientific results, and accumulated expertise. How can it free itself if the Lord does not guide it? How can it return

from the horizons of amazing equations to the simplicity of *īmān*? “Have you ever considered (the kind of man) who makes his own passions his deity, and whom God has (thereupon) let go astray, knowing (that his mind is closed to all guidance), whose hearing and heart He has sealed, and upon whose sight he has placed a veil? Who, then, could guide him after God (has abandoned him)? Will you not, then, receive admonition?” (45:22)

Man’s passions revealed themselves to him in the theory of chance. Ever since the scientific breakthroughs following Newton, blind minds have followed the passions of genius, naming Newton the new Moses, building their laboratories as temples, and ordaining scientists as priests of the idol of chance.

Probability and the sciences of chance also have an echo of Darwin’s theory that man is an evolved ape. Indeed, mathematicians still talk of the “miracle of the ape.”

The purport of this probabilistic theory - which is really more a mathematical calculation than a true theory - is that the probability of the universe existing by chance is similar to the probability of an ape writing the works of Shakespeare if it were chained to a typewriter: one in ten to the power of a thousand billion, which is one followed by a thousand billion zeros. If you wanted to write this figure down, you would need one million kilometers of paper. If you wanted to just utter the full figure, you would need 15,000 years; that is 150 centuries.

Science develops so rapidly that any discovery becomes obsolete within seven years: soon, that lifespan will be shortened to three years. Then what? The nucleus which the researcher observes through their microscope upbraids them for their ignorance. Their merely observing the nucleus disturbs it; they are not watching it exactly as God created it, for there is no way to do that; they can only watch it be disturbed. They don’t know if it is just a matter or light ripple.

Our Lord, You have not created all this without meaning and purpose! Glory be to You! Keep us safe, then, from the suffering of the Fire!! You are God, the Maker, the Wise.

¹ [Translator's note:] Qur'ān, 3:191.

4. Revelation and Prophecy

The vast discoveries which open the mind to God's infinite are basically saying: the idea that the universe's existence is random is impossible. Whoever wants to hear will hear this, just as the illiterate old woman listens to her *fiṭra* and knows from her weakness the power of her Maker and from her ignorance His knowledge. Meanwhile, the arrogant and tyrannical mind keeps regaling itself with its dubious calculations and blind hypotheses.

The Omnipotent Lord (Exalted is He) has sealed the scientific mind with the secretions of its brother, the philosophical mind. From Epicurean hedonism to Freud's philosophy of the instincts, from the Greek materialists to the Marxist materialists, the hedonistic philosophical mind has accumulated on itself layers upon layers of skepticism and has rejected the clear Truth known even to the illiterate old woman.

The mind might find belief in God at the end of its research, or God may shorten for it the distance and enable it to believe from the first step by having it rely on its *fiṭra* which whispers to it, from its innermost being, the existence of a Maker.

The Lord has ordered man to contemplate the signs of the universe and draw lessons from it: "Blessed be He in whose hand all dominion rests, and He has the power to will everything. He who has created death as well as life, so that He may put you to a test (and thus show) which of you is best in deed, and (make you realize that) He alone is Almighty and Forgiving. He who has created seven heavens one above another. No fault will you see in the creation of the Most Gracious. And turn your vision (upon it) once more: Can you see any flaw? And turn your vision (upon

it) again and yet again, (and every time) your vision will fall back upon you humbled and truly defeated.” (67:1-4)

The inquiring mind - armed with its mathematics and physics - could have turned back humbled and defeated from beholding nothingness, existence, and infinity, amazed at its own idiocy for having ascribed the miracles of creation to spontaneity and chance. Yet this arrogant mind is dissolute. It wallows in its rationalistic dissolution just as the materialistic sensualists wallow in their hedonistic dissolution.

The rightly-guided mind, by contrast, finds belief in God at the end of science, if not as the first step on the threshold of *fiṭra*. From Revelation there comes to it knowledge of His Names, the Unseen, and the purpose of this world’s trials.

The Lord (Blessed is He) honored man when He created him in due proportion. He further honored man with a mind which He then bestowed with the faculty of speech. To speak is to reveal what you have in your mind in order to guide the person you are addressing. The faculty of speech is one of the greatest gifts of the Lord, since it is the mediator between Revelation and the mind. But the philosophical mind is degenerate, referring to man as nothing more than an articulate animal. Certainly, the faculty of speech is one of the most important characteristics that distinguish humans from animals; yet this alone does not raise man above such animality, which he will continue to resemble so long as he goes on chattering and philosophizing at the level of carnality and instincts.

The only way for him to rise above being merely an articulate, chattering animal is to open his ears and receive Revelation from the Messengers (peace be upon them).

The honor of hearing is another of the great gifts of the Lord (Exalted is He), for it is the channel through which comes news of God, the pathway to eternal bliss, and the truth of life and death.

The faculty of hearing is usually cited before the faculty of seeing in the Qur'ān, for the latter only films and conveys messages about the visible world.

The juncture between the speech of the Messenger and the ear's reception of this speech is an assembly of *īmān* and the starting point of man's transcendence of his animality. He will transcend if he accepts the Truth, but he will remain with the vilest of beasts if he rejects it. In the latter case, he will not be reckoned among the sensible, for his mind is deaf, switching off the light of Revelation in its heart: "Verily, the vilest beasts in the sight of God are those deaf and dumb ones who do not use their reason. For if God had seen any good in them, He would certainly have made them hear. But (as it is), even if He had made them hear, they would have surely turned away in their obstinacy." (8:22-23)

The believers, men and women, say, "We hear and obey," whereas the unbelievers and the hypocrites, men and women, say, "We hear and disobey."

Man's greatest honor is when the Maker (Exalted is He) addresses him with His Messenger's speech and invites him to Himself. He sends to him Messengers with glad tidings and severe warnings about the Hereafter. These Messengers are ardent and anxious about guiding people, and so they live amongst them, patiently bearing their evils.

The Messenger is a human among humans whom God chooses to convey to a certain people the message of Heaven. The Lord chose Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) to convey His message to all the humans and jinn until the end of this world.

Revelation came to Muḥammad all of a sudden. He was alarmed by what was happening to him and so took refuge with his wife Khadija: "Cover me, cover me! Wrap me, wrap me!" He had no idea what had come upon him. As the Lord later reminded him,

“You did not know (before) what Revelation was, nor what *īmān* (implied).” (42:49)

Another verse was revealed to him, reminding him that he had been but a servant among servants who did not know what fate had in store for him before Revelation came down: “And you had never expected that this Book would be sent to you, but it was a mercy from your Lord. So, never be a supporter for the disbelievers.” (28:86)

Is Revelation just some sort of philosophy or poetic inspiration? Not at all! It is God’s address to a servant whom He chose in pre-eternity and appointed as His interpreter. A man who, before the Revelation, was like other ordinary men. A man who, after Revelation, became extraordinary. A man who ate food and walked in the markets. The enviers, the unbelievers, the hypocrites, and the arrogant elite were dumbfounded by the human resemblance between them and their brother who spoke unto them words they were not accustomed to: “What sort of a Messenger is this who eats food (like all other mortals) and goes about in the marketplaces? Why has not an angel (visibly) been sent down to him to act as a warner with him? Or (why has not) a treasure been granted to him (by God)? Or he should (at least) have a (bountiful) garden, so that he could eat thereof! And so these evildoers say (to one another): ‘You follow none but a man bewitched.’” (25:7-8)

Each Messenger has brought a miracle that challenged the human mind in the field which that age was most distinguished in. For example, the staff of Moses (peace be upon him) in an age of magic and sorcery; and Jesus’ (peace be upon him) healing of the blind and the leprosy, and the resuscitation of the dead in an age of medicine.

As for Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace), the unbelieving transgressors asked that angels come down and escort him, or that a great treasure be sent down to him, or that he produce a luscious garden in the midst of the arid mountains of Mecca. The

Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) was indeed given countless miracles: the moon being cleft asunder, the water gushing forth from between his fingers, the victory over his enemies by the terror that the Lord cast in their hearts, the food that grew abundant by his prayers, and the reverence with which God filled the hearts of both enemy and ally alike. Nevertheless, some people say nothing about these miracles and pretend that the Qur'ān was his sole miracle, in this following the Orientalists, who themselves were prefigured by the earlier rejectors of truth: "This is naught but a calumny he has forged with the help of others." [25:4]

As to the manner of the Revelation's descent, al-Hārith Ibn Hishām once asked: "Messenger of God! How does Revelation come down to you?" to which the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) replied: "Sometimes it comes like the ringing of the bell - and this is the hardest on me - and does not leave me until I have memorized what (the Archangel Gabriel) has said. Other times, the Angel manifests himself to me and addresses me directly and I then grasp what he says." Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of 'Ā'isha (God be pleased with her).

That is how Revelation came down to God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) through twenty-three years. Both the Qur'ān and the Sunna were Revelation, for the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) never spoke out of his own desire, but only told the Truth, for he was the Interpreter of the Lord (Exalted is He).

Although Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) has departed this life and joined the Heavenly Assembly, his eternal miracle remains incarnated in the Qur'ān which the Lord has preserved and will preserve until the end of this world. The mission of the other Messengers was sealed by the mission of Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace). Yet the link between the Creator and His servants has not been severed. It is still extant

and is embodied in the two sources of Revelation, the Qur'ān and the Sunna.

The Qur'ān was revealed in a clear Arabic language to an Arab Messenger. The correlation between the Qur'ān and the language of the Arabs is eternal; hence, whoever does not master this language will not understand the Qur'ān. This is not some nationalistic fervor, but rather an affirmation of the responsibility incumbent upon everyone, Arab and non-Arab, who wants to devote themselves to learning the language of scripture.

The Arab nationalists betrayed the Qur'ān when they pretended that Islam was the flower and product of Arabism. These people have no relationship whatsoever with the language of the Qur'ān, not knowing the morphology, syntax, and rhetoric of classical Arabic, not to mention their lacking the linguistic intuition of the ancient Arabs.

The language of the Qur'ān is a perfect and preserved language. It was the Qur'ān that preserved the language, and not the opposite. No other form of language is perfect, even if it uses Arabic words and comes from Arab culture. It is sad not to be aware or not to recognize the prophetic light referred to in this verse: “O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness (to the truth), a bearer of glad tidings and a warner, and as one who invites (all men) to God by His leave, and as a lamp spreading light.” (33:45-46)

5. Islamic Doctrine

(*Aqīda*)

The Lord sent Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) with the final, comprehensive Message which is valid from his time to the end of this world. The Message can be found in the Book that God has preserved - and will continue to preserve - and in the Sunna that the scholars of *ḥadīth* (God reward them for the favor they have rendered to us) have devoted themselves to collecting, scrutinizing, and correcting.

This comprehensive Message was transmitted to ordinary humans who were immersed in worldly affairs, pulled back and forth by the incentives of belief and unbelief, speaking different languages, embracing both primitive and sophisticated ideologies, living in civilized towns or in the simple desert, and enjoying abundant wealth or suffering horrible misery.

How did man receive this comprehensive Message in that period, and how will he receive it until the end of this world? He is a human in a human society; a human whom history pushes along at its own pace; a human even after embracing Islam; a human influenced by his social conditions, mental capabilities, and linguistic culture. If man were placed in a sterilized bottle in the laboratory, if he were a pure and transcendent being, his relationship with the Revelation would be clear as crystal. Yet he is confined in the cage of his body and so skirmishes with his natural instincts and his prevailing customs.

The daughters and sons of this world have received this Message with different rational instruments influenced by time and place and

sometimes tarnished by certain dogmatic parasites. Nevertheless, Muslim scholars liberated the Islamic creed, the true *‘aqīda*, from philosophical confusion, the intrigues of the renegades, and the residues of *jāhiliyya*.

In this section, God-willing, I intend to examine the legitimacy of laying so much emphasis on *‘aqīda* as to make it the mother of all issues. I also intend to look to the guardians of the orthodox *‘aqīda* (God grant them success) for answers to the following questions: What is proper *‘aqīda*? What are its limits? What is meant by this technical term that scholars adopted to combat the aberrations of dogma, even though it does not exist either in the Qur’ān or in the Sunna? And how did these dogmatic wars break out?

The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) once said: “I have been sent with the shortest expressions bearing the widest of meanings, I have been made victorious with *rub* (awe and fear being cast in the hearts of the enemy), and the keys to the treasures of the world were brought to me and put in my hands while I was sleeping.” Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The narrator, Abū Hurayra, then accused his contemporaries of misappropriating this wealth: “The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) has left this world and now you are ripping these treasures out of the ground”; and in other narrations: “... and you are passing them out,” “...you are sucking from the teat of these treasures,” “...you are messing around with them.”¹

¹ [Translator’s note:] At-Tirmidhī reported on the authority of Safīna, the servant of God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), that the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) said: “[The rule of] the Caliphate will last in my *umma* for thirty years. Then will come [the rule of] monarchies.” Sa’īd Ibn Jumhān (the reporter of the *ḥadīth* on the authority of Safīna) said: “And then he (Safīna) said, ‘Count! The caliphate of Abū Bakr, then the caliphate of ‘Umar, then the caliphate of ‘Uthmān.’ Then he said, ‘Count! The caliphate of ‘Alī.’ ‘We found it was thirty years.’” Sa’īd said: “I told him, ‘The Umayyads claim they are caliphs!’ Safīna said: ‘Those bad men are telling lies! No, they are kings, the worst of kings.’”

The earth's treasures poured forth onto the Muslims, who were then afflicted with another ordeal: the despotism of the Umayyads. That ordeal in turn was followed by another in which different nations embraced Islam, each bringing its own philosophical background and barbaric ideas.

Then the armies of worldly trials launched an all-out war on the bearers of the Message, confusing them and tempting them. The end result was the fragmentation of the Islamic sciences, the trial of the Muslim mind,¹ and the trial of Muslim politics.

This sort of confusion can be found in statements like that of 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar (God be pleased with him): "We will be with the one who is victorious (in the fight over the office of the caliphate)," in which he publicly took sides with those scholars who were rising up against Yazīd Ibn Mu'āwiya, even though he had earlier pledged his allegiance to the Umayyad chief.

Another example can be found in *The Rules of Kingship* (al-Aḥkām as-Sultāniyya) by the Ḥanbalī jurist Abū Ya'lā (not to be confused with the book of the same name by the Shāfi'ī jurist al-Māwardī). The book relates the following fatwa from Imām Aḥmad (God be pleased with him): "Regarding him who defeats (his rivals) and is named Caliph and Commander of the Believers: no one who believes in God and in the Hereafter should spend a single night at home before accepting him as leader, be he pious or impious." In another fatwa, he maintained that "The Friday Prayer shall be led by whomever wins (the fight over the office of the caliph)," an opinion he substantiated with the above-quoted statement of Ibn 'Umar from the year of al-Ḥarra.²

¹ [Translator's note:] Cf. *The Muslim Mind on Trial* by Imam Abdessalam Yassine (Justice and Spirituality Publishing, 2001).

² [Translator's note:] The Battle of al-Ḥarra was in 60 ah. Under the commandship of his governor Muslim Ibn 'Uqba al-Murrī, the armies of the illegitimate "caliph" Yazīd, son of Mu'āwiya, invaded Medina.

What are the past conflicts and battles that the word *'aqīda* - a novel term - has borne with it? Why does that ossified and overly-strict jurisprudence seek to fight heresy and idolatry among the ignorant Muslims while keeping silent about political idolatry - a much more serious offence? The fatwa legitimating the usurpation of power, which our pious ancestors issued with the intention of preserving the unity of the Muslims and enduring the lesser of two evils, is still used as a pretext for alliances with the unjust enemies of Muslims. A sort of logic that is fragmented. A sort of jurisprudence whose mirror has been broken and which is thus unable to look comprehensively at the overall Islamic Message, instead reading it dispersed in the fragments of our inherited jurisprudence.

But this distortion of the Islamic Message occasioned by our historical upheavals should not be blamed primarily on the deficiency of the Muslim mind; rather, the deficiency was total: political, social, and economic.

After the *fitna* that caused the end of the legitimate Rightly-Guided *khilāfa*, the Islamic society faced an influx of material treasures, foreigners, and beautiful young foreign women, bringing with them their Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, and Sabaeen religions, as well as Hellenistic philosophies - all fortified with the rancor of the renegades.

A resistance body was formed by Muslim scholars to confront the dogmatic doubts and falsehoods brought in by those who joined the community of Islam from the outside. Hence there arose the Science of the Fundamentals of the Islamic Faith (*'ilm uṣūl ad-dīn*), or scholastic theology, that uses dialectical argumentation in defense of the orthodox *'aqīda*.

The questions that ought to be asked are: Should we take our *'aqīda* directly from the Qur'ān and ḥadīth? Will God accept our faith from us if we believe in what He and His Messenger taught us with a simple faith? Or do we have to explain our *'aqīda* before some sort

of supervising judge and in his presence disavow the doctrines of the Jahmiyya, Qadariyya, Murji'a, Khawārij, Peripatetic philosophers, Mu'aṭṭila, and other sects, so that this judge may condescendingly award us a certificate of good conduct and pure *'aqīda*?

The real question is: Are we going to try to present for ourselves and for the rest of mankind a comprehensive Message, or are we going to battle the ghosts of the pasts, looking at the Message through the fragmented mirror of the dead?

The doubts raised by the medieval Zanādiqa who denied the divine attributes which the Lord (Exalted is He) ascribed to Himself - like having hands, eyes, a face, or fingers, or being able to walk or run - are not the same as the doubts that fill the minds of the new Zanādiqa.

We should believe in what God (Blessed is He) attributed to Himself and what His Messenger attributed to Him, leaving the true understanding of such attributes to Him. In any case, we cannot refute the doubts raised by the new renegades with the fatwa of a third-century jurist, no matter how virtuous he was.

Individual idolatry destroys the faith of weak, illiterate Muslim men, and particularly of weak, illiterate women. Without resorting to violent and repulsive methods and without accusing them of unbelief and heresy, we should teach *īmān* afresh to such people so that they may know that the declaration of God's uniqueness ("There is no god but God") requires the rejection of sorcery, talismans, slaughtering animals for idols, worshipping shrines, omens, swearing by the name of anyone besides the Lord, and other forms of heresy.

The assertion that "there is no god but God" is the essence of belief and the essence of obedience to the teachings which He has revealed. The heart's affirmation of this is part of *īmān* - indeed, it is the highest of the sixty or seventy branches of *īmān*. The vast field

comprising the Lord's ordinances and His Messenger's teachings is not covered by scholastic theology - which, in fact, only pulls the carpet out from under them, emphasizing instead the shortcomings and negative aspects of Muslims. Thus were the sciences that were one whole fragmented. And thus did some sciences attain the stage of perfection while others came to a standstill.

As for the science of the fundamentals of *dīn* (that is, scholastic theology), it came to a stop. The jurisprudence of heresy came to a standstill first in the eighth century ah (fourteenth century ce) with Ibn Taymiyya (God have mercy upon him) and secondly with Imām Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (God have mercy upon him).

The science of the fundamentals of jurisprudence (*'ilm uṣūl al-fiqh*) nearly attained the stage of perfection after it emanated from the mind of the genius jurist Imām ash-Shāfi'ī (God have mercy upon him) and after the subsequent eminent scholars had established its foundations. It was then crowned by the noble science founded by al-Ghazālī and perfected by ash-Shāṭibī (God have mercy upon them both): the science of the general objectives of Islamic Law (*'ilm maqāṣid ash-sharī'a*). We should now complete this by including the issues of political power, *shūrā*, and the other affairs of this age that were lacking in the jurisprudence of our predecessors (God have mercy upon them).

As for the jurisprudence concerned with the secondary issues of Islam, it came to a standstill after it was perfected in the field of the rites of worship.

As for Arabic grammar, it attained an illustrious position across the ages on account of its strong connection with juristic analogy. But now linguists study the language of the Qur'ān with instruments devised from outside Islam and from a secular perspective. This is a new form of apostasy that seeks to estrange Muslims from their scripture at a stroke; this is far worse than the heresy of the illiterate old woman who clings to the shrines.

The inductive method, which established the foundations of the universal sciences in the Islamic countries before the West plucked this from us, is the offspring of the analogical method devised by the science of the fundamentals of jurisprudence. We will definitely plunge into disbelief, historical decline, and subordination to the unbelievers if we do not recover this method of ours.

Talking of *'aqīda* outside the comprehensiveness of the Message, paying no heed to the bloodstains left by the skirmishes of scholastic theology, dwelling passively on the past, and failing to surmount the challenges of our time are all tantamount to our irrelevance in this all-out war. God has full power and control over His affairs.

6. *The Intrigues of this World*

The treasures of this world poured forth with all their might on the virtuous generation of the Companions (God be pleased with them). We read in the previous section how these treasures confused Abū Hurayra and ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar. We also find in the biographies of the Companions and in the books of *ḥadīth* the confusion of other Companions like Abū Dharr who challenged Mu‘āwīya’s assertion that this wealth belonged to the Muslims and, as their leader, he was entitled to dispose of it however he wished. We also find several narrations of the perplexity of other Companions and their different interpretations for how to understand the *ḥadīths* where the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) described the historical upheavals that would befall the *umma* and advised his followers on how to conduct themselves in the face of such upheavals. I wish to reiterate here that the jurisprudence of these ordeals (past, present, and future) still lies dormant in the books of *ḥadīth* and awaits those who will bring them out and show the Muslims the way towards the promised second *khilāfa*.

The treasures of this world poured down on the virtuous generation when their experience with Revelation was still fresh, their hearts and minds were enlightened by the Prophet’s teachings, and their wills still honed by the greater *jihād* which they had engaged in during the time of the Prophet and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. Having imbibed the Sunna in their mind, they manifested it in their actions: they were truly in synch with the Divine.

As for us, the worldly treasures that poured down came down through the rain gutters of Western hegemony, cultural invasion, capitalistic monopoly, usury-based money, petro-dollars, and so forth, which we have already read about in previous chapters. This

poured down on us while our efforts were scattered ideologically and geographically.

God has opened these gutters of dirty water and evil rain over them by way of progressive punishment and over us by way of trial. The resources of the land were one of the first trials to emerge when power became corrupted in the Muslim world; now we are afflicted by poverty even though mineral resources - the wealth of our age and the main sustenance of the modern world - well up from the earth in our lands. We are an *umma* that is enslaved by tribal leaders who offer us up to our enemies.

The treasures of this world poured out on the virtuous Companions while they were united in heart, mind, faith, and practice. Now these treasures are overwhelmingly poured forth on us while we are scattered: the sciences of the early Muslims have been scattered, the *umma* has been scattered, even the Islamist movements - the hope of the *umma* - are scattered.

Is there any way to overcome division, assemble what has been scattered, and recover a strong character which can surmount any obstacle? How can we liberate ourselves from an overly-strict jurisprudence so as to make a new *ijtihād* that befits our time and place? We already have precious research methodologies which our past eminent scholars have established: can these serve as the stairway through which we might ascend to the Qur'ān and Sunna? Or will our ascension from the lowest rungs of the stairway only further our division and fragmentation?

The fact is that our ancestors lived in a world that played them and which they played in turn, a world in which they used their utmost *ijtihād* and *jihād* to assess their particular interests and needs: simply clinging to their hem will not benefit us in understanding our own world, our own interests, and our own needs.

The Qur'ān has warned us against the temptations of this world: "Know (O men) that the life of this world is but a play and a passing

delight, and a beautiful show, and (the cause of) your boastful vying with one another, and (of your) greed for more riches and children. Its parable is that of the (life-giving) rain: the herbage which it causes to grow delights the tillers of the soil; but then it withers, and you can see it turn yellow; and in the end it crumbles into dust. But (the abiding truth of man's condition will become fully apparent) in the Hereafter: (either) a severe penalty (for the wretched), or God's forgiveness and satisfaction (for the blessed). For the life of this world is nothing but an enjoyment of delusion." (57:19)

The Prophet's teaching weaned the first generation off the love of this world so that they came to prefer what the Lord had reserved for them and thus became *mujāhidūn* and *mujāhidāt* who strove hard for Islam.

They heard the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) say: "This world is sweet and green (i.e., alluring), and God will appoint you as successors in it in order to see how you act. So be dutiful to God and act properly toward women." Reported by Muslim and an-Nasā'ī on the authority of Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (God be pleased with him). "Be dutiful to God and act properly toward women": because the position of women in society and the degree of their decency or indecency are the criteria of the *umma's* rise or fall. Women are the sweetness and greenness of this world. They may either be a good provision in this world and loving companions in the journey towards the Hereafter, or they may be instruments of degeneration into the unlawful pleasures of this world.

"Alluring to men is the enjoyment of worldly desires through women and children, heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, horses of high mark, and cattle and lands. All this may be enjoyed in the life of this world, but the most beautiful of all goals is with God." (3:14) The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) has also noted that: "This world is a provision and the best of its provisions

is the pious woman.” Reported by Muslim and an-Nasā’ī on the authority of ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Amr (God be pleased with him).

The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) has condemned this world in numerous ḥadīths: “This world and its pleasures are cursed except the remembrance of God, the acts of piety that ensue therefrom, and scholars (who teach wisdom) and disciples (who seek to learn it).” Reported by at-Tirmidhī on the authority of Abū Hurayra. “This world is a prison for the believer and a paradise for the unbeliever.” Reported by Muslim and at-Tirmidhī on the authority of Abū Hurayra.

The abstinence of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) from the pleasures of this world was an example followed by the Companions. The fact that the senior Companions renounced the treasures of this world after they had poured forth on them was a distinguished sign of their disinterest in worldly vanities. The two Commanders of the Believers, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, were unique models of abstinence from the pleasures and glitter of this world, even though they were leaders of a state that today covers ten nation-states of our fragmented umma.

The *tābi’ūn* and the following generations saw the Companions’ ascetic lifestyle, learned the ḥadīths that warned against the allure of this world, and read the verses in scripture enjoining renunciation; hence, *īmān* permeated their hearts. They also saw the corruption of this world manifested in illegitimate princes and despotic rulers who had become deluded with their worldly pleasures. Hence, the latter generations of Muslims renounced worldly affairs and disengaged from the political upheavals, just as the Companions had done, for they had no space in the public arena to voice the truth, order what is right, and censure what is wrong.

Hence asceticism was born and in turn gave birth to the science of secluded spiritual education called Sufism. I call it a science because those generations who fled from the temptations of this world with

their *dīn* established records of their spiritual states, rules for their spiritual discipline, and biographies of the practitioners that have been passed down to this day. I call it a science even though the theoretical knowledge of Sufism is secondary to its practice.

Sufism emerged alongside the nascent sciences of ḥadīth, the fundamentals of the faith, the fundamentals of jurisprudence, Arabic grammar, and the other sciences devised by the Muslim mind.

Sufis and jurists coexisted in peace and harmony for many centuries. Every now and then, someone stridently-critical of Sufism - like the Ḥanbalī Ibn al-Jawzī (God have mercy upon him) - would emerge, but this would not spoil the overall atmosphere of harmony. In the fight against unbelief, dogmatic doubts, and heresies, Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Shāfi'ī scholars settled on the doctrines of Imām al-Ash'arī (God have mercy upon him) for matters of *'aqīda*. Such scholars were either practicing Sufis who sought out a master to refine their hearts after attaining erudition in the intellectual sciences, or they were scholars who incontestably approved of Sufis.

The Ḥanbalī minority remained hostile to Ash'arī doctrine and Sufi practice; they sometimes rioted in the streets of Baghdad and fought to preserve what they saw as the purity of Islamic *'aqīda*. Among the Ḥanbalīs there were illustrious scholars, whose erudition and piety have been recorded in the books of *Ṭabaqāt*.¹

The eighth century ah witnessed a Ḥanbalī renaissance that breathed life into *ijtihād* after four centuries of dormancy. This renaissance was led by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya (God have mercy upon him) and his disciples. This genius - well-versed in the sciences of *ḥadīth* and the fundamentals and branches of jurisprudence and a distinguished debater in all the sciences of his time - was equally

¹ [Translator's note:] Biographical dictionaries of generations of Muslim scholars. For instance, there are *Ṭabaqāt ash-Shāfi'iyya* (Shāfi'ī scholars), *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyya* (Ḥanafī scholars), etc.

a paragon of asceticism and audacity in speaking the truth to the despotic rulers of his time. To his intellectual virtues he added the virtues of chivalry. He was a *mujtahid*, a mujāhid, and an ascetic worshipper.

At the same time though, he was perhaps too hasty in accusing his opponents of heresy and unbelief and some of his opinions were eccentric and extreme.

The jurisprudence of this eminent scholar did not die; it was not simply put away on the shelves like the jurisprudence of Imām Ibn Ḥazm, another *mujtahid* and revivalist before him. This is because two centuries ago, Imām Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb revived his thought in the Najd.¹ This school of thought then fell into stagnation for some time until petrodollar wealth gave it a new lease of life. In this way, Ibn Taymiyya’s opinions have been held up as the exclusive source of the faith. The followers of this school of thought imagine that their shaykh is an abundant and infinite sea from which all other scholars have drawn.

The land resources of our age have led to a sort of jurisprudence that is overly-strict, outside the mainstream, and harsh. Ever since the swords of the Saudi dynasty started supporting ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s movement, the Call has been allied to the state in Saudi Arabia. Today, that alliance is much stronger thanks to oil money - actually, plundered money that rightly belongs to the entire *umma* - and the sort of jurisprudence promoted by Saudi Arabia claims exclusive knowledge of the lawful and the unlawful.

A proper alliance between the Call and the state would be one where the former is the one that leads. But in contemporary Saudi Arabia, it is the state which calls the shots. Hence, even though Ibn Taymiyya had issued a fatwa with the non-mainstream position

¹ [Translator’s note:] A region of modern Saudi Arabia, containing its capital, Riyadh.

that the Shia are *Rawāfiḍ*¹ and unbelievers, because of a sudden change of heart of the state authority, Saudi clerics consider them acceptable Muslims.

In a similar vein, today's followers of Ibn Taymiyya consider the Sufis as indisputably renegades and atheists, and particularly if they are *mujāhidūn* like Hassan al-Banna and his disciples who recite a Sufi-like litany every day and work for Islam's revival.

Indeed, for these narrow-minded jurists, there is no need to determine whether any individual Sufi is a renegade - contrary to Ibn Taymiyya himself, who plunged with them in the depths of argumentation before rendering judgment.

May the Lord shed on him and us His all-embracing mercy!

¹ [Translator's note:] The *Rawāfiḍ* are those who abuse the Companions. The *Nawāṣib*, on the other hand, abuse the descendants of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace). Both sects are condemned for their extremism.

7. Adherence to the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunna*

I have no wish here to appear before some panel of judges who have appointed themselves the indisputable authorities. The controversy between the Sufis and the Ḥanbalīs, just like the controversy between the Ḥanbalīs and the Ash'arīs over matters of *'aqīda*, will never come to an end. Over twenty years ago, I witnessed my own spiritual birth when the good Lord bestowed on me the favor of progressing towards Him through a Sufi master¹ (God have mercy upon him). I have described this experience in my book *al-Ihsān*,² which is meant for those seekers of truth who are not satisfied with the descriptions of the Sufis based on an unjust reading of their ambiguous terminology, vicious interpolations into their writings, and their actual errors - for, like all children of Adam, they are bound to err.

Among the trials that God has set for His servants is that sort of superficial, imitative jurisprudence. O you who think you know everything because you have read one or two pamphlets that lambast the Sufis: this is not what Ibn Taymiyya would do. Intelligent and well-versed as he was, he would instead exert every effort to explore all aspects of the subject at hand prior to engaging in disputation. Owing to his strong-willed personality, he himself never sought a spiritual master; he thus missed a great deal of knowledge that is not learned from books.

The Ḥanbalī scholars of *ḥadīth* (God set them right) tend to imitate Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (God have mercy upon him) in promoting

¹ [Translator's note:] Imam Yassine's spiritual master was Shaykh al-Ḥāj al-'Abbās Ibn al-Mukhtār al-Qādirī al-Butshīshī (God bless his soul).

² [Translator's note:] *Al-Ihsān* (al-Ufuq Publishing House, Casablanca, 1998).

the fatwa that legitimates the usurper of power who “defeats [his rivals] and is named Caliph and Commander of the Believers” which all Muslims should recognize, “be he pious or impious.”

Ibn Taymiyya himself did not imitate this fatwa; rather, he opposed the rulers of his time and died in their prisons. His life and his death are evidence that he was not a blind copycat.

In turn, many Ḥanbalī scholars have inherited cargo containers full of fatwas that Ibn al-Qayyim himself described as “expired.” Did he or Ibn Taymiyya issue fatwas meant to be valid forever? Had he seen how his fatwas have been misused to justify Saudi Arabia’s oil plutocracy and arms deals with world superpowers, he probably would have removed himself from engaging in jurisprudence in the first place.

Confined to the mindset and the fatwas of their predecessors, the Ḥanbalīs rely on the fatwa of yielding to the one who gains power by force and on their superficial reading of Ibn Taymiyya’s fatwas to fan the embers of animosity amongst the Muslims. For them, the world is divided into two parts: one part occupied by the Shia, Sufis, and other “heretics,” and another part occupied by those exalted above unbelief and idolatry because they have defeated all their rivals by force. Therefore, no one who believes in God and in the Hereafter is exempt from venerating the despotic ruler as a saint or from venerating as compassionate fathers his allies who are selling them massive amounts of arms in unimaginable arms deals and who trespass the lands of Islam with huge armies.

The Ḥanbalī scholars of *ḥadīth* claim to adhere strictly to the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet. They don’t say: this is our understanding, this is the extent of our knowledge and ability to adhere to the *dīn*. Rather they say: Ours is the only understanding, ours is the only knowledge. Knowledge for them is confined to an explicit Qur’ānic verse or an established Sunna that the pious ancestors understood perfectly and which someone among them, viewed as an absolute authority, passed down. Nothing else!

But reading the Qur'ān and the Sunna from only one angle, only the lowest level of imitation, and only the perspective of those who lived in a specific time and place, is not the proper way to read these texts.

Similarly, reading the Qur'ān and the Sunna with a narrow-minded attitude and with a heart busy venting its anger on minor heresies because it is unable to change the greater evils, is also not the correct reading.

Adhering to the understanding of a particular scholar who came and passed away and whose jurisprudence was applicable for only a certain time is not adhering to the Qur'ān and Sunna, but adhering to a *mujtahid* who was sometimes right and sometimes wrong.

Adhering to the Qur'ān and Sunna is a deliberate act whose energy and light are a quickened heart and mind. The mind and the heart, the essence of man, may succumb to instincts, passions, political pressures, and social conditions.

Adherence is not an easy matter of straightforwardly knowing good from evil, right from wrong. It is not a white line or a sword that splits the world into two parts.

Adherence is an obligation whose prerequisites are intellectual aptitude and a strong will. Adhering to the branches of *īmān*¹ must be preceded by having the root of *īmān*. If the criterion for adherence is to have a brilliant mind but not a heart with total allegiance to God (Exalted is He), the fall will be fatal.

¹ [Translator's note:] The branches of *īmān* are acts of worship (physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual) that strengthen *īmān* and prepare the journey towards *ihsān*. Scholars of *ḥadīth* like al-Bayhaqī and al-Ḥulaymī compiled them and enumerated them in the sixties and seventies. In his *The Prophetic Method* (al-Minhāj an-Nabawī), Imām Abdessalam Yassine grouped them into 77 branches which are in turn arranged into Ten Attributes (*al-khiṣāl al-'ashr*) within a context of training the *mu'minūn* and the *mu'mināt* (physically, intellectually, socially, morally, and spiritually) to ascend the three stages of Islam (*islām*, *īmān*, and *ihsān*) in a dynamic inseparable from serving the other top-priority objective of uniting the *umma* worldwide.

Adherence is attainable only for those who turn their whole person spiritually towards God, transcending all worldly concerns and distractions. The Message and the *umma* will thus become united in their mind and in their heart. They will see from the upstream - not the downstream - of history how the Message came down to this world, how Islamic doctrines branched off from one another, how the people of right disputed with the people of falsehood, and how the people of right agreed and disagreed with one another.

Sister in faith: you need a complete mind so that you may deepen your knowledge of the *dīn* and so that the disagreements among the scholars may not stand between you and maintaining the unity of the *umma*.

You need also to purify your heart, for it is from such purification that the Companions (God be pleased with them) began to do *ijtihād*.

To engage in a profound study of the origins and history of the sacred sciences helps to minimize the importance of the disagreements over the details. The Companions (God be pleased with them) disagreed over certain matters, yet this jurisprudential disagreement did not affect their unity. On the contrary: this actually made things easier and more feasible for the *umma*. ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, who was also a *mujtahid*, once said that: “I would never have appreciated it if the Companions of the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) had always been in agreement.” There is no harm in the believing woman following any of the four jurisprudential schools so long as she is not just looking for the most lenient dispensations (*rukhaṣ*). For instance, there is no harm in following the opinion of Ibn Taymiyya (God have mercy on him) regarding the *ḥijāb*, even though it is the most rigorous among the four opinions held by the Ḥanbalī school.

But the gravest and most repugnant failing is when some self-important and self-appointed inspector of the Muslims goes around denouncing anyone who disagrees with their jurisprudential

opinions as a heretic. Such juristic terrorism is scaring Muslims away from their *dīn*.

The Sunna teaches kindness, not terror. Adhering to the Sunna should engender mercy, not rancor.

Sister in faith, you need to improve your mind and purify your heart so that you do not imitate those who adopt rigorous fatwas to make themselves the exclusive interpreters of the Sunna. Let whosoever wishes be strict with themselves and take extreme precautions out of piety and devoutness.

On the other hand, to constantly adopt the most stringent opinion is to invite unnecessary hardships into one's life. Similarly, to imitate a particular formulation of '*aqīda* that is very narrow and exclusivist is really just adhering to a bunch of complicated opinions, not God's real Law.

The hardliners, though virtuous, commit an offense when they think ill of other Muslims unless they explicitly disavow some medieval Jahmī doctrine which they had never heard of, unless they can explain in detail their '*aqīda* regarding God's Attributes (instead of just entrusting the true understanding thereof to God's knowledge), and unless they denounce those women who seek favors at the shrines as idolators. But Muslims ought to teach the ignorant, not accuse them of unbelief.

We should think of these hardliners as sincere and appreciate how much they esteem the Sunna of the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) and how anxiously they seek to authenticate its narrations. These are very positive aspects that the Taymiyyan trend has brought to the Islamic movements.

Those women and men solicitous of their *dīn*, who fear to meet their Lord with unsound hearts, whose skin shivers out of the fear that they might depart this world with unsuccessful endeavors,

should all make thorough investigations and dedicate their whole life to seeking the right path and adhering to the Qurʾān and Sunna.

The Lord (Exalted is He) announced the completion of our *dīn* at the Farewell Pilgrimage¹: “This day have I perfected your *dīn* for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as a *dīn*.” (5:4)

This perfected *dīn* was what Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) and his Companions lived. After his passing, the Companions disagreed over certain jurisprudential details. After them came generations who disagreed over the fundamentals of *ʿaqīda* and the basics of the *dīn*. Dogmatic wars broke out between the orthodox and the heterodox until the battlefields were clear of the *Zanādiqa*, the *Bāṭiniyya*, and other stripes of renegades. The Shia went into hiding for several centuries. The Sufis also went into retreat and were held in high esteem for a long time.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya used to revere the ascetic Sufi woman Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya, the Ḥanbalī Sufi ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, and other Sufi masters. He had a strict position regarding the *Rawāfiḍ* and an extreme aversion to the advocates of the doctrine of the Oneness of Being or of the doctrine of divine indwelling. So can anyone ever aspire to the unity of the Muslims and the soundness of one’s *dīn* without de facto adopting his jurisprudence?

¹ [Translator’s note:] In the tenth year of the Hijra, God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) went to Mecca as a pilgrim for the last time - his “Farewell Pilgrimage” - and from Mount ʿArafat preached to an enormous throng of pilgrims. He reminded them of the duties Islam enjoined upon them, and that they would one day have to meet their Lord, Who would judge each one of them according to their intentions and actions.

8. Scholars of the Hereafter

Is there any hope that Muslims will one day become genuine Muslims, not just blind followers of various doctrines hurling insults at each other and contesting each other's formulation of *'aqīda*? Can one hope that Muslims will one day place their history under the microscope of knowledge in order to determine the origins of these doctrinal controversies, to accept jurisprudential differences as a divine mercy, and to cordon off the most serious disagreements? If they could, new generations would grow up in that original soundness and pristine *fiṭra*; new generations with pure hearts and brilliant minds that would learn directly from the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) and obey his teachings; new generations that would engage the developed world armed with knowledge that would be anything but ossified and narrow; new generations that would not accuse the rest of the world of apostasy just because it does not resemble the world from the age of Revelation; new generations of scholars of the Hereafter that would not be duped by the temptations of this world.

So what beclouds our horizons and stands between us and learning directly from the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace)? First, our ignorance and our lack of instruments to carry out *ijtihād* and directly understand the teachings of the Lord and His Prophet. Second, the glorious and immense legacy of our scholars which, because they were such great geniuses, eclipses the rays of Qur'ānic and Prophetic light from directly reaching those with lesser minds or less pure hearts.

I once heard an audio tape of a virtuous preacher. He mentioned how some people chant the statement *lā ilāha illallāh* (there is no god but God) many times as a litany; his reaction was "That's not

allowed! That's not allowed!" For those interested in Sufism, he recommended reading al-Ghazālī's *Revival of the Sciences of Islam* (*Ihyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn*) and looking for a Salafī Sufism - as if al-Ghazālī were a shield that protects from error! Or a final authority after whom knowledge comes to a standstill!

If we try to perfect our *dīn* only by stitching together fatwas on secondary matters from various schools, if we content ourselves with the lowest common denominator that everyone agrees on instead of learning directly from the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace), then our *dīn* will be nothing but a patchwork, a maze without an exit.

Many people are confused about how to understand al-Ghazālī's majestic and voluminous book in which he seeks to revive the understanding of the Sunna and of spiritual education and in which he speaks of knowledge received directly from God through inspiration (*al-'ilm al-ladunī*), the spiritual opening of the heart to divine knowledge (*al-faḥ al-qalbī*), and the wonders of the light with which God fills the hearts of those engaged continuously in His remembrance.

How can we take Sufism from al-Ghazālī and the Sunna from Ibn Taymiyya while the two men are poles apart? How can we take the Sunna from Ibn Taymiyya when he plunged so deeply into argumentation with the advocates of the doctrine of the divine indwelling and of divine union that he came out of their quagmires full of stains?

Sister in faith: Read the second volume of *The Fatwas of Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*; you will find amazing and confusing tales from this knight of the *dīn*.

For instance, in that volume he states that there is a type of divine union that is permissible to believe in and another that is not permissible to believe in. He also asserts that the friends of God (*al-awliyā'*) live a sort of "divine union." You find him adopting

the language and terminology of the Sufis. For instance: “Such a *ḥāl* (spiritual state) comes upon a large number of the people of spiritual love on the right side as well as on the wrong side. If that *ḥāl* (of union) is affected by deficiency and error, the person affected becomes present with their beloved Lord but absent from their own person; present with the Lord whom they remember but also absent from their very remembrance of the Lord; present with the Lord they have come to know but also absent from their very knowledge of the Lord; present with the Lord they see but absent from the very sight of the Lord; present with the Lord’s existence but absent from their own existence. In that state, they cannot distinguish between their own person and their Lord. Under the influence of that state, they may say things like “I am the Lord” or “Exalted be I” or “there is none but God under my garment” or similar statements. The person is thus inebriated by *wajd* (spiritual ecstasy) which produces indiscriminate pleasure and joy. The statements of such an ecstatic should not be disclosed, but rather kept under the seal of secrecy.”

I do not wish to overburden the reader and reiterate what I have not kept under the seal of secrecy in other books.¹

If there is any lesson I should draw from reading the fatwas and books of the great scholars, it is the need to seek the truth and to be as sincere as they were. Al-Ghazālī found the Truth with the Sufis, as noted in his brilliant testimony, *Deliverance from Error* (al-Munqidh mina aḍ-Ḍalāl). He realized that learning humbly under the physicians of the heart or the scholars of the Hereafter (as al-Ghazālī refers to the Sufi masters) is an indispensable station in spiritual progress, even if you are already an authority (*ḥujja*) in the fundamentals of jurisprudence.

Ibn Taymiyya sincerely sought the Truth and brandished the sword of argumentation against those he thought were the enemies of the

¹ [Translator’s note:] See, for instance, *al-Iḥsān* (1998), *Islam between the Call and the State* (1972), and *Tomorrow, Islam* (1973).

Sunna. His brilliant mind, acute intelligence, and amazing memory dominated his personality and kept him from learning under a Sufi master. Thanks to his great sincerity and his great love of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace), in the last days of his life he attained spiritual stations “that cannot be imagined,” as he said in a letter addressed to his disciples from the prison where he died. In those letters, that Knight of Scholars talked of his extreme joy on account of the treasures of spiritual knowledge that the Lord had opened to him, noting that they - his disciples - lacked sufficient *wajd* (ecstasy).

Great Sufis such as al-Ghazālī used to read from the Preserved Tablet.¹ Ibn Taymiyya as well used to read in the Preserved Tablet from which he would relate future events. What?!? Ibn Taymiyya??

Oh yes! In *Stations of the Spiritual Travelers* (Madārij as-Sālikīn), Ibn al-Qayyim reported that Ibn Taymiyya told him that he had read in the Preserved Tablet that the Muslims would win in a certain battle against the Mongols.

The sister in faith should also read in this book and note how the author (God have mercy upon him) cites a book called Stations of the Spiritual Travelers (Manāzil as-Sā'irīn) by the Ḥanbalī scholar Abū Ismā'īl al-Harwī, who was a Sufi master. As-Subkī has reported from his master adh-Dhahabī that Ibn Taymiyya did not appreciate that book one bit and accused al-Harwī of making unlawful statements on divine union. God save us from this divine union! Even though Ibn Taymiyya himself said that the friends of God live in a sort of “divine union.”

Abū Ismā'īl al-Harwī was a source of trouble. He waged dogmatic wars on the Ash'arīs. Ibn al-Qayyim, however, did not accuse

¹ [Translator's note:] The Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) is the Eternal Book where God wrote the fate and destiny of His creation from the moment He made the universe to the end of this world.

Abū Ismāʿīl of serious offences, instead only gently criticizing his extravagant utterances (*shaṭaḥāt*).

I hope that my sister in faith will read *Madārij as-Sālikīn* and ponder the veracious testimony of Ibn al-Qayyim - the Ḥanbalī, Salafī, and Sunni scholar of *ḥadīth* - which al-Ghazālī also echoed: that a scholar (*ʿālim*) compared to a spiritual knower (*ʿārif*) is like an ignorant person compared to a scholar.

Should I, as someone from later times, let myself be the most stupid and spiritually-underprivileged of all creatures to allow the disputations of spiritual knowers and great scholars eclipse the truth from my sight? Should I blindly follow one opinion or blindly side with a certain school of thought? Why should I not seek the Truth as they did and be sincere as they were?

We have already read about the Companions of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace). We saw how Abū Bakr and Ḥanzala, who accused himself of hypocrisy, went to the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) and took from him counsel that healed their hearts. Similarly, Muʿādh once complained about his want of *īmān* and told his companion: “Let’s sit together and renew our *īmān*!” Reported by al-Bukhārī. Ibn Rawāḥa used to also say to others: “Let’s renew our *īmān* for a while” in sessions which the angels themselves praised.

As brethren in faith, the Companions were incontestably authorized and even encouraged to sit with one another, to preach to one another, and to remember the Lord and the Hereafter in order to strengthen their *īmān*. The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) once stated that: “Every person spiritually acquires the *dīn* of their best friend, so choose your best friends carefully.” Reported by Abū Dāwūd and at-Tirmidhī on the authority of Abū Hurayra. The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) also informed us that his Companions are the ones who will preserve the *umma* and that the Hellfire would never touch anyone who saw him or

saw those who saw him. The former reported by Muslim on the authority of Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī and the latter by at-Tirmidhī on the authority of Jābir.

The chain of narrators ascending from generation to generation up to the Companions of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) is one of the most important facts denied by those who adhere solely to the texts and dispense with the spiritual companionship of the hearts.

What kind of balanced, comprehensive, and integrated reading of the Qur‘ān and Sunna will allow my heart to benefit from associating with the righteous even as my mind benefits from listening to the lectures of the scholars?

That a mind may benefit from a mind is taken for granted. But that a heart should spiritually benefit from another heart through love, companionship, and cooperation is not recognized by those who content themselves with purely academic knowledge.

Our scholars used to travel to seek knowledge from an academic master and seek the blessings of his academic degree. But in addition, wherever they went, they would also seek a righteous spiritual master. Only a few of them were content with refining their minds without asking for the righteous to pray for them.

The Generous Lord (Blessed is He) has opened wide the door to drawing nearer to Himself, as noted in the *ḥadīth qudsī*¹ reported by al-Bukhārī on the authority of Abū Hurayra: “Whoever sets himself against one of My friends, I will declare war on them. No servant will draw nearer to Me by anything I love more dearly than the acts of worship I have prescribed for them. And if My servant keeps drawing nearer to Me through supererogatory acts of

¹ [Translator’s note:] A *ḥadīth qudsī* is one that reports something revealed to the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) by God (Exalted is He) but which is expressed in the Prophet’s own words.

worship, I will love them. And if I love them, I will be their hearing by which they hear, their eyesight by which they see, their hand by which they seize, and their foot by which they walk. If they ask Me [a favor], I will surely grant it to them. If they seek My protection, I will definitely protect them. No decision have I ever hesitated to make other than taking the believer's soul, for they hate to die and I hate to cause them hurt."

This magnificent *ḥadīth* confused scholars so much that adh-Dhahabī, one of the great *ḥadīth* critics, nearly rejected its authenticity had it not been for the high esteem enjoyed by al-Bukhārī.

Nevertheless, the experts of *ḥadīth* avoid accepting the straightforward meaning of the *ḥadīth* as it was reported lest the advocates of the Oneness of Being should use it to bolster their claims.

Whoever advocates the idea of divine union has erred. Whoever professes a sort of oneness that excludes a separate existence of the Creator and the created is ignorant. Any scholar who states that there is a sort of divine union in the friends of God has stained their scholarship. The right opinion is the one expressed by that sinless Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace). Hence, we take the "what" as it is in the *ḥadīth* and entrust the "how" to God (Exalted is He).

It is none of my business to watch others fight and argue with one another while I lag behind and exert no effort to draw nearer to the Lord! The invitation of God (Glorified is He) is open and the way is paved for those who patiently knock at the right door. "I will love them. And if I love them, I will be their hearing... their eyesight... their hand... their foot..." *Allāh! Allāh! Allāh!*

9. The Ranks of the Hereafter

“Speech is an attribute of the speaker,” as the theologians say. Whoever reflects on the speech of scripture will notice a focus on God and the Hereafter, the vast gardens of bliss He has prepared for His beloved servants, and the severe punishment He has prepared for His enemies.

In the Book of God, the Lord’s servants are divided into two categories: the wretched - that is, the People of the Left Hand - and the blessed - who include the People of the Right Hand and the higher class of the Foremost and the Nearest to God. The speech of God (Glorified is He) invites the servants to compete to be among the first and foremost. For the Hereafter is made of ranks, and the servant who draws nearest to the Lord will not be like the ordinary worshipper who only expects God’s reward and does not seek His Countenance.

The scholars of the Hereafter among the Companions were extremely fearful that this world might spoil their Hereafter. Among these was the noble ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn ‘Awf, who became a rich businessman.

Once, when ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān (God be pleased with him) was served some food, he remembered his Emigrant brother and the pioneering preacher of Islam, Muṣ‘ab Ibn ‘Umayr and how, after he was killed in the Battle of Uḥud, he was shrouded in a gown that was too short to cover both his head and his feet at the same time. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān, who at that time was wealthy, noted: “Muṣ‘ab Ibn ‘Umayr was killed and he was better than I... Ḥamza was killed and he was better than I... After them, the treasures of this world poured forth on us. I really fear that our rewards in the Hereafter

might have already been given to us in advance.” At that point, he began to shed tears and refused to eat the food served to him. Reported by al-Bukhārī.

Remembering the Hereafter and longing for the meeting with God were what most dominated the minds of the Companions (God be pleased with them). In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Imām Muslim, one of the sections in the “Book on Repentance” is titled “Chapter on the Merit of Remembering God, Reflecting on the Affairs of the Hereafter, and Being Vigilant of God’s Presence, and the Permissibility of Putting that Aside to Engage the World.” In that chapter, Imām Muslim reports the story of Ḥanzala and Abū Bakr noted earlier; here, I will cite an alternative version of the story reported by Ḥanzala: “One day, we were in the company of the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) and he talked to us about Hell in his sermon. When I came home, I played with the kids and flirted with my wife. When I came out, I met Abū Bakr and told him what had happened. Abū Bakr noted that, ‘I too did the same thing.’ Then we met the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) and I said to him: ‘Messenger of God: I am a hypocrite!’ ‘Ḥanzala, there are moments for earnestness and moments for entertainment. If your hearts remained constantly mindful of God and the Hereafter, the angels would shake hands with you and greet you in the streets.’”

That exemplary generation regarded their temporary absorption in worldly affairs as a sign of hypocrisy from which they sought to be healed in the company of the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace). Similarly, the rich among them shed tears out of fear that their worldly possessions might negatively affect their status in the sight of the Lord.

The discourse of the Qur’ān and the Sunna, which has a focus on the remembrance of God and the Hereafter, is at variance with the discourse of a great deal of Islamic literature that is still bewildered by the influence of this world and its masters, and thus fears talking of the Unseen. Or is it heedlessness, spiritual emptiness,

and superficiality? Is it simply a speech that “is an attribute of the speaker”? Many hearts have grown heedless of God and the Hereafter and many minds have become absorbed in debating how Islam is the best system of governance, how Islam’s history is glorious, and how we once had a great and brilliant civilization - but of God and the Hereafter there is not a single mention!

How can our hearts and minds ascend to the rank of the scholars of the Hereafter?

Despair seized the Muslims for a long time after they read the *ḥadīth* wherein the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) informed us that the best Muslims were those who lived in his generation and in the following two generations.

Despair overwhelmed those who understood that the successive departure of the virtuous Companions was indicative of a successive decline until the end of this world, based on the *ḥadīth* that: “The virtuous will depart successively and only the scum of the earth will remain. God will not see any worth in them.” Reported by al-Bukhārī on the authority of Mirdās al-Aslamī.

Or based on the *ḥadīth* related by Abū ad-Dardā’: “One day as we were in the company of the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), he stared at the sky and said: ‘The time will come when knowledge will be spirited away from people and they won’t be able to do anything about it.’ Ziyād Ibn Labīd al-Anṣārī said: ‘How can it be spirited away from us now that we have learned the Qur’ān? By God, we will learn it and teach it to our wives and children!’ ‘My dear Ziyād! I thought you were among the brilliant minds of Medina! The Jews and Christians have their Torah and Gospel: but are they of any avail to them?’”

The Companion ‘Ubāda Ibn aṣ-Ṣāmit confirmed that “Abū ad-Dardā’ was right. The first knowledge that will be lifted away from the hearts of the people is reverence (*khushū’*). There will come a

time when you enter a great mosque and will not be able to find a single reverent person.”

But now with the blessed Islamic renaissance, enthusiasm, and audacious engagement in the *jihād* overwhelm us. We read the promise of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) about the advent of a second *khilāfa* and feel transported with joy. We feel great consolation and delight at the sight of these young believing generations of Islam. But the concerns of the coming *jihād* overshadow our concern for drawing nearer to God and purifying our intention so that the remembrance of the Hereafter becomes almost wholly absent.

The constant remembrance of God and the Hereafter that we read about in the Qurʾān and in the ḥadīths cannot become part of our psychological being except through keeping company with those who remember Him constantly. If heedlessness of God and of their inevitable meeting with Him troubled the Companions so much that they accused themselves of hypocrisy - though the worldly affairs that absorbed them for a time were lawful - then our heedlessness of the Lord which is caused by wasting most of our time watching TV or being involved in other trivial affairs of this world is indeed hypocrisy personified. The evils that distract people from God are widespread and target women and men alike. These distractions will mislead us if our hearts and minds are not concerned with striving to ascend the highest stations of nearness to Him.

How is it possible to recite Sūrat al-Wāqīʿa and not become supremely motivated to gather the forces of my will and rush to be among the First and Foremost (*as-sābiqūn*) by performing supererogatory acts of worship in the hope that I may be raised to those nearest to Him?

“And the Foremost (in the race) will be foremost (in the Hereafter). These will be the Nearest to God in gardens of bliss: a good many of those of old times, but (only) a few of later times. (They will be

seated) on gold-encrusted thrones, reclining upon them, and facing each other (in love). Immortal youths will wait upon them, with goblets, ewers, and cups filled with water from unsullied springs by which their minds will not be clouded and which will not make them drunk. And with fruit of any kind that they may choose, and with the flesh of any fowl that they may desire. And (with them will be their) companions with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes like pearls (still) hidden in their shells.” (56:10-24)

At the end of the *sūra*, the Lord (Exalted is He) reminds us of the highest stations near to Him. He describes the condition of the one at death’s door and at the threshold of the Hereafter so that we may keep that moment in mind while we’re still alive to rush to righteous deeds: “Why, then, when the soul (of the dying man) reaches the throat - the while you are (helplessly) looking on - and while We are nearer to him than you, although you see (Us) not. Why, then, if you are exempt from (future) account, can you not call back the soul - if what you claim is true? (All of you are destined to die.) Thus, then, if he happens to be of the Nearest to God, (there is for him) rest, satisfaction, and a garden of bliss. And if he happens to be of the People of the Right Hand, (for him is the greeting), “Peace be unto you,” from the People of the Right Hand. And if he happens to be of those who are wont to call the truth a lie, and (thus) go astray, a welcome of burning despair (awaits him in the Hereafter), and the heat of a blazing fire! Verily, this is indeed the truth of truths. Glorify, then, the Name of your Lord, the Most High.” (56:83-96)

Glorified be my Lord the Most High!

The ḥadīths that warn how the virtuous will depart us so that only the scum of the earth remain and how knowledge and devoutness will be lifted away ought to be contrasted with other ḥadīths that promise the great good that God has reserved for the later generations of this umma. In other words, our regression will be followed by an ascent. The question then is which stairway should

be ascended by the men and women seeking the highest stations of the Hereafter. Every sincere believer - woman and man alike - believes that this stairway can only be ascended by following the Sunna and taking the Qur'ān as a guide.

But what is the perfect compliance of the Sunna? What is the way that the Qur'ān has shown? What is the right way we ask God in our prayers to show us so that we may be in the company of those He has favored - the Prophets, the Sincere, the Martyrs, and the (wide category of) the Righteous?¹

Was the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) a Sufi who secluded himself in lodges (*zāwiyas*) and washed his hands of the concerns and affairs of this world? Not at all! He and his virtuous Companions, men and women, were in constant *jihād* and confronted unbelief at all levels.

This perfect Prophetic model forces us to part with the Sufi model. The duty of following the Sunna impels us to quit the discourse of the Sufis which is more befitting of a life of seclusion and ecstatic states, not a life of *jihād*. What befits the life of *jihād* is the language of the Qur'ān and the Sunna. Although of course the Sufis are free to talk about their ecstatic conditions in their closed circles just as the experts of any other discipline talk about their field of specialization in their own terminology.

At the same time, did the Companions not use to constantly engage in God's remembrance? Did they not frequently recite the Qur'ān, offer supererogatory prayers at night, and fast? Did the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) not say that the sentence *lā ilāha illallāh* (there is no god but God) is the highest branch of *īmān*? Was the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) not loved with a matchless love? Were not compassion, love, and mutual assistance the predominant features of the first society of

¹ [Translator's note:] See Qur'ān, 4:69.

Islam? Was not the love of God a *raison d'être* and a permanent concern? Did the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) not counsel his *umma* to choose their best friends with care so that they may acquire their *dīn*? Is not the act of keeping company with the righteous to renew our *īmān* part of the *dīn*?

So how are we supposed to ignore all these facts just because the Sufis practice this and because so-and-so accuses the Sufis of heretical beliefs?

10. Seeking God's Countenance

Had it not been for the Hereafter - with its rewards in the highest stations of Paradise and its punishments in the lowest stations of Hell - we would not have been motivated to do anything by the belief in God's existence. For what motivates the believing men and women to do good and what sustains the ethos of the Muslim society is the fear of the Lord's punishment and the desire to earn His reward in the Hereafter.

Muslim women and men have heard how the Lord has condemned this world's allurements that cause heedlessness of the Hereafter. They know that after death there is Resurrection, the balancing of the deeds, the bridge over the Fire, the reward in Paradise, and the punishment in Hell. Believing women and men have therefore contented themselves with what God has judged as lawful and have refrained from what He has judged as unlawful. Some believers show total disinterest in worldly pleasures. The Sincere amongst them, like 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn 'Awf - one of the ten Companions promised Paradise in their lifetime - shed tears out of fear that this world might spoil their Hereafter.

When the believing women and men hear God say "And verily the Hereafter is better" (93:4) and "The Hereafter is better and everlasting" (87:17), they prefer the Hereafter to this world and work according to that preference.

When they hear the Lord say "But verily, the Hereafter is greater in ranks and greater in distinction" (17:21), they vie among each other, hurrying in quest of the Hereafter. Their ambition craves the Hereafter because they read verses such as "Unto them who cares for (no more than the enjoyment of) this fleeting life, We readily

grant thereof as much as We please, (giving) to whomever it is Our will (to give). But in the end We consign them to (the suffering of) Hell, which they will have to endure disgraced and disowned. But as for those who care for the (good of the) Hereafter and strive for it as it ought to be striven for while they are (true) believers, they are the ones whose striving is acceptable (to God).” (17:18-19)

Another group of believing men and women become preoccupied with the following verse: “And keep your self patient with those who call their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Countenance; and let not your eyes pass beyond them in quest of the beauties of this world’s life; and pay no heed to any whose heart We have made heedless of all remembrance of Us because they had always followed (only) their own passions, abandoning all that is good and true.” (18:28) Seeking His countenance indeed!

In other words, there is something more sublime, more sacred, and more blissful than the adornments and comforts of Paradise. This is confirmed by the previously-mentioned *ḥadīth* qudsī in which God (Exalted is He) invites His servants to come closer to Him.

It is indeed a glorious journey, the one that gradually raises the believer from being merely skeptical of the allure of this world to being disinterested in its unlawful and doubtful pleasures to being fully attached to the Hereafter and, finally, to solely seeking God’s Countenance. This is a glorious journey in which the Companions (God be pleased with them) found a guide and teacher in the person of the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace). The *tābī’ūn* in turn found in the Companions guides and friends.

Each virtuous generation has found in the older generation righteous guides and close friends. Or as the *ḥadīth* says: “Every person spiritually acquires the *dīn* of their best friend.” And as the Qur’ān says: “On that Day [of Judgment], close friends will be foes to each other - (all) except for the Righteous. (And God will say:) ‘O you servants of Mine! No fear need you feel today, and neither shall you grieve, for you believed in Our messages and

were Muslims. Enter the Garden, you and your wives, in eternal bliss.” (43:67-70)

To that sublime position leads close friendship between the righteous and to that eternal bliss leads the company of pious spouses.

Some of the ḥadīths of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) on the Hereafter upbraid women. For instance, he once said: “Few among the inhabitants of Paradise are women.” Reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of ‘Imrān Ibn Ḥuṣayn (God be pleased with him). He also said: “I looked into Hell and found that most of its inhabitants are women.” Reported by Imām Aḥmad, Muslim, and at-Tirmidhī on the authority of ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās (God be pleased with him) and by al-Bukhārī and at-Tirmidhi on the authority of ‘Imrān Ibn Ḥuṣayn (God be pleased with him). The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) explained that this is because women tend to be ungrateful to their husbands. But these ḥadīths reproaching women need to be read along with those ḥadīths and verses which emphasize that God will not fail to reward those who are best in deed and that whoever does good while they are a believer - whether man or woman - the Lord will surely make theirs a good life.

There are believing women who wonder why God (Exalted is He) does not mention in the Qur’ān the bliss and comfort of the believing women in Paradise as He mentions that of the believing men with their beautiful heavenly companions dwelling in luxurious pavilions. God knows best. It is a sign of impertinence to inquire about what God and His Messenger have kept a secret. Also, it is a sign of unbelief and lack of confidence in God’s justice that a believing woman should think that a man’s bliss and comfort in Paradise will be better than a woman’s, for every man and woman will be granted their due reward.

There was once a believing woman so intoxicated by her love of God and so overwhelmed by her yearning for Him that she forgot her love of both this world and the Hereafter:

I care not about Paradise or Hell. I want nothing but my Love.

This verse of poetry is by Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya, the great Sufi ascetic (God have mercy upon her) which she uttered in a state of utmost spiritual ecstasy.

Can the desire for God be joined with the desire for Paradise? In the writings of such great saints as Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, we read that disinterest in this world and in the Hereafter as well are the two necessary steps toward seeking God's Countenance. This means that you draw nearer to God by showing disinterest in what He has endeared to you.

If you abstain from the unlawful pleasures of this world, content yourself with only a little of its lawful pleasures, and feed the poor and the needy from your own money, these are pious acts. Yet if you show disinterest in the Hereafter, is this not a sign of ingratitude and disrespect?

What the great saints (God have mercy upon them) mean is that you should totally cast out of your heart both this world and the Hereafter. The heart is the bridge to God. Of course, we have the right to enjoy the bliss and comfort of the Hereafter that God has described so meticulously and made so attractive to our eyes - praise is due to Him. We pray to Him to fill our hearts with the bliss of knowing Him and to make glad our lower selves with the pleasures of Paradise.

Man's preoccupation with the beauties of the life of this world is further encumbered by evil company, just as associating with the virtuous and those who call on their Lord morning and evening raises his will until his heart becomes attached to the Lord.

From Paradise, the blessed believers will question the sinning criminals below: "What has brought you to the Hellfire?" They will respond: "We were not among those who prayed, and neither did we feed the needy; but we used to engage in vain discourse

with those who engaged in vain discourse, and we used to deny the Day of Judgment until certainty came upon us (in death).” (74:41-46). “With those who engaged in vain discourse” - it was those who caused them to perish. So let every soul look carefully with whom it keeps company.

The People of Paradise will ask after each other. Then one of them will say: “I had (on earth) a close friend who used to say, ‘What! Are you really of those who believe it to be true (that) after we have died and become dust and bones we shall indeed be brought to judgment?’” (And) he adds: “Would you like to look down (and see him)?” He looked down and saw him in the midst of the blazing fire, and says: “By God! You had almost caused me to perish! Had it not been for my Lord’s favor, I would certainly have been among those brought (there)!” (37:51-57)

The matter is all about a good companion, a close friend who walks with you on the way to happiness, or an evil companion who pulls you down into the darkness of heedlessness.

There were many righteous men and women in the virtuous centuries of Islam. Where, now, are the righteous in an age of computers, satellite dishes, missiles, and atoms? We desperately need them in the midst of this world’s racket and mania.

The abundant good which God (Exalted is He) has reserved in His divine providence for the later generations of this *umma* for sure compensates for their enduring these ever-more-intense ordeals. For the bigger the ordeal, the greater the reward. The Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) once said to his Companions: “There will come after you days of extreme endurance. In them, enduring (hardships and temptations) will be like holding flaming embers in one’s hands. In them, the well-doer will be given the reward of fifty men who do your same righteous deeds.” Reported by at-Tirmidhī.

In his version of the ḥadīth, Abū Dāwūd has the Companions asking: “Messenger of God! The reward of fifty men! Among us or among them?” To which the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) replied, “The reward of fifty men among you.” The ḥadīths foretelling that a group of this *umma* will remain on the right path until the Day of Resurrection are numerous in the books of authenticated ḥadīths. The following is a reliable ḥadīth reported by at-Tirmidhī on the authority of Anas (God be pleased with him): “My *umma* is like rain: No one knows where its good lies - in the beginning or in the end.”

The door of divine generosity is open and the condition for the *umma* is the same - whether for the earlier or the later generations. And that condition is: pure intention, devotion, and following the steps of the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace). This divine aid will hold for any servant, woman or man, who meets the condition. Whoever strives for the adornments of the Hereafter, God will certainly not fail to reward the one who is best in deed. As for those who are raised by divine providence to seek God’s Countenance, those who keep themselves patient, who call on their Lord morning and evening, knock at His door, implore Him earnestly, and call on Him with distressed souls and devoted hearts, they are the ones meant by the ḥadīth *qudsī*: “If My servant draws nearer to Me a hand’s length, I will draw nearer to him an arm’s length. If they draw nearer to Me an arm’s length, I will draw nearer to them a fathom’s length. And if they come to Me walking, I will go toward them running.” Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurayra (God be pleased with him).

In another ḥadīth *qudsī*, the Lord (Glorified is He) says: “I am as My servant expects Me to be, and I am with them when they remember Me. If they remember Me (privately) in their self, I will remember them in My Self. If they remember Me in an assembly, I will remember them in a far better assembly.”

To think well of God, to expect good from Him, to seek to draw nearer to Him, and to engage diligently in His remembrance with

good companionship: But where are those blessed assemblies after the virtuous centuries?

The virtuous generation is that of the Companions. But after them were destined to come believers from the Foremost. One day, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) visited the cemetery with his Companions. No doubt the martyrs among his Companions reminded him of the future righteous of his umma: "I wish I could have seen our brethren." "Aren't we your brethren, Messenger of God?" the Companions asked. "You are my Companions. Our brethren are those who have not yet come." Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, inter alia, on the authority of Abū Hurayra (God be pleased with him).

The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) was ranking the righteous that would come after him as his brothers in a position that paralleled that of his Companions. Those are people who love God and His Messenger, a dual love that is like two wings for those who hover high in that sublime horizon. The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) also once said, "Among those of my *umma* who love me the best are some people who will come after me. They would love to see me in return for all their family and wealth." Reported by Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurayra.

O Lord, admit us among them by Your grace and favor!

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