

# **SINCERITY DESCRIBED IN THE QUR'AN**

**"We have sent down the Book to you with truth.  
So worship Allah, making your religion sincerely His.  
Indeed the sincere religion belongs to Allah alone..."  
(Surat az-Zumar: 2-3)**

**HARUN YAHYA**

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SINCERITY DESCRIBED IN THE QUR'AN  
HARUN YAHYA

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The reason why a special chapter is assigned to the collapse of the theory of evolution is that this theory constitutes the basis of all anti-spiritual philosophies. Since Darwinism rejects the fact of creation, and therefore the existence of Allah, during the last 140 years it has caused many people to abandon their faith or fall into doubt. Therefore, showing that this theory is a deception is a very important duty, which is strongly related to the religion. It is imperative that this important service be rendered to everyone. Some of our readers may find the chance to read only one of our books. Therefore, we think it appropriate to spare a chapter for a summary of this subject.

In all the books by the author, faith-related issues are explained in the light of Qur'anic verses, and people are invited to learn Allah's words and to live by them. All the subjects that concern Allah's verses are explained in such a way as to leave no room for doubt or question marks in the reader's mind. The sincere, plain and fluent style employed ensures that everyone of every age and from every social group can easily understand the books. This effective and lucid narrative makes it possible to read them in a single sitting. Even those who rigorously reject spirituality are influenced by the facts recounted in these books and cannot refute the truthfulness of their contents.

This book and all the other works by Harun Yahya can be read individually or discussed in a group. Those readers who are willing to profit from the books will find discussion very useful in that they will be able to relate their own reflections and experiences to one another.

In addition, it is a great service to the religion to contribute to the presentation and circulation of these books, which are written solely for the good pleasure of Allah. All the books of the author are extremely convincing, so, for those who want to communicate the religion to other people, one of the most effective methods is to encourage them to read these books.

It is hoped that the reader will take time to look through the review of other books on the final pages of the book, and appreciate the rich source of material on faith-related issues, which are very useful and a pleasure to read.

In them, one will not find, as in some other books, the personal views of the author, explanations based on dubious sources, styles unobservant of the respect and reverence due to sacred subjects, or hopeless, doubt-creating, and pessimistic accounts that create deviations in the heart.



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

The author, who writes under the pen-name HARUN YAHYA, was born in Ankara in 1956. Having completed his primary and secondary education in Ankara, he then studied arts at Istanbul's Mimar Sinan University and philosophy at Istanbul University. Since the 1980s, the author has published many books on political, faith-related and scientific issues. Harun Yahya is well-known as an author who has written very important works disclosing the imposture of evolutionists, the invalidity of their claims and the dark liaisons between Darwinism and bloody ideologies such as fascism and communism.

His pen-name is made up of the names "Harun" (Aaron) and "Yahya" (John), in memory of the two esteemed prophets who fought against lack of faith. The Prophet's seal on the cover of the books is symbolic and is linked to the their contents. It represents the Qur'an (the final scripture) and the Prophet Muhammad (saas), the last of the prophets. Under the guidance of the Qur'an and sunnah, the author makes it his purpose to disprove each one of the fundamental tenets of godless ideologies and to have the "last word," so as to completely silence the objections raised against religion. The seal of the final Prophet (saas), who attained ultimate wisdom and moral perfection, is used as a sign of his intention of saying this last word.

All author's works center around one goal: to convey the Qur'an's message to people, encourage them to think about basic faith-related issues (such as the existence of Allah, His unity and the Hereafter), and to expose the feeble foundations and perverted ideologies of godless systems.

Harun Yahya enjoys a wide readership in many countries, from India to America, England to Indonesia, Poland to Bosnia, and Spain to Brazil. Some of his books are available in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Urdu, Arabic, Albanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat (Bosnian), Polish, Malay, Uygur Turkish, and Indonesian, and they are enjoyed by readers worldwide.

Greatly appreciated all around the world, these works have been instrumental in many people recovering their faith in Allah and in many others gaining a deeper insight into their faith. The wisdom, and the sincere and easy-to-understand style gives these books a distinct touch which directly effects any one who reads or studies them. Immune to objections, these works are characterized by their features of rapid effectiveness, definite results and irrefutability. It is unlikely that those who read these books and give serious thought to them can any longer sincerely advocate the materialistic philosophy, atheism or any other perverted ideology or philosophy. Even if they continue to do so, it will be only a sentimental insistence since these books refuted such ideologies from their very foundations. All contemporary movements of denial are now ideologically defeated, thanks to the collection of books written by Harun Yahya.

There is no doubt that these features result from the wisdom and lucidity of the Qur'an. The author modestly intends to serve as a means in humanity's search for Allah's right path. No material gain is sought in the publication of these works.

Considering these facts, those who encourage people to read these books, which open the "eyes" of the heart and guide them to become more devoted servants of Allah, render an invaluable service.

Meanwhile, it would just be a waste of time and energy to propagate other books which create confusion in peoples' minds, lead man into ideological chaos, and which, clearly have no strong and precise effects in removing the doubts in peoples' hearts, as also verified from previous experience. It is apparent that it is impossible for books devised to emphasize the author's literary power rather than the noble goal of saving people from loss of faith, to have such a great effect. Those who doubt this can readily see that the sole aim of Harun Yahya's books is to overcome disbelief and to disseminate the moral values of the Qur'an. The success and impact of this service are manifest in readers' conviction.

One point should be kept in mind: The main reason for the continuing cruelty, conflict, and all the ordeals the majority of people undergo is the ideological prevalence of disbelief. This state can only be ended with the ideological defeat of disbelief and by conveying the wonders of creation and Qur'anic morality so that people can live by it. Considering the state of the world today, which leads people into the downward spiral of violence, corruption and conflict, it is clear that this service has to be provided more speedily and effectively. Otherwise, it may be too late.

It is no exaggeration to say that the collection of books by Harun Yahya have assumed this leading role. By the will of Allah, these books will be a means through which people in the 21st century will attain the peace, justice and happiness promised in the Qur'an.

The works of the author include: The New Masonic Order, Judaism and Freemasonry, Global Freemasonry, Kabbalah and Freemasonry, Knight Templars, Islam Denounces Terrorism, Terrorism: The Ritual of the Devil, The Disasters Darwinism Brought to Humanity, Communism in Ambush, Fascism: The Bloody Ideology of Darwinism, The 'Secret Hand' in Bosnia, Behind the Scenes of The Holocaust, Behind the Scenes of Terrorism, Israel's Kurdish Card, The Oppression Policy of Communist China and Eastern Turkestan, Palestine, Solution: The Values of the Qur'an, The Winter of Islam and Its Expected Spring, Articles 1-2-3, A Weapon of Satan: Romanticism, The Light of the Qur'an Destroyed Satanism, Signs from the Chapter of the Cave to the Last Times, Signs of the Last Day, The Last Times and The Beast of the Earth, Truths 1-2, The Western World Turns to God, The Evolution Deceit, Precise Answers to Evolutionists, The Blunders of Evolutionists, Confessions of Evolutionists, The Misconception of the Evolution of the Species, The Qur'an Denies Darwinism, Perished Nations, For Men of Understanding, The Prophet Musa (as), The Prophet Yusuf (as), The Prophet Muhammad (saas), The Prophet



Sulayman (as), The Golden Age, Allah's Artistry in Colour, Glory is Everywhere, The Importance of the Evidences of Creation, The Truth of the Life of This World, The Nightmare of Disbelief, Knowing the Truth, Eternity Has Already Begun, Timelessness and the Reality of Fate, Matter: Another Name for Illusion, The Little Man in the Tower, Islam and the Philosophy of Karma, The Dark Magic of Darwinism, The Religion of Darwinism, The Collapse of the Theory of Evolution in 20 Questions, Engineering in Nature, Technology Mimics Nature, The Impasse of Evolution I (Encyclopedic), The Impasse of Evolution II (Encyclopedic), Allah is Known Through Reason, The Qur'an Leads the Way to Science, The Real Origin of Life, Consciousness in the Cell, Technology Imitates Nature, A String of Miracles, The Creation of the Universe, Miracles of the Qur'an, The Design in Nature, Self-Sacrifice and Intelligent Behaviour Models in Animals, The End of Darwinism, Deep Thinking, Never Plead Ignorance, The Green Miracle: Photosynthesis, The Miracle in the Cell, The Miracle in the Eye, The Miracle in the Spider, The Miracle in the Gnat, The Miracle in the Ant, The Miracle of the Immune System, The Miracle of Creation in Plants, The Miracle in the Atom, The Miracle in the Honeybee, The Miracle of Seed, The Miracle of Hormone, The Miracle of the Termite, The Miracle of the Human Body, The Miracle of Man's Creation, The Miracle of Protein, The Miracle of Smell and Taste, The Miracle of Microworld, The Secrets of DNA.

The author's childrens books are: Wonders of Allah's Creation, The World of Animals, The Glory in the Heavens, Wonderful Creatures, Let's Learn Our Islam, The Miracles in Our Bodies, The World of Our Little Friends: The Ants, Honeybees That Build Perfect Combs, Skillful Dam Builders: Beavers.

The author's other works on Quranic topics include: The Basic Concepts in the Qur'an, The Moral Values of the Qur'an, Quick Grasp of Faith 1-2-3, Ever Thought About the Truth?, Crude Understanding of Disbelief, Devoted to Allah, Abandoning the Society of Ignorance, The Real Home of Believers: Paradise, Knowledge of the Qur'an, Qur'an Index, Emigrating for the Cause of Allah, The Character of the Hypocrite in the Qur'an, The Secrets of the Hypocrite, The Names of Allah, Communicating the Message and Disputing in the Qur'an, Answers from the Qur'an, Death Resurrection Hell, The Struggle of the Messengers, The Avowed Enemy of Man: Satan, The Greatest Slander: Idolatry, The Religion of the Ignorant, The Arrogance of Satan, Prayer in the Qur'an, The Theory of Evolution, The Importance of Conscience in the Qur'an, The Day of Resurrection, Never Forget, Disregarded Judgements of the Qur'an, Human Characters in the Society of Ignorance, The Importance of Patience in the Qur'an, General Information from the Qur'an, The Mature Faith, Before You Regret, Our Messengers Say, The Mercy of Believers, The Fear of Allah, Jesus Will Return, Beauties Presented by the Qur'an for Life, A Bouquet of the Beauties of Allah 1-2-3-4, The Iniquity Called "Mockery," The Mystery of the Test, The True Wisdom According to the Qur'an, The Struggle Against the Religion of Irreligion, The School of Yusuf (as), The Alliance of the Good, Slanders Spread Against Muslims Throughout History, The Importance of Following the Good Word, Why Do You

Deceive Yourself?, Islam: The Religion of Ease, Zeal and Enthusiasm Described in the Qur'an, Seeing Good in All, How do the Unwise Interpret the Qur'an?, Some Secrets of the Qur'an, The Courage of Believers, Being Hopeful in the Qur'an, Justice and Tolerance in the Qur'an, Basic Tenets of Islam, Those Who do not Listen to the Qur'an, Taking the Qur'an as a Guide, A Lurking Threat: Heedlessness, Sincerity in the Qur'an, The Religion of Worshipping People, The Ruses of the Liar in the Qur'an.

# INTRODUCTION

Take the example of two people. Assume they have both been granted with sufficient opportunity here on earth to earn the pleasure of Allah, and that they had been informed about what is good and what is evil; that they fulfilled their religious duties and obligations until the time of death, and spent their lives seeming as devout Muslims; and that they succeeded in all areas, that is, had good jobs and families and became respected members of the society. If people were to be asked who was the most successful of the two, in response, you might receive answers such as, "the one who was more hardworking or tenacious or who strove most strenuously." However, if we were to consider these responses carefully, we would then recognize that these definitions of "success" are based not according to the Qur'an, but according to worldly criteria.

According to the Qur'an, neither working hard, nor growing weary, nor achieving respect or love from others is regarded as criteria of superiority. Rather, it is their belief in Islam, their good deeds done in order to gain Allah's consent, and their goodwill, nurtured in the depths of their hearts, that are regarded as the criteria of superiority in Allah's presence. Allah states this fact in the Qur'an, in regards to sacrificial offerings, as follows:

**Their flesh and blood does not reach Allah but your heedfulness does reach Him. In this way He has subjected them to you so that you might proclaim Allah's greatness for the way that He has guided you. Give good news to the good-doers. (Surat al-Hajj: 37)**

As mentioned, the deed done by one slaughtering a beast for the sake of Allah is appreciated by Him depending on one's devotion, or fear of Him. The meat or blood of any beast slaughtered by man calling Allah's name could not be of any value in His presence if the deed were not performed for His sake. Here, the important factors are the goodwill and sincerity felt towards Allah while performing the deed or act of worship. Therefore, a man does not ascend in virtue in the sight of Allah only by his acts of charity, his worship, his attitude, and his kind words. Of course, all these are deeds that must be accomplished by Muslims during their life times, and for which one may hope to attain great rewards on the Judgment Day. But, the most essential factor to be guarded while fulfilling all such deeds is the extent of the nearness one feels towards Allah. What is important is not the quantity of deeds accomplished, but that one turns to Allah with purity and sincerity of heart.

Sincerity is **"acting by complying to Allah's orders and without considering any personal benefits or any expectations in return."** A sincere person turns to

Allah with his heart and aims only at winning His consent by his every single deed, step, word and prayer. Thus, he strongly believes in Allah, attaining righteousness. According to the Qur'an:

**... The noblest among you in Allah's sight is the one who best performs his duty. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (Surat al-Hujurat: 13)**

In many verses of the Qur'an, attention is called to good deeds performed "only to gain Allah's consent." However, some people tend to undervalue this fact. They never reflect upon the purity of the intention in their hearts in taking on a job, offering a speech, helping people or making sacrifices; all the while believing their actions to be sufficient by assuming that "they are fulfilling their religious duties." However, in the Qur'an, Allah tells us about those who strove all their lives but to no avail. If such were the case, these would be confronted with the following situation on the Day of Judgment.

**Some faces on that Day will be downcast, labouring, toiling endlessly. (Surat al-Ghashiyya: 2-3)**

Therefore, people will encounter one of two situations in the hereafter. Two people who had pursued similar jobs, expended similar effort, and worked with the same determination during their lives, could receive different treatment in the hereafter, because of the matter of their intentions. On the Day of Judgment, those who purified themselves will be awarded with the glad tidings of Paradise, whereas those who underestimated the value of sincerity while in this world will suffer the endless torments of Hell.

In this book, we will be referring to these two aspects of belief that render the deeds one does meaningful and worthy in Allah's sight, namely self-purification and sincerity. This book aims to warn those who fail to live their lives merely to gain Allah's consent that all their efforts could be in vain, and therefore to invite them to purify themselves before the Day of Judgment. In addition, we would also like to once again remind all believers that any thoughts, words or deeds that may diminish one's sincerity are of great consequence because of their possible consequences in the hereafter. Therefore, we would like to show all the way to guard their sincerity, by the light shed by the verses of the Qur'an.

# WHAT IS A RIGHTEOUS PERSON LIKE?

## **Holds fast to Allah and is sincere in his religion to Allah**

Allah orders believers to live as those "who hold fast to Allah and are sincere in their religion to Allah" in the following verse:

**Except those who repent and put things right and hold fast to Allah and dedicate their religion to Allah alone; they are with the believers. Allah will give the believers an immense reward. (Surat an-Nisa': 146)**

A man is purified if he holds fast to Allah, devotes his life to gain His consent with the knowledge that there is no other deity than Allah, and never gives up on his faith in Allah, whatever happens. Allah enjoins in the Qur'an as follows: **"Whoever holds fast to Allah has been guided to a straight path."** (Surah Al 'Imran: 101)

"Being sincere in one's religion to Allah" means seeking to gain Allah's consent and satisfaction without expecting any other personal advantages or benefits. Allah also has emphasized the importance of this issue in another verse, and has revealed that the religion could only be lived in the following manner:

**They were only ordered to worship Allah, making their religion sincerely His as people of pure natural belief, and to establish prayers and pay the welfare tax—that is the religion of the correct. (Surat al-Bayyina: 5)**

In his deeds and prayers, a true believer never strives to obtain the love, satisfaction, appreciation, interest and admiration of any person other than Allah. Any such longings are an indication that he has failed to turn to Allah with complete sincerity and purification. In fact, we frequently encounter people "doing good deeds or establishing prayers for purposes other than gaining Allah's consent." For instance, there are people who brag about helping the poor, or aim to acquire respect or advantages when practicing important religious duties such as the regular prayers (*salat*). In the Qur'an, people who establish prayers or do good to be seen are mentioned as follows:

**Have you seen him who denies the religion? He is the one who harshly rebuffs the orphan and does not urge the feeding of the poor. So woe to those who pray, and are forgetful of their prayer, those who show off. (Surat al-Ma'un: 1-6)**

**You who believe! Do not nullify your charity by demands for gratitude or insulting words, like him who spends his wealth, showing off to people and not believe in Allah and the Last Day... (Surat al-Baqara: 264)**

Anyone who desires to be seen is indeed looking to gain the assent of other people, rather than Allah. A true believer should meticulously avoid aiming to show off while lending a helping hand, assuming a pleasing attitude, praying or making a sacrifice. The only true aim of one who sincerely believes in Allah should be to obtain Allah's consent. The Qur'an also emphasizes how the prophets performed religious rites only for Allah's consent and never sought personal rewards or advantages. The following words spoken by the Prophet Hud (as) to his people confirms this truth:

**My people! I do not ask you for any wage for it. My wage is the responsibility of Him Who brought me into being. So will you not use your intellect? (Surah Hud: 51)**

A believer never attempts to gain the consent of any being other than Allah. Hence, he knows for certain that Allah possesses all hearts, and that all people would submit if only He wishes so. Furthermore, no amount of worldly acclaim, praise or admiration gained in the world will secure anything in the hereafter. On the Day of Judgment, each man will stand alone in Allah's presence and be asked to account for each of his deeds. On that day, faith, piety, sincerity and submission will play the fundamental role. Likewise, the Prophet Muhammad (saas) reminded believers of the importance of sincerity, by saying "*Allah accepts those deeds which were performed purely for His sake and which were meant to seek His pleasure.*"<sup>1</sup>

## **Turns to Allah with Repentance and is Sincere in deed and intention to Him**

Allah informs true believers about genuine faith as follows:

**[Adhere to the correct religion], turning in repentance to Him. Heed Him and establish prayer. Do not be among the idolaters. (Surat ar-Rum: 31)**

Allah calls attention in another verse that the right way to follow is the way followed by prophets and morally upright people.

**... but follow the Way of him who turns to Me. Then you will return to Me and I will inform you about the things you did. (Surah Luqman: 15)**

Turning to Allah with heartfelt devotion means loving Him so much that one cannot refrain from faith, devotion and fidelity under any circumstances, and fears Him with awe. It is to have faith in Him with such reverence that one anxiously fears Him and ardently avoids losing His consent. Anyone believing in Allah in such a manner is sure to attain self-purification. One who believes and is so devoted to Allah performs prayers and other deeds to earn His consent sincerely. In reward for this, which is the basis of self-purification, true believers are **"those who have faith and do right actions and humble themselves before their Lord." (Surah Hud: 23)**

Allah instructed true believers to fulfill the orders and acts of worship prescribed in the Qur'an with total submission, sincerity and hearts purified for His sake. In a verse, it is related how Allah reminded Maryam (as) to submit to Him with heartfelt devotion: **"O Maryam, worship your Lord devoutly: Prostrate yourself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down." (Surah Al 'Imran: 43)**

This is also stated by the Prophet (saas), who said:

*"Goodness and comfort are for him who worships his Lord in a perfect manner and serves his Master sincerely."*<sup>2</sup>

Allah also revealed the good news that those obeying Him with heartfelt devotion and fulfilling His orders with submission will be rewarded doubly:

**But those of you who are obedient to Allah and His Messenger and act rightly will be given their reward twice over; and We have prepared generous provision for them. (Surat al-Ahzab: 31)**

The characteristics of true believers, as mentioned in the verse below, are best exemplified in the prophets sent by Allah to warn people: **"The steadfast, the truthful, the obedient, the givers, and those who seek forgiveness before dawn." (Surah Al 'Imran: 17)**

The Qur'an contains many verses that emphasize the fact that prophets are men who turned to Allah with sincere devotion, His purified servants. Some examples are as follows:

**Ibrahim was a community in himself, exemplary, obedient to Allah, a man of pure natural belief. He was not one of the idolaters. (Surat an-Nahl: 120)**

**And remember Our servants Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of true strength and inner sight. We purified their sincerity through sincere remembrance of the Abode. (Surah Sad: 45-46)**

**Ibrahim was forbearing, compassionate, penitent. (Surah Hud: 75)**

**Mention Musa in the Book. He was truly sincere and was a Messenger and a Prophet. (Surah Maryam: 51)**

**And Maryam, the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity—We breathed Our Spirit into her and she confirmed the Words of her Lord and His Book and was one of the obedient. (Surat at-Tahrim: 12)**

## **Believes in Allah by Showing Him a Great Respect**

True believers who attained the level of self-purification defined in the Qur'an believe in Allah "by showing a deep respect." This means that they comprehend Allah's greatness and power; and thus, feel a deep love, a pure respect, and an awe-inspired fear towards Him. Those who devote themselves to Allah with such deep respect and fear never renounce the chance to gain His consent for the sake of any other worldly benefits or rewards. Sincerity is to know that no earthly benefits and rewards, big or small, could ever be more important than gaining Allah's consent and fulfilling His commands. In the Qur'an, this quality of those who are righteous is explained as follows: **"... They do not sell Allah's Signs for a paltry price..." (Surah Al 'Imran: 199)**

In regards to Allah's orders and prohibitions, no matter what the circumstances are, the righteous, as defined in the Qur'an, never make compromises in their fulfilment of the requirements of the Qur'anic verses. The respectful fear and profound devotion felt deep within one's heart wholly refrains one from behaving in any way displeasing to Allah; and also encourages one to be greatly eager and enthusiastic to adopt a wholesome morality as consented by Allah. In the Qur'an, the respectful fear shown by sincere believers towards Allah is expressed as follows:

**Those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined and are afraid of their Lord and fear an evil Reckoning. (Surat ar-Ra'd: 21)**

In other verses, true believers are described as having their respectful devotion towards Allah increased when they hear Allah's verses:

**Say: "Believe in it or do not believe in it." Certainly, when it is recited to them, those who were given knowledge before it fall on their faces in prostration, saying, "Glory be to our Lord! The promise of our Lord is truly fulfilled!" Weeping, they fall to the ground in prostration, and it increases them in humility. (Surat al-Isra': 107-109)**



The respectful devotion of the Prophet Zakariya (as) and his wife is described as an example for believers in the Qur'an as follows:

**... They outdid one another in good actions, calling out to Us in yearning and in awe, and humbling themselves to Us. (Surat al-Anbiya': 90)**

Another issue mentioned in the same verse is that the sincere believers compete with one with another in doing good deeds for Allah's consent. These people strive continuously—to the limit allowed by their power and wealth—to succeed in earning Allah's assent, mercy, compassion and Paradise.

## **Submits to Allah with Complete Devotion**

Allah points out the importance of the quality of submission in believers in the following verse:

**Say, "We believe in Allah and what has been sent down to us and what was sent down to Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq and Ya'qub and the Tribes, and what Musa and 'Isa were given, and what all the prophets were given by their Lord. We do not differentiate between any of them. We are Muslims submitted to Him." (Surat al-Baqara: 136)**

True sincerity entails submission with complete surrender to Allah. However, this submission should be unconditional. One who consents to Allah's will, but is only thankful and submissive to Allah under certain circumstances, could not be regarded as in submission if he becomes rebellious and disobedient under a different set of circumstances. For instance, one who is engaged in good business relations, and earns a sufficient amount of money, could frequently utter that it is Allah Who permitted his circumstances, wealth and good fortune. However, when things take a turn for the worse, he suddenly becomes forgetful of his earlier submissiveness towards Allah. His character changes suddenly, and he begins to grumble continually that he is a good man, that he did not deserve what befell him, and that he could not for the life of him understand why things are not going well. He may even go beyond the bounds of what is acceptable and start to blame Allah by forgetting that Fate always works according to the best and most favorable manner. He may ask himself irreverent questions like "Why have things worked out this way?" "Why did these things happen to me?"

However, trusting in Allah, regardless of the good or bad that has happened to us, or the favorable or unfavorable appearances of events, is in fact that most valued in Allah's presence. Despite the outer appearances, one should be submissive by knowing that each and everything was created with goodness and wisdom:

**"If you have received a wound, they have already received a similar wound. We deal out such days to people turn by turn, so that Allah will know those who believe and can gather martyrs from among you—Allah does not love wrongdoers." (Surah Al 'Imran: 140)**

Hence, all hardships and problems are to test humans. These are caused as specifically as trials, in order to determine who will stay firm and aim at self-purification and submission to Allah.

Those who believe sincerely never doubt the ultimate good of things that happen and always put their trust in Allah in complete submission. They realize that these are only for trial. Their faith is unconditional. On the contrary, it is a sound, strong and firm faith that surmounts all kinds of difficulties one may encounter. They submit themselves to Allah without seeking a worldly reward. In the Qur'an, this determined and decisive attitude of true believers for submission is emphasized as:

**When his Lord said to him, "Become a Muslim!" he said, "I am a Muslim who has submitted to the Lord of all the worlds." (Surat al-Baqara: 131)**

In yet another verse, Allah relates that the noblest religion is the one adopted by those who surrender themselves to Allah and believe in Allah alone, and thus underlines the importance of unconditional submission:

**Who could have a better religion than someone who submits himself completely to Allah and is a good-doer, and follows the religion of Ibrahim, a man of pure natural belief? Allah took Ibrahim as an intimate friend. (Surat an-Nisa': 125)**

The Prophet (saas) had this to say on the same point:

*"... The luckiest person who will have my intercession on the Day of Resurrection will be the one who said, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,' sincerely from the bottom of his heart."*<sup>3</sup>

**Turns Towards Allah not Merely During Troubled Times,  
but Every Moment of his Life**

During their lifetimes, some people fail to ponder upon Allah, Who has created them and Who has bestowed worldly blessings upon them. As things harmoniously unfold in their lives, they tend to completely forget that they are actually weak creatures in need

of Allah's compassion. Yet, Allah is the only power that can ensure these blessings and make things right.

However, the fact that these people act so carelessly is not based on their ignorance, but rather the truth that they are completely ungrateful and haughty towards Allah. The most telling evidence of this is that these people unfailingly turn to Allah and ask for His help as soon as they realize that they are in desperate straits or when facing affliction or hardship. These people, who previously insisted on denying Allah, immediately start to pray to Him as "His faithful and devoted servants."

Allah informs us of this truth as follows:

**When harm touches people they call on their Lord, repenting to Him. But then, when He gives them a taste of mercy from Him, a group of them immediately associate others with their Lord to show ingratitude for what We have given them. "Enjoy yourselves—you will soon know." (Surat ar-Rum: 33-34)**

As should be apparent from these verses, these people turn their back on Allah until such time, not because they are unaware of Allah's power or they fail to understand that they are liable to worship Allah, but because they grow arrogant. Likewise, they forget how they took shelter in Allah and sincerely and desperately begged for His assistance, and return to their denial as soon as Allah removes the hardship and difficulty. In other words, they act sincerely when faced with problems and insincerely when the problems disappear. The Qur'an provides the following example of such people:

**It is He Who conveys you on both land and sea so that when some of you are on a boat, running before a fair wind, rejoicing at it, and then a violent squall comes upon them and the waves come at them from every side and they realise there is no way of escape, they call on Allah, making their religion sincerely His: "If You rescue us from this, we will truly be among the thankful." But then, when He does rescue them, they become rebellious in the earth without any right to do so. Mankind, your rebelliousness is only against yourselves. There is the enjoyment of the life of this world and then you will return to Us and We will inform you about what you did. (Surah Yunus: 22-23)**

Clearly, these people, who could adopt a more sincere form of behavior if they so wished, promise that they will surely become true believers once Allah helps them. However, as soon as they obtain His help, they turn their face away from Him. Yet, Allah announces that this rebelliousness will be held against them, and warns them of the grievous doom.

As for the purified ones, who turn to Allah with an open heart, there is no difference in their behavior whether in times of hardship or prosperity. As they are well aware of Allah's absolute power, they always live with a fear and awe of Him in their hearts. For this reason, they behave righteously throughout their lives, and serve Allah with a heartfelt and undivided devotion. Allah declares that people who act sincerely only when they are faced with hardships, and others who purify themselves and strive so all their lives, will in no way be equivalent in terms of the reward awaiting them in the hereafter. While true believers will be rewarded with Paradise, the rest will be punished with the Fire. The following verses correspond to this promise:

**When harm touches man he calls upon his Lord, repenting to Him. Then when He grants him a blessing from Him, he forgets what he was calling for before and ascribes rivals to Allah, so as to misguide others from His Way. Say: "Enjoy your disbelief for a little while. You are among the Companions of the Fire." What of him who spends the night hours in prayer, prostrating and standing up, mindful of the hereafter, hoping for the mercy of his Lord? Say: "Are they the same—those who know and those who do not know?" It is only people of intelligence who pay heed. (Surat az-Zumar: 8-9)**

## **Is Never Reluctant to Serve and to Worship Allah**

In the following verse, Allah makes light of those people who claim to be believers while failing to truly have faith:

**Among the people there are some who say, "We believe in Allah and the Last Day," when they are not believers. They think they deceive Allah and those who believe. They deceive no one but themselves but they are not aware of it. (Surat al-Baqara: 8-9)**

These are the people who have denial in their hearts, despite being counted among the true believers, and worshiping with them, and establishing relationships with them. One of their most defining characteristics, distinguishing them from those who have true faith in Allah, is that they are reluctant to serve and worship Him. True believers are sincere men and women who harbour a heartfelt faith in Allah, who turn to Him with sincerity and who worship Him with a great love and respect. In the subsequent verse, Allah describes the reward awaiting such behavior in the hereafter, and presents the example of the angels as a model for mankind:

**The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant to Allah nor would the angels near to Him. If any do disdain to worship Him, and grow arrogant, He will in any case gather them all to Him. (Surat an-Nisa': 172)**

As is announced in this verse, one of the distinguishing signs of sincerity and righteousness is to never be reluctant in serving and worshipping Allah. Likewise, the true believers are able to remain eager to worship Allah under all kinds of circumstances and conditions. For this reason, they never lose their enthusiasm, even if they are forced to sacrifice their lives or property, or to confront hardships and afflictions.

The Prophet Muhammad (saas) reminded believers of the importance of worshipping Allah with steadfastness and sincerity by saying: "*... do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and worship Allah in the forenoon, and in the afternoon and during a part of the night, and always adopt a middle, moderate, regular course whereby you will reach your target (Paradise).*"<sup>4</sup>

The Qur'an features many examples of this superior morality expressing these sincere efforts made by true believers. For instance, there are those who repeatedly asked the Prophet (saas) for a mount to go to war and who failed to take part in it as they could not find one; also mentioned are those who returned after failing to find anything to spend. Although these people were certainly aware that they could face serious detriment in war such as being killed, maimed or injured, they willingly desired to take part, merely on account of their sincere faith and strong purity of self. The Qur'an portrays such people as:

**Nor is anything held against those who, when they came to you for you to provide them with mounts and you said, "I cannot find anything on which to mount you," turned away with their eyes overflowing with tears, overcome by grief at having nothing to give. (Surat at-Tawba: 92)**

The Qur'an also features examples of those who under similar circumstances again were reluctant to serve and worship Allah, in order to make true believers realize the difference between such two kinds of people. The related verse states:

**There are only grounds against those who ask you for permission to stay when they are rich. They were pleased to be among those who were left behind. Allah has sealed up their hearts so they do not know. They will make excuses to you when you return to them. Say: "Do not make excuses, we will not believe you. Allah has already informed us about you. Allah will see your actions, as will His Messenger. Then you will be returned to the Knower of the Unseen and the Visible, and He will inform you regarding what you did." (Surat at-Tawba: 93-94)**

Men, who claimed with their tongues that they were worshipping Allah and that they were obeying the Prophet (saas), asked to be excused from the war, in complete contradistinction to true believers, even though they were well-advantaged in terms of property and wealth. These men, who refrained from participating in war in a time when Muslims were facing great hardships, showed shameless audacity towards Allah. Nowadays, the same circumstances could also apply for different cases of affliction or trouble. It should always be remembered that, in the verses of the Qur'an, our Lord revealed that the hearts of these people, who prefer to preserve their worldly goods rather than embarking on a job that could lead them to gain Allah's consent, and at a time when Muslims needed their assistance and support, are sealed.

## **Sincerely Desires to be Purified**

One of the most important characteristics of any true and sincere believer is that he honestly desires and strives to be purified from all kinds of attitudes and moral defects forbidden in the Qur'an, in order to attain the level of morality pleasing to Allah. Humans are prone to make mistakes. Yet, Allah announces in the subsequent verse that He has inspired the human soul not only with the limits of sin and evil, but also of ways to avoid them.

**And the self and What proportioned it and inspired it with depravity or with its sense of duty, he who purifies it has succeeded, he who covers it up has failed. (Surat ash-Shams: 7-10)**

Any true believer with the fear of Allah in his heart aims to be purified from the evil side of his soul. He strives to attain the level of the sublime morality defined in the Qur'an, by making proper use of his conscience and intelligence. Any serious effort made by someone, who sincerely desires to be cleansed, is an indication of his "true faith and purification."

Only one who has absolute faith in Allah and the hereafter would attempt to dissipate the evil side of his soul. Otherwise, he would prefer to deny the existence of his evil side and prevent it from becoming known to others. He would hope that no one would be aware of it. Though, Allah has the best knowledge concerning both the inside and the exterior of everyone. Allah is aware of the most secret of secrets. On the Day of Judgment, all the deeds done by each person will come to light. The sincere believers, who are aware of this fact, are recognized by their struggle against their inner-self (*an-nafs*). In the Qur'an, this feature of theirs is defined as follows:

**Do not ever stand in it [such a mosque]. A mosque founded on performing one's duty from the first day has a greater right for you to stand in it. In it there are men who love to purify themselves. Allah loves those who purify themselves. (Surat at-Tawba: 108)**

## **Makes a Concerted Effort and "Ever-abiding" Good Works**

In the following verse Allah announces that the ever-abiding good works are better in reward and expectation with Him:

**Wealth and sons are the embellishment of the life of this world. But, in your Lord's sight, right actions which are lasting bring a better reward and are a better basis for hope. (Surat al-Kahf: 46)**

These acts also are important indicators of one's sincerity and purity. Some people are capable of performing good deeds, not because they are fearful of Allah, but they would like to gain worldly honor or admiration in the eyes of people. For instance, one may send his furniture or clothes to those left homeless and in need as a result of an earthquake. He may lend a helping-hand to his neighbors, or behave in a kind, compassionate and considerate manner. He may also be friendly, tender and understanding towards his employees. He may be respectful and tolerant of his elders. If necessary, he may be self-sacrificing, taking part in activities organized by aid institutions. These are certainly good deeds. However, what is really important is the constancy and patience shown while behaving in such ethical behavior. Throughout his life, any Muslim who has purified himself should lend a helping-hand to anyone in need, without regard for people's opinions of him. These efforts made only to gain Allah's consent also serve to prove the extent of their sincerity. However, if the said person fails to lead the remaining part of his life by complying with the above-mentioned morality, and to behave in a similar self-sacrificing and devout manner, then the purity he would have achieved while performing other deeds becomes vulnerable.

Likewise, there may be some people in ignorant societies who are capable of performing such good deeds even though they do not admit to believing in Allah. However, they do not perform these acts because of their fear of Him or in hope of the hereafter. They aim to gain some worldly rewards and benefits, whether large or small. For instance, they may have helped the earthquake survivors just to dispose of their unwanted items of furniture and clothing. Again, the respect he shows towards his elders may merely be the result of the influence of cultural traditions. Similarly, he may be treating his employees in a friendly manner in order to win them over to gain more

prestige at work and thus a better income. He may be contributing his help to aid organizations to gain esteem and respect in society. In order to be able to assert for certain that these deeds derive out of the fear of Allah and the superior morality commanded by Allah, the said person would have to use the same effort in each and every moment of his life, and to continually behave in compliance with the Qur'an. The importance of calling on Allah "morning and evening," all day, "ever-abidingly" is emphasized as follows:

**Restrain yourself patiently with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, desiring His countenance. Do not turn your eyes from them, desiring the attractions of this world. And do not obey someone whose heart We have made neglectful of Our remembrance and who follows his own whims and desires and whose life has transgressed all bounds (Surat al-Kahf: 28)**

If one sincerely believes in the existence of Allah and of the hereafter, then he will in no way be capable of acting otherwise. Hence, such a person knows for certain that he will be accountable for each moment lived in this world, and will be worthy of eternal life in Paradise only if he leads a life complying with Allah's consent. Consequently, he hastens to do good deeds in order to gain Allah's consent with each of his acts, words and attitudes. By questioning "What more can I do?", "How should I behave in order to gain Allah's consent and mercy?", "Which of my manners do I have to correct in order to behave in a more ethical manner?" he strives hard. Likewise, it was announced in the Qur'an that the behavior of those striving, as they ought to strive, are worthy of a great reward. The verses maintain:

**As for anyone who desires this fleeting existence, We hasten in it whatever We will to whoever We want. Then We will consign him to Hell where he will roast, reviled and driven out. But as for anyone who desires the hereafter, and strives for it with the striving it deserves, being a believer, the striving of such people will be gratefully acknowledged. (Surat al-Isra': 18-19)**

## **Aside from Acts of Worship, Continuously Strives to be Righteous**

Allah highlights in many verses of the Qur'an that divine morality should be applied to every part of the life of a true believer. One must live as a Muslim, speak as a Muslim, and think as a Muslim, from the moment he opens his eyes in the morning to the moment he falls asleep at night. He should aim for purity and intend to always act



sincerely and honestly towards Allah, and to make the best possible use of his will and conscience to this end.

However, some people struggle to limit religion to certain specific rites. They believe that one's spiritual life should be separated from their worldly one. Somehow, they find this idea logical and even sensible. They remember Allah and the hereafter only when they practice their prayers, fast, give alms to the poor, or perform pilgrimage (*hajj*). At other times, they become carried away by the confusion and complexity of the worldly affairs. Because they forget Allah and the reward that they will receive on the Day of Judgment, they become unconcerned about gaining Allah's consent and fail to strive to this end.

They do not consider that they are also expected to think religiously while walking on the street, eating their meals, working in the office, engaging in sports, conversing with others, pursuing a commercial transaction, watching television, talking of politics and listening to music, etc. As they assume that these are merely worldly matters, they tend to believe that their plans too should therefore be worldly. Yet, one could live perfectly in compliance with the morality of the Qur'an and attain sincerity while engaged in these matters. He can show an interest in his duties and be attentive while conversing with others, having his meals, engaging in sports, attending his school or work, doing the cleaning, watching television and listening to music. Yet, he must strive to obtain Allah's blessing while performing all these activities.

All manners that please Allah are explained clearly and in detail in many verses of the Qur'an. Many details concerning how to be just and fair in trading, not resorting to methods to obtain unjust earnings, to give full measure and full weight etc. are clarified in the Qur'an. When a person lives with the fear of Allah and acts in light of these verses, he is doing trade in compliance with Allah's consent and sincerity. Similarly, refraining from profane talk, not remaining silent while others disparage the Qur'an, and speaking truthfully and with wisdom are all components of this sublime morality mentioned in the Qur'an. Therefore, no one should form the wrong opinion that religion comprises only certain religious rites and that sincerity can only be attained by performing these rites. Due to the complexity of our worldly lives, people are liable to be engaged in many different matters. What is important is that one should always be with Allah in his heart, seek Allah's consent in his every action, never sacrifice the morality of the Qur'an, and guard his purity.

## **Is Even-tempered, Sincere and Reliable**

One who consistently aims to act sincerely will often be found to be good-natured and genuine. Such a person, who only considers Allah's consent, and who does not seek any worldly rewards, could never be phoney, insincere or unnatural. He is well-mannered

in behavior, appearance and speech. As he would not strive to gain influence over people, or be overly ambitious, he will be likeable, making others feel at ease with him. As he would aim only to obtain Allah's consent, he will be well aware that any feigned disposition aimed at gaining influence over people will damage his integrity. He will be comfortable and at peace in the knowledge that Allah is his only friend and guardian.

One who firmly guards his purity and sincerity, may hope that Allah will accept each of his deeds as pious and reward him with a bountiful recompense, both in this world and in the hereafter.

## **PLOYS USED BY THE DEVIL TO DESTROY THE SINCERITY OF TRUE BELIEVERS**

Until the Day of Judgment, Satan has sworn to lead mankind astray, in an effort to make them members of his party. As Allah declares when he said, **"Satan has gained mastery over them, so he has made them forget the remembrance of Allah; they are the Satan's party; now surely the Satan's party are the losers"** (Surat al-Mujadala: 19), Satan has succeeded in his desires with those who deny the existence of Allah. He has surrounded them from all sides, made them forget the remembrance of Allah, and acquired absolute mastery over them. Thus, these people became the party of Satan, as creatures calling others to denial, sin and evil, as does the devil.

However, the condition of those who sincerely believe in Allah is certainly different. Satan may directly influence those who deny Allah. However, as true believers firmly put their faith in Allah, Satan fails in influencing them. For instance, he could in no way prevent them from striving for Allah's sake. He cannot prevent them from fulfilling their religious duties, performing their prayers, doing good and being morally upright, reciting the name of Allah, and from sacrificing themselves to fight both with their belongings and their lives.

Well aware of this fact, the devil is compelled to search for even more devious methods to influence true believers. As he is not capable of directly hindering the good deeds done in Allah's sake, he tries to mix evil into the good intentions of true believers performing these deeds; to make them turn towards objectives other than Allah's consent, and to prevent them from turning towards Allah devoutly, by thus impinging their sincerity. In the Qur'an, Satan's determination to this end is emphasized by his very own words. The verses relating these words are as follows:

**I will lead them astray and fill them with false hopes. I will command them and they will cut off cattle's ears. I will command them and they will change Allah's creation. Anyone who takes Satan as his protector in place of Allah has clearly lost everything. He makes promises to them and fills them with false hopes. But what Satan promises them is nothing but delusion. (Surat an-Nisa': 119-120)**

**He said, "By Your misguidance of me, I will lie in ambush for them on your straight path. Then I will come at them, from in front of them and behind them, from their right and from their left. You will not find most of them thankful." (Surat al-A'raf: 16-17)**

As indicated in these verses, Satan attempts to master true believers by "leading them astray and filling them with false hopes," by "laying in ambush for them on Allah's straight path," and by "coming at them, from in front of them and behind them, from their right and from their left."

He uses efforts to make them see right as wrong, good as evil, fine as ugly, and evil as good. He strives to hinder them from doing a good deed in Allah's sake by planting doubt and exciting vain desires in their hearts. He endeavors to lure true believers to pursue even that which contradicts the morality of the Qur'an by adorning it to make it attractive.

## **Satan's Party**

If necessary, to accomplish the above-mentioned objectives, Satan depends for help on those who befriend him and deny Allah. He uses their mouths to speak his suggestions, and their words to express his plans. It is through such crafty tactics that he approaches true believers.

Certainly, Satan does not openly invite true believers to denial by merely uttering "Do not conform to the Qur'an, do not behave in compliance with Allah's consent or conform to me instead." On the contrary, he tries to deceive them with fraud, ruses and lies. He attempts to prevent them from being sincere and plants various vain desires in their hearts, and tries to make them seek the admiration of others instead of gaining Allah's consent.

For instance, he tries to add the desire to gain people's assent to the intentions of a believer who strives to do a good deed for the sake of Allah. He encourages him to praise his own virtues, and inflate his ego.

Yet, to take pride in one's self while performing a good deed will prevent him from attaining sincerity. If he truly chooses to perform a deed that is self-sacrificing, he should be doing it to gain Allah's consent. Therefore, there should be no need to make his deeds

public. In any case, Allah sees and hears him. However, Satan presents this desire in a more seemingly innocent light, through such reasoning as "They will trust and love you more if they know how morally upright you are and how you conform to the Qur'an. Anyway, it is a perfectly legitimate desire." It is of course a legitimate desire, however, one would be behaving more in line with the Qur'an if he seeks this recognition from Allah and leaves the matter of his public perception in His hands. If he behaves differently, he will risk being overcome by the wrongdoings that are rejected by the Qur'an. Such behavior would amount to worshipping to be seen, to become important, and in taking pride in one's self. All such behavior is opposed to one's sincerity and purity, qualities that are only acquired while performing worship to merely gain Allah's consent.

## **Satan's Cunning**

Satan's plan to harm the sincerity of true believers, which will last until the Day of Judgment, dates back to the time of Adam (as). He approached Adam (as) with the same sly and deceitful strategies, and tried to make him perceive good as ugly and ugly as good. As announced in the Qur'an, Satan succeeded in persuading Adam (as) and his mate to not heed Allah's prohibition. Thus, he caused them to be driven out of Paradise. This event is explained in the verses of the Qur'an as follows:

**We said, "Adam, live in the Garden, you and your wife, and eat freely from it wherever you will. But do not approach this tree and so become wrongdoers." (Surat al-Baqara: 35)**

**But Satan whispered to him, saying, "Adam, shall I show you the way to the Tree of Everlasting Life and to a kingdom which will never fade away?" (Surah Ta Ha: 120)**

**Then Satan whispered to them, disclosing to them their private parts that had been concealed from them. He said, "Your Lord has only forbidden you this tree lest you become angels or among those who live for ever." He swore to them, "I am one of those who give you good advice." So he enticed them to do it by means of trickery. Then when they tasted the tree, their private parts were disclosed to them and they started stitching together the leaves of the Garden in order to cover themselves. Their Lord called out to them, "Did I not forbid you this tree and say to you, "Satan is an outright enemy to you"?" (Surat al-A'raf: 20-22)**

Satan did not openly tell Adam and his mate to defy Allah's orders. It is apparent that no true believer would comply with such a suggestion. Thus, he devised other persuasive arguments, and told them that they would become angels and live eternally if they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. In order to make his lies still more persuasive, he dared even to swear by Allah. The Qur'an warns the true believers against this kind of cunning conceived by the devil:

**Children of Adam! Do not let Satan tempt you into trouble as He expelled your parents from the Garden, stripping them of their covering and disclosing to them their private parts. He and his tribe see you from where you do not see them. We have made the satans friends of those who do not believe. (Surat al-A'raf: 27)**

Those who are guided by the Qur'an are prepared in advance against unfounded concerns, vain desires and deceitful ruses of the devil. As declared in the verse, **"Those who believe fight in the Way of Allah. Those who disbelieve fight in the way of false gods. So fight the friends of Satan! Satan's scheming is always feeble."** (Surat an-Nisa': 76), the strategy of the devil is weak and is comprised merely of hollow deceptions. True believers comprehend that this whispering voice is that of Satan and immediately seek refuge in Allah as related in the following verse,

**If an evil impulse from Satan provokes you, seek refuge in Allah. He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. As for those who do their duty, when they are bothered by visitors from Satan, they remember and immediately see clearly. (Surat al-A'raf: 200-201)**

As soon as they find refuge in Allah, they become capable of interpreting the events in the light of the Qur'an. They acquire an understanding aiding them to distinguish right from the wrong. Therefore, the false imputations of the devil fail due to the powerful faith of true believers.

Likewise, as the Qur'an underlines in the following verse, Satan exercises no authority over true believers who put their trust and faith in Allah, and who take Allah as their only Guardian:

**But as for My servants, you will not have any authority over them. Your Lord suffices as a guardian. (Surat al-Isra': 65)**

As mentioned in the Qur'an, Satan is influential over those guarded by him, and those who associate others as divinities beside Allah:

**He has no authority over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord. He only has authority over those who take him as a friend and associate others with Allah. (Surat an-Nahl: 99-100)**

It is stated that the devil could not affect the sincere and pure servants of Allah:

**He said, "My Lord, because You misled me, I will make things on the earth seem good to them and I will mislead them all, every one of them, except Your servants among them who are sincere." (Surat al-Hijr: 39-40)**

For this reason, the sincere and righteous believers have no reason to fear the cunning and deceitful traps set by the devil, as they know for certain that the devil holds no power over them. They only fear Allah. Those who fear Satan are the ones who befriend him, and those who have entered his fold. This reality is unfolded in the Qur'an as follows:

**It was only Satan frightening you through his friends. But do not fear them—fear Me if you believe. (Surah Al 'Imran: 175)**

In the Qur'an, Allah announces that Satan will expend all efforts to plant vain desires and deviance in the hearts of all people, including the prophets. This is a special kind of trial created to distinguish between those who have a disease in their heart and those who are sincere believers. Those who have attained purity and those who have knowledge are in no way influenced by these vain desires of Satan. They are well aware that the devil holds no independent power, and is indeed created and fully controlled by Allah. The devil is powerless to lead believers astray, to hinder their sincerity or guide them to the wrong path, without the Will of Allah. When Satan tries to "place vain desires in their hearts," the Muslims' belief that the Qur'an is undoubtedly a true blessing from Allah is strengthened. This truth is revealed in a verse as follows:

**We did not send any Messenger or any Prophet before you without Satan insinuating something into his recitation while he was reciting. But Allah revokes whatever Satan insinuates and then Allah confirms His Signs—Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise—so that He can make what Satan insinuates a trial for those with sickness in their hearts and for those whose hearts are hard—the wrongdoers are entrenched in hostility—and so that those who have been given knowledge will know it is the truth from their Lord and believe in it and their hearts will be humbled to Him. Allah guides those who believe to a straight path. (Surat al-Hajj: 52-54)**

## WAYS TO ATTAIN SINCERITY

In previous chapters, we explained the importance of sincerity as well as the characteristics of the sincere believers according to the light of the Qur'an. Any true believer, wishing to gain Allah's approval and to be bestowed with the eternal blessings of Paradise, should pay meticulous attention to these verses his entire life, and live in conformity with the morality of the Qur'an, in order that he may attain sincerity. However, to this end, he should turn towards Allah with a genuine heart, and strive only to obtain Allah's consent. He should be extremely careful against all kinds of negative influences that may damage his purity. As already mentioned in the foregone chapters, Satan also continually struggles and resorts to various methods to make people stray from the Straight Path.

One should always be aware that he may all damage his sincerity by a number of deeds performed out of habit, or forms of behavior acquired from the surrounding community. Therefore, he should constantly check his intentions, and utter every word, perform every movement purely for Allah. And yet, he should in no way forget that this level of morality is not difficult to maintain, but is, rather, quite simple.

Purity, honesty and turning to Allah in an untainted manner, are characteristics that can be obtained without major effort. Furthermore, our Lord, who facilitates each action, has supported us with His prophets and pious believers, and has shown the ways to acquire sincerity in His verses. Islamic scholars have also attached great importance to sincerity, and used their works to invite true believers to turn to Allah.

The works of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, a renowned Islamic scholar, play an important role in guiding the Muslims who strive to attain sincerity. Bediuzzaman emphasized the need of self-purification in particular, and presented critical recommendations to true believers:

*"O my brothers of the hereafter! And O my companions in the service of the Qur'an! You should know—and you do know—that in this world sincerity is the most important principle in works pertaining to the hereafter in particular; it is the greatest strength, and the most acceptable intercessor, and the firmest point of support, and the shortest way to reality, and the most acceptable prayer, and the most wondrous means of achieving one's goal, and the highest quality, and the purest worship."*<sup>5</sup>

As stressed by Bediuzzaman himself, sincerity is one of the most important characteristics that one has to possess in order to serve Allah as perfectly as possible. As ordered in the coming verse, **"We have sent down the Book to you with truth. So worship Allah, making your religion sincerely His. Indeed the sincere religion belongs to Allah alone..." (Surat az-Zumar: 2-3)**, true religion could only be lived by serving Allah and sincerely obeying to Him. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi claims that one

should definitely acquire sincerity in order to obtain merit with his deeds in Allah's presence:

*"... Since in sincerity lies much strength and many lights... we are certainly compelled more than anyone to work with all our strength to gain sincerity. We are in utter need of instilling sincerity in ourselves. Otherwise what we have achieved so far in our sacred service will in part be lost, and will not persist; and we shall be held responsible."*<sup>6</sup>

In verses of the Qur'an, Allah announces how one can acquire untainted faith and sincerity. Additionally, each man has been created with a competency to understand and experience sincerity and genuineness. Therefore, acquiring and increasing one's sincerity is quite simple. Even if one is completely ignorant, he may acquire sincerity by relying on his conscience. He becomes able to comprehend what is sincere and what is not, purifying himself of all attitudes that hinder sincerity after merely turning to Allah with an honest heart. For this reason, one should be aware that his conscience is a divine guide. He should never fool himself with excuses such as "I didn't know which approach was the sincere one," "I could not guess that this behavior would damage my sincerity," "I thought that I was sincere and genuine" etc. He should always keep in mind that these are nothing but insincere excuses, put forth in order to ease his conscience. Hence, it is quite simple for one who complies with his conscience to attain to sincerity and maintain it until the Day of Judgment.

In this chapter, we will be discussing the "ways to attain sincerity," as they are made known in the verses of the Qur'an, and which are also continuously brought to mind by our own consciences. We will cite examples of this in daily life. Following that, we will call attention to the attitudes that hinder sincerity, and will relate how simple it is to attain it.

## **Sincerity Strengthens the True Believers**

In order to experience true sincerity, one should first and foremost comprehend why sincerity is important. He should have a heartfelt desire to attain such a level of faith. Because, any person who fails to comprehend the importance of sincerity may then seek power and might in worldly things, pursuing them in order to attain societal prestige. Such a person obstinately seeks fame, repute, glory, wealth, beauty, academic credentials and other honors. Yet, none of these can grant one the true power and esteem, neither in this world or the hereafter. Likewise, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi reminds true believers that power, both in this world and in the hereafter, could only be acquired through sincerity, by stating, *"You should know that all your strength lies in sincerity and truth. Yes, strength lies in truth and sincerity. Even those who are wrong gain strength from their sincerity in their wrongdoing. Evidence that strength lies in truth and sincerity*



*is this service of ours. A small amount of sincerity in our work proves this claim and is evidence for itself."*<sup>7</sup> Therefore, anyone forgetting this principle and running after the above mentioned material assets is not purely seeking to gain Allah's consent.

For instance, let us assume that a task deemed favorable by the Muslims is divided among four or five people. Let us also imagine that one of the said people is entrusted with a passive and seemingly unimportant behind-the-scenes job, which may nevertheless be difficult to accomplish, whereas the others are charged with active jobs, and in the foreground, which directly call upon the attention and praise of others. If the first person refuses to embark of the said task, just because he will have to remain in the background and will not achieve praise, and wishes to replace his job with another offering greater opportunity to acquire recognition and respect, then he will be impinging upon his sincerity. Under such circumstance, the said person will most likely have been carried away by insincere thoughts, such as "Even though I will expend enormous effort, my name will not be mentioned in the end. What's more, the others will gain more merit in spite of working less than me." Nevertheless, the most noble approach to follow, under such a situation, would be to work only to acquire Allah's recognition and praise, to seek to gain His consent. If the job is likely to bring a benefit, it is of no importance who participates in it. Even if one is unlikely to acquire recognition from others and remain unknown, he should still undertake such opportunity with the enthusiasm of gaining Allah's consent. This is what sincere behavior would imply.

One who always acts sincerely will not only be successful and enjoy peace of mind in this world, but may also be hopeful of a great recompense in the hereafter. Because, such a person does not depend on his worldly possessions, authority, belongings or wealth, and his esteem in society, but primarily depends on Allah, then his faith, intelligence, conscience and sincerity. As portrayed in the following verse, Allah always helps those who turn to Him with untainted devotion:

**... Allah will certainly help those who help Him—Allah is All-Strong, Almighty (Surat al-Hajj: 40)**

Therefore, no force could overcome faith and sincerity. Through sincerity, one is assured of gaining Allah's assistance, support and power.

## **Increasing One's Fear of Allah**

Fear of Allah is the primary way to increase one's sincerity. One must dedicate himself to Allah with a profound love after comprehending His greatness, that there are no other forces beyond Him, that it is only Allah Who has created the universe from nothing and Who guards living things compassionately. He thus understands that his only

real friend, both in this world and the hereafter, is Allah. Therefore, His consent is the only approval one should seek for. Apart from this profound love, he deeply fears Allah, as Allah has told people in His verses to fear and heed Him:

**... So heed Allah. And know that you will be gathered back to Him. (Surat al-Baqara: 203)**

The fear of Allah arises out of the understanding and appreciation of His greatness and power. One who comprehends the eminence of Allah's authority and His eternal might knows that he may have to face His wrath and punishment, as part of Divine justice, if he were to fail to lead a life conforming to His wishes. The torments prepared by Allah in the life of this world and the hereafter for those who deny Him are detailed in the verses of the Qur'an, and all people are warned to beware them. Any true believer is always conscious of this fact. Fear of Allah serves to ensure that he continually remembers that his worldly life will sooner or later come to an end, and that all people will finally have to account for their actions and deeds in Allah's presence. Thus, he is always conscious of the said torments. This conscientiousness causes him to feel an inherent fear of facing Allah's chastisement, and therefore to "restrain himself" from it.

Restraint means that one persistently refuses to behave in ways forbidden and not consented by Allah, and takes no chances whatsoever in duly fulfilling His orders. A sincere man, fearing and being cautious of Allah, is aware of any behavior not consented by Him and takes necessary measures to avoid it. For instance, he would realize if the wicked side of his soul is inclined towards earthly possessions. In such a case, he will put all his wealth and might to use in a noble cause for the sake of Allah, in order to rid himself of the inclination. This is true morality, which is most compatible with sincerity. One who wishes to acquire sincerity, should immediately remember Allah's orders to "**spend in the way of Allah**" and "**fear Allah as much as you can**" in order to restrain himself from all behavior displeasing to Him. As ordered by Allah, he should spend in His way, disregarding the temptations of the wicked side of his soul. The verses state the following:

**It is not devoutness to turn your faces to the East or to the West. Rather, those with true devoutness are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, the Angels, the Book and the prophets, and who, despite their love for it, give away their wealth to their relatives and to orphans and the very poor, and to travellers and beggars and to set slaves free, and who establish prayer (salat) and pay the welfare tax (zakat); those who honor their contracts when they make them, and are steadfast in poverty and illness and in battle. Those are the people who are true. They are the people who do their duty. (Surat al-Baqara: 177)**

Allah instructs people to fear Him as much as they can: **"So fear Allah as much as you can; listen and obey" (Surat at-Taghabun: 16)**. In compliance with this verse, a believer never finds his faith and fear of Allah sufficient. He tries to increase his fear of Allah in his heart and the power to restrain himself until the very last moment. The verses of the Qur'an refer to those "who live in the awe of their Lord":

**Those who live in the awe of their Lord in the Unseen will have forgiveness and an immense reward. (Surat al-Mulk: 12)**

**"... have awe of their Lord and fear an evil Reckoning." (Surat ar-Ra'd: 21)**

Fear of Allah and sincerity are nurtured together side by side. True believers try to fear Allah as much as they can in compliance with the above-mentioned verse. These efforts are also known as parts of sincerity. Thus, believers succeed in fearing and guarding themselves from Allah, as indicated in the following verse: **"You who believe! Heed Allah with the way He should be heeded and do not die except as Muslims..." (Surah Al 'Imran: 102)**

The depth and sensitivity brought by the increase in one's fear of Allah causes the person to become even more cautious and sincere. In addition, he will be able to see the means to approach unto Allah, and use such opportunities as a sincere person. The following verse states that truth in the following manner:

**You who believe! Heed Allah and seek the means of drawing near to Him... (Surat al-Ma'ida: 35)**

Such a person, who fears Allah deeply, could in no way behave meekly while practicing the morality of the Qur'an. He could never pass up an opportunity to worship Allah. He never forgets that Allah hears and sees him always and everywhere, whether he is alone or surrounded by a large crowd. He acts with the knowledge that he may be faced with Allah's chastisement if he fails to adopt the best comportment. As the fear of Allah felt by such a person increases, his understanding is continuously strengthened. Thus, he never sacrifices any part of his sincerity, as he always remembers the threat of Hell throughout his lifetime.

## **Not Fearing Anyone but Allah**

One of the responsibilities of any true believer is to be conscious of the truth revealed in the following verse, and to reach a level of faith sufficient to "honor Allah with honor that is due to Him."

**They do not measure Allah with His true measure. The whole earth will be a mere handful for Him on the Day of Rising the heavens folded up in His right hand. Glory be to Him! He is exalted above the partners they ascribe! (Surat az-Zumar: 67)**

Allah can only be honored if all His attributes are known and the revelations of these attributes are seen and grasped at any given moment. One could only fear Allah and restrain himself, and therefore attain a sincere faith, if he truly grasps the extent of His greatness.

One should be conscious of the truth that "there are no greater forces than Allah" in order to duly honor Him. Those who fail to duly appreciate Allah are deceived by the outer appearances of the worldly life and base their lives upon this deception. They tend to grant undue importance to those with money, respect and authority, deemed important according to worldly values. They tend to overemphasize their worth, and misjudge them as being people of power and status, with the ability to control others as well as life itself. Therefore, they strive to win their love and appreciation. They are attentively on their guard against their wrath, and fear becoming the target of any harm that could be inflicted by them.

If you were to ask these people about their faith, you will likely find out that some of them claim to have faith in Allah. However, these people who claim to know and recognize Allah tend to divine those they fear as beings who could act independently of Allah. Such thinking impinges upon the sincerity of their worship. It even leads them to behave in such a way as to gain the consent of the above-mentioned people that they so respect or revere.

Yet, there is no other power that could do good or harm to people without the permission of Allah. In the verses of the Qur'an, Allah denounces this line of thinking:

**If you ask them, "Who created the heavens and the earth?" they will say, "Allah." Say: "So what do you think? If Allah desires harm for me, can those you call upon besides Allah remove His harm? Or if He desires mercy for me, can they withhold His mercy?" Say: "Allah is enough for me. All those who truly trust put their trust in Him." (Surat az-Zumar: 38)**

**... Say: "Who can control Allah for you in any way whether He wants harm for you or wants benefit for you?" Allah is aware of what you do. (Surat al-Fath: 11)**

In regards to this truth, Allah reminds mankind not to fear any other except Him:

**... then you should not fear them but rather fear Me—and so that I can complete My blessing to you so that hopefully you will be guided.. (Surat al-Baqara: 150)**

This level of morality, that assists people in acquiring pure faith and sincerity, can be observed in the prophets. In the Qur'an, it has been emphasized that the prophets feared no one but Allah. The following verse underlines this fact:

**Those who conveyed Allah's Message and fear Him, fearing no one except Allah. Allah suffices as a Reckoner. (Surat al-Ahzab: 39)**

Every human who succeeds giving due honor to Allah, knows that there are no forces but Allah, and never fears any one but Him. He also knows that nothing could ever happen without His consent. This understanding enables him to continuously worship Allah in a pure, sincere and untainted fashion. If he is to do a good deed, he does it not because he is afraid of others people's reactions, but because he will fail to fulfill Allah's commands if he does not do it. Similarly, he gives up any deed or form of behavior, not because he thinks he will be exposed to the anger of others, but because he desires to win Allah's compassion and avoid His chastisement.

For instance, when people who work in an office are asked to donate to a charitable foundation, some will see the opportunity as a requirement of the morality of the Qur'an and make their donations purely out of the fear of Allah. Whereas, others will donate money thinking that their friends might accuse them saying "How tight he is!", or if they fail to donate, "He is the only one who didn't donate," or "He probably has no money." Thus, they act reluctantly, not sincerely wanting to give any money. However, they feel forced to do so, since they do not want to be perceived negatively by others. It is certain that the recompense for these alms in Allah's presence will be very far from the recompense for alms donated by sincere believers. Such people have tainted their sincerity and have strayed from the morality of the Qur'an. However, those who act out of fear of Allah may hope to be rewarded by Him.

The difference between those who fear others and those who fear Allah could also be observed under adverse circumstances. For instance, let us take the example of a man who made a habit of making use of unfair advantages in his office. If this man remains unaffected when reminded that his acts will not be accepted by Allah, though stops as soon as he is told that his immoral actions will be revealed in detail to his colleagues, then it will be impossible to assert that he is sincere. Although it might have appeared outwardly that he had stopped acting immorally, he is, nevertheless, insincere. He has corrected his actions not out of his fear of Allah, but out of his desire to protect

himself from the wrath of his colleagues. However, he will always be able to make amends for what he did. If he sincerely repents and corrects his way of thinking, he may then act sincerely. It is very important for anyone who wishes to act sincerely to heed the right approach as in these examples we have given of types of circumstances we commonly encounter in daily life. Thus, he should monitor himself accordingly. If he fears any other being or status other than Allah, he should then purify himself of this fear, if he wishes to achieve sincerity.

## **Striving One's Utmost for Allah's Consent**

One who aims to behave sincerely under whichever circumstance he is faced with should "strive his utmost to obtain Allah's consent." Allah's instruction on this matter is related in the following verse:

**... So compete with each other in doing good. Every one of you will return to Allah ... (Surat al-Ma'ida: 48)**

Another verse declares:

**Then We made Our chosen servants inherit the Book. But some of them wrong themselves; some are ambivalent; and some outdo each other in good by Allah's permission. That is the great favor. (Surah Fatir: 32)**

As mentioned in this verse, there are people who are "ambivalent," despite believing in Allah, and there are those who "outdo each other in good." A sincere Muslim strives to hasten in good deeds. Every moment of his life, he struggles to act in ways that please Allah. He uses all his means to become one of the pious servants of Allah.

The difference between those who are ambivalent and those who outdo each other in good could be explained as follows: One is confronted by many events during his lifetime. He is always faced with many options from which to decide how to direct his affairs, what to do when confronted with these events, and what kind of morality to adopt. The choice depends entirely on his conscience. A true believer is extremely careful and cautious of those options that are incompatible with the values of the religion. Thus, he unconditionally refuses such choices and adopts instead that behavior with which he thinks Allah is most pleased, and which will bring him closest to Allah and gain the greatest reward in Paradise. His ability to obey his conscience while making his decision is what makes him acquire sincerity. In the Qur'an, believers who became foremost in good deeds are portrayed in the following way:

**Those who are filled with the fear of their Lord, those who believe in the Signs of their Lord, those who do not associate anything with their Lord, those who give what they have given, their hearts fearful of their return to their Lord—It is those who hasten to good deeds, and they outstrip [others] therein. (Surat al-Muminun: 57-61)**

Even if one is faced with thousands of alternatives, it is simple for him to spot the one pleasing to Allah. This alternative is clear and evident for the one who seeks the means of approaching to Allah and perceives what happens to him with the eyes of faith. For instance, when one is forced to choose a way to spend his day, he will be faced with numerous alternatives. He may spend the entire day by being engaged in sports' activities or watching television at home. He may claim that these activities are pleasing to Allah, as sports are important to maintain health while watching television cultivates him. Surely, exercising and watching television are beneficial and important activities. However, spending an entire day at sports or watching television could not be regarded as conscientious for a true believer if he considered how irreligious trends are becoming more and more prevalent every day; defenseless women, the elderly and children are being killed in Muslim territories, merely for saying, "Our God is Allah"; battles, war and moral degeneracy are widespread. There is no doubt that telling others about the perfection of the morality of the Qur'an, and trying to be the means by which they may attain their heavenly reward in the hereafter, would instead be a more desirable activity. This is a responsibility to be assumed by each and every Muslim. All who choose this alternative will be performing a pious deed and a religious service for the sake of his life in the next world. But, apart from this, he will also be gaining a heavenly reward for conveying the religion by conforming to the provisions of the verse, as well as being the means for the salvation of others.

Allah offers the following example:

**Do you make the giving of water to the pilgrims and looking after the Masjid al-Haram the same as believing in Allah and the Last Day and struggling in the Way of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. Allah does not guide wrongdoing people. Those who believe and make pilgrimage and struggle in the Way of Allah with their wealth and themselves have a higher rank with Allah. They are the ones who are victorious. (Surat at-Tawba: 19-20)**

As is apparent from these verses, the giving of water to pilgrims or looking after the Sacred Mosque are also good deeds suitable for obtaining Allah's consent. However, it must be stressed that believers who limit their religious duties to these deeds, in spite of possessing other responsibilities, should not fool themselves into thinking that these deeds are sufficient. These deeds are found to be inadequate when they are compared to

the acts of others who fight by sacrificing their belongings and lives for Allah's sake. It would not be sincere to prefer less commendable deeds when one thinks that there are some more in conformity with the morality of the Qur'an. This implies that he is not making full use of his conscience, that he is taking his responsibility lightly, and that he is merely concerned with ensuring his comfort and security. However, to prefer the opportunity to gain Allah's consent to acquiring the things of this world is that which conforms to the teachings of the Qur'an. The difficulty of the deed or the degree to which it opposes one's wishes are of no importance. Such an understanding grants a true believer sincerity. Similarly, pious deeds proffer him with Allah's consent, compassion and reward in Paradise.

## **Expecting Reward Only from Allah**

Anyone desiring to acquire sincerity should be aware of the following fact: He should expect reward for his worldly deeds only from Allah. Any deed done by expecting any recompense other than Allah's consent, compassion and heavenly reward, will diminish his sincerity. A good deed performed to gain material and societal advantages rather than a reward from Allah will bring only loss instead of gain. Even if one had served Allah for years with this mindset, he could never hope to acquire true sincerity until and unless he strove only to gain His consent. However, any religious deed performed without contaminating one's intentions with anything other than Allah's pleasure will certainly result in a great heavenly reward.

In the following verse, Allah announces that believers who do good will be given a great reward:

**This Qur'an guides to the most upright Way and gives good news to the believers who do right actions that they will have a large reward. (Surat al-Isra': 9)**

Allah informs us in another verse that doing good will be rewarded doubly.

**But those of you who are obedient to Allah and His Messenger and act rightly will be given their reward twice over; and We have prepared generous provision for them. (Surat al-Ahzab: 31)**

In his works, Bedüzzaman Said Nursi claims that humankind could only be successful through sincerity, and that people could only acquire sincerity by considering Allah's consent:

*"... That is to say, the only means of salvation and deliverance is sincerity. It is of the greatest importance to gain sincerity. The tiniest act performed with sincerity is*



*preferable to tons of those performed without sincerity. A person should think that what gains sincerity in his actions is doing them purely because they are a Divine command and that their result is Divine pleasure..."<sup>8</sup>*

Bediuzzaman also underlines the fact that affection felt towards a person will only be sincere if it is without expecting something in return and only for Allah's consent:

*"There is sincerity in everything. A jot of love, even, with sincerity is superior to tons of official love for which return is wanted. Someone described this sincere love as follows: 'I do not want a bribe, recompense, return or reward for love, for love which requires a price in return is weak and short-lived.'"<sup>9</sup>*

Anybody wishing to acquire sincerity should clearly grasp this fact. Thus, his efforts will become pious and he would then be able to hope to attain Allah's consent, compassion and heavenly rewards.

However, Satan continually attempts to lead men astray from the straight path and direct them towards seeking benefits other than Allah's consent. Excuses such as, "I am already working to gain Allah's consent, what harm will it do to me if I hope some small personal benefit as well?" "I will gain both Allah's consent and the community's respect," "I will do a good deed, but they will owe me one in return," or "I would make a self-sacrifice, but I hope that everything will be repayed to me" etc., results out of the Satan's efforts. Each one of these thoughts that compel one to seek rewards other than Allah's consent prevents him from acquiring sincerity and of performing pious deeds.

Said Nursi said that sincerity could only be achieved if one is pleased and satisfied with what Allah gives him. The point emphasized here by Bediuzzaman is that one should not only speak out loud of his satisfaction, but also should enjoy deep in his heart the submission of being content and happy with what Allah gives him. Because, he will finally be held responsible for the intentions in his heart in Allah's presence:

*"One should also take as one's guide the quality of preferring others to oneself, the same quality of the Companions that is praised in the Qur'an. For example, when giving a present or performing an act of charity, one should always prefer the recipient to oneself, and without demanding or inwardly desiring any material reward for religious service, know one's act to be purely Allah's grace and not impose a sense of obligation on men. Nothing worldly should be sought in return for religious service, for otherwise sincerity will be lost. Men have many rights and claims, and may even deserve the welfare tax (zakat). But it cannot be demanded. When one receives something, it cannot be said that 'This is the reward for my service.' Rather in perfect contentment one should always prefer to oneself others who are more deserving. Thus manifesting the meaning of 'They prefer others to themselves, though poverty be their lot' (Surat al-Hashr: 9), one may be saved from this terrible danger and gain sincerity."<sup>10</sup>*

In yet another of his works, Bediuzzaman stressed the importance of receiving all of the rewards in the hereafter by saying *"This world is made for service, not for receiving remuneration. The remuneration, fruits, lights of pious deeds are in the next world.*

*Bringing those everlasting fruits into this world and wishing to have them here means making the next world dependent upon this one. Thus the sincerity of that pious deed is harmed, and its light is extinguished. Yes, those fruits are not desired, intended. Any man granted one should give thanks to Allah by thinking that it is granted for encouragement."*<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, all recompenses other than Allah's consent hoped for by mankind belong to this world and represent the preference of this world to the hereafter. Such persons, who enjoy these worldly benefits may be deprived of them in the hereafter. Whereas, a person who performs pious deeds by aiming at acquiring only Allah's consent, and who keeps his intentions untainted will be granted by Allah blessings both in this world and the hereafter. Allah gives the following good news to believers:

**Anyone who acts rightly, male or female, being a believer, We will give them a good life and We will recompense them according to the best of what they did. (Surat an-Nahl: 97)**

In the Qur'an, there are many examples highlighting the supreme morality of the prophets in this regard. In the verses of the Qur'an, it is told that the prophets informed their communities that "they did not demand any reward other than Allah's consent for their service":

**[Hud said:] My people! I do not ask you for any wage for it. My wage is the responsibility of Him who brought me into being. So will you not use your intellect? (Surah Hud: 51)**

**[Nuh said:] My people! I do not ask you for any wealth for it. My wage is the responsibility of Allah alone. I will not chase away those who believe. They are surely going to meet their Lord. However, I see you as ignorant people. (Surah Hud: 29)**

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi also reminded that one could only hope to acquire sincerity by wanting to imitate the superior morality of the prophets:

*"... Many may be candidates for the same position; many hands may stretch out for each moral and material reward that is offered. Hence it is that conflict and rivalry arise; concord is changed into discord, and agreement into dispute. Now the cure and remedy for this appalling disease is sincerity. Sincerity may be attained by preferring the worship of Allah to the worship of one's own soul, by causing Allah's pleasure to vanquish the pleasure of the soul and the ego, and thus manifesting the meaning of the verse: **'Verily my reward is from Allah alone'** (Surah Hud: 29) by renouncing the material and moral reward to be had from men and thus manifesting the meaning of the verse:*

***'Naught is incumbent on the Messenger but conveying the message' (Surat al-Ma'ida: 99);*** and by knowing that such matters as goodly acceptance, and making a favorable impression, and gaining the attention of men are Allah's concern and a favor from Him, and that they play no part in conveying the message, which is one's own duty, nor are they necessary for it, nor is one charged with gaining them—by knowing this a person will be successful in gaining sincerity, otherwise it will vanish."<sup>12</sup>

## **Freeing Oneself from the Need of the Opinions of Others and Seeking only Allah's Consent**

In one of his works treating the conditions to be fulfilled to acquire sincerity, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi highlighted the importance of cleansing one's self from the need of acceptance from others and turning only to obtain Allah's consent, by saying, *"You should seek Divine pleasure in your actions. If Almighty Allah is pleased, it is of no importance even should the whole world be displeased. If He accepts an action and everyone else rejects it, it has no effect. Once His pleasure has been gained and He has accepted an action, even if you do not ask it of Him, should He wish it and His wisdom requires it, He will make others accept it. He will make them consent to it too. For this reason, the sole aim in this service should be the direct seeking of Divine pleasure."*<sup>13</sup> This example is of great consequence in understanding the meaning of sincerity. It stresses that once Allah assents, nothing matters, even if the whole world were to turn in opposition to you. Besides, Allah controls the hearts of them all. If He so willed, then He makes them all to agree with you.

On the other hand, if Allah does not give His assent, then it is unimportant whether the whole world were to give theirs. Any true believer knows with certainty that if he earns only the assent of people it is not worth anything in Allah's presence, and that he will have acquired nothing on his way to the next world, unless Allah willed otherwise. Those who had assented may well be great in number, or powerful in terms of wealth or authority. Yet, these beings are all weak, and proceed through Allah's permission, and will one day lose their power and might after having decomposed in the earth. For this reason, the support of even large groups will not be beneficial in the hereafter. Only Allah is Everlasting and worthy of granting consent. It is only by comprehending this truth that one can acquire the understanding of lasting sincerity. He should turn towards acquiring Allah's assent by freeing himself from the "opinions of others." In the Qur'an, Allah describes this with a metaphor:

**Allah has made a metaphor for them of a man owned by several partners in dispute with one another and another man wholly owned by a single man. Are they the same? Praise be to Allah! The fact is that most of them do not know. You will die and they too will die. (Surat az-Zumar: 29-30)**

In the Qur'an, seeking the consent of others besides Allah is described as "idolatry (*shirk*)" or "ascribing partners to Allah." In the above-mentioned verse, Allah compares the one who seeks the consent of others and ascribes partners to Allah to a man owned by several partners in dispute with one another. He also compares the one of faith who firmly serves Allah with the one wholly owned by a single man. Allah reminds us that all

beings other than Him will surely meet their end some day. Thus, He invites people to ponder the importance of seeking only His consent.

Therefore, one should guard against the vain desires of his inner self, and evaluate himself sincerely without letting his lower-self deceive him. One of the strongest inclinations of one's lower-self is the desire to acquire the approbation of others, as opposed to complying with the morality of the Qur'an. Likewise, many people act the way they do not because they like or approve of it, but to be appreciated by their peers. In other words, they strive to increase their status in society. Therefore, the primary motive in their lives becomes the "desire to acquire the consent of others."

Many of you have no doubt often heard people saying such things as "What will people say?", "How could we explain this to others?", "We have become the laughingstock of the neighborhood" or "Now we can never go out in public again."

In general, these reactions stem from attaching too much importance to what people say, and think. Sometimes people feel the pangs of their conscience, not because they have committed a wrong, but because others have come to know about it. However, if a wrong is committed, the fact that Allah knows about it is truly what matters. And, once again, one should turn only to Allah to seek repentance. When one feels no responsibility whatsoever towards Allah for committed errors, but feels ashamed or embarrassed in front of others, then it is clear that he accords more importance to the consent of other people than that of Allah's. When outside, such people fail to be as committed to fulfilling religious duties as they are when at home. Excessively concerned with others' opinions, they prefer to gain their consent to Allah's.

Their behavior differs when they visit the seaside or a wealthier neighborhood. Their morality also varies when they are with Muslims or when they visit other cities or countries. From time to time, ruled by such a way of thinking, they may even neglect to pay sufficient attention to the worship of Allah. However, a sincere person never behaves in such a way. Wherever he goes, or whomever he sees, he remains committed in his devotion because of his fear of Allah. The Qur'an calls attention to the fact that no conditions or circumstances could ever influence the minds of true Muslims, as follows:

**[There are men who are] not distracted by trade or commerce from the remembrance of Allah and the establishment of prayer and the payment of the welfare tax; fearing a day when all hearts and eyes will be in turmoil. (Surat an-Nur: 37)**

Thus, any true believer wishing to acquire sincerity should completely free himself from the worry of "what would people say." Such a concern is well entrenched in ignorant communities. Hence, one can never experience pure sincerity, as long as he holds on to the need for other people's approval.

One should always be sincere in his intentions and seek purely turn to Allah's consent in order to acquire sincerity. The fact that people grant him their assents would in no way be beneficial for him unless Allah wishes so. Yet, one who earns the consent, support, love and approval of Allah has already acquired the support that all these people can provide. If he behaves sincerely, Allah will enable him to lead the best of lives, both in the world and in the hereafter, provide a means of support that no human being can provide, and grant him a friendship incomparable to any friendship among humans. In one of his works, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi also highlighted this important fact as follows:

*"... The divine assent is sufficient. If He is your beloved, then everything is your beloved. If He is not your beloved, then the applause of the entire world is utterly worthless. The assent and approbation of people if sought along with such an otherworldly deed shall cancel that deed. If preferred, they shall destroy the sincerity of the said deed. If they are tempting, then they shall remove its purity."*<sup>14</sup>

*"O lower self, if you acquired your Creator's assent with your piety and devotion, then it shall be sufficient and there shall be no need to look for people's assent. If the people agree and accept on Allah's behalf, then it is good. If they act to gain worldly blessings, then it shall be utterly worthless. Because they are weak servants, just like you. Preferring the second option shall mean idolatry. If a man applying to the sultan for a business matter suckles the sultan, then the said matter shall be settled. If not, there shall be many troubles and inconvenient situations with the preferential treatment of the people. In any case, the sultan's permission is obligatory. And this permission depends upon his assent"*<sup>15</sup>

## **Strengthening One's Conscience**

Conscience is a power entrusted by Allah with the task of showing mankind the right way. Until the end of their lives, it warns people about the evil in their souls, the incitements of the devil, and all other kinds of behavior disapproved by the Qur'an. It inspires in one the means to please Allah and act in accordance with the Qur'an. Whatever the circumstance, one who listens to the inner voice of his conscience will be able to achieve sincerity. Sincerity means the ability to use one's conscience in the most effective way. It also implies that one should never abandon his conscience, even under the opposition of his lower-self or outside influences.

For this very reason, one who wishes to acquire sincerity should first and foremost determine whether he is making good use of his conscience. If he suppresses his conscience from time to time, does not listen to its voice, and intentionally behaves in a way to please his lower-self, then he is not using his conscience in compliance with the Qur'an. More importantly, as announced in the verse which states, **"In fact, man is**

**evidence against himself, though he puts forth his excuses," (Surat al-Qiyama: 14-15)** each man intuitively knows that the voice whispering in his ear is the voice of his conscience, and also what excuses he sets forth to be able to ignore that voice.

Conscience is a great blessing and gift to humanity. As expressed by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi as, *"Even if the mind goes on holiday and neglects the opinion, the conscience could never forget its Creator. Even if it denies its own lower self, it sees Him, thinks of Him, and heads towards Him"*<sup>16</sup> or *"... The Creator having two windows in each conscience shall cause His skill to always manifest itself in human hearts"*<sup>17</sup>, the conscience is never caught unawares, even if the man himself is unaware. One's conscience never becomes distracted by the inner-self, even if the person himself does. One's conscience never acts insincerely, or obeys the devil, even if the person does. In brief, one could intentionally or unintentionally commit errors, but his conscience never strays from the straight path or commits errors.

However, one's ability to listen to one's conscience may diminish. If one acts unconcerned to the voice of his conscience, which invites him to the straight path, and if he makes a habit of suppressing this voice, then he will weaken his conscience's influence, and will cause his ability to listen to it to become dull. Even though his conscience warns a person and calls him to do the right thing, he would no longer be swayed by its voice. He would no longer listen to it or consider it significant. Therefore, many types of behavior, which would in no way be accepted by a true believer's conscience, start to by-pass his conscience. Such a person no longer feels the pangs of his conscience while violating the Qur'anic rules. He may behave contrary to Allah's consent, and follow the Devil. He performs deeds unapproved of by the Qur'an without concern. For instance, during war, most people feel great discomfort and uneasiness when they watch defenseless women and children die. They wish to be able to do something to help them. However, in the coming days, reading the same articles and seeing the same scenes over and over in the newspapers, tend to dull one's conscience. From then on, news about death or cruelty no longer influences him. He no longer feels any worry nor is he conscientious of any responsibility. This change clearly marks the dulling of his conscience. Though, in such case, it is no longer impossible to speak of untainted sincerity.

In order to acquire sincerity, first and foremost, one should ensure that he is sensitive to his conscience, as guided by the Qur'an. This is only possible through an increase in one's fear of Allah. One should consider profoundly that Allah hears and sees him, everywhere and at all times. He keeps track of all of his deeds; and will one day call him to account for them. He should strive to comprehend clearly that death could come upon him in just a matter of moments, that he may as well find himself giving account for himself in Allah's presence. He may be faced with the torment in Hell if he had failed to live up to the level of morality indicated by Allah and to make good use of his conscience. If he succeeds in letting these important facts of the Qur'an penetrate well

and deeply within his heart, then the dullness of his conscience will be replaced by a conscientious sensitivity. Such sensitivity may, in turn, enable him to act sincerely by listening to the voice of his conscience, whatever the circumstances.

## **Comprehending that Life of this World is Temporary**

Throughout the world, all people, without exception, talk about or at least think about one issue at one point in their lives: living a long life, and to avoid dying if at all possible... Scientists have been devoting serious effort to this end for many centuries, and have tried to find formulas to make people live a longer life. However, to this day, no progress has been made. Hence, with the verse, **"We did not give any human being before you immortality. And if you die, will they then be immortal? Every self will taste death. We test you with both good and evil as a trial. And you will be returned to Us," (Surat al-Anbiya': 34-35)** Allah instructs us that each person was created mortal, a fact which each will certainly face at his appointed time.

Regardless of the fact that people refrain from thinking or accepting the reality of death, the truth is that mankind is mortal. In any case, this worldly life is exceedingly short and transient. Each one is sent to this world in order to be tested for a period of time ranging from sixty to seventy years. Therefore, it would be a great mistake for anyone to base his plans on this worldly life alone, to accept this short-lived sojourn as his true life, and to forget the hereafter where he will live forever.

This fact stands out clear and simple so that all can easily comprehend it. Yet, as indicated in the following verse: **"He Who created death and life to test which of you is best in action. He is the Almighty, the Ever-Forgiving," (Surat al-Mulk: 2)** Allah adorned this world in order to create this environment in which man will be tested. One should not be deceived by the fact that some people compete with each other to maximize their enjoyment of these worldly blessings. Because, as the verses of the Qur'an indicate, those who live in negligence could in no way be deemed a group one should measure up to. Those, who strive to accumulate and heap up belongings, sacrifice their beliefs in order to acquire authority, and who play roles to earn the appreciation or approbation of others, are in fact running after illusory ideals. To suppose that this worldly life is real, and to run hopelessly after mundane benefits and rewards, is just as illogical, comical and humiliating as mistaking the scenes of a play for reality.

However, it should always be kept in mind that, not only those who devote themselves to this worldly life, but also those who expend effort to acquire benefits both in this world and the hereafter, are deluded. The life of this world was created as a blessing for mankind. While they are here, people should make the best possible use of its many splendors, and enjoy its many blessings. Yet, one should never idealize nor run



after these blessings with excessive desire or ambition. He should utilize them all to live according to the religion in the best possible manner, to appreciate Allah, and to give thanks, after having recognized that which has been bestowed upon him by Allah. Acting in accordance with such reasoning as, "I can lead a life both to gain Allah's consent and to make the best use of the benefits of the worldly life," would be a thought-pattern damaging to one's sincerity.

In the following verse, referring to some of His prophets, Allah reminds mankind that the behavior of those who keep solely the hereafter in mind are the best in merit with Him:

**And remember Our servants Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of true strength and inner sight. We purified their sincerity through sincere remembrance of the Abode. In Our eyes they are among the best of chosen men. (Surah Sad: 45-47)**

Nevertheless, Allah bestows the greatest worldly blessings upon those who sincerely turn to Him and desire the hereafter. Thus, one who distances himself from sincerity by saying, "Let me have both this world and the next," will in the end be deprived of both. One who longs for the hereafter alone will gain the blessings both of this world and the next.

Similarly, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi said, *"The secret of this matter lies in sincerity. The transient pleasures of this world become an ultimate purpose for those who have not succeeded to attain spiritual purity. Thus, the acts done by these people for the hereafter are effected by these pleasures, and their sincerity is tainted. Because worldly objectives, pleasures could not be sought along with deeds to earn otherworldly rewards. If so, sincerity is harmed."*<sup>18</sup> He underlined that the aim to gain both worldly and otherworldly benefits emerge from a soul deficient in its education. Such thinking diminishes sincerity, and prevents one from performing pious deeds aimed at the hereafter.

In another of his works, Said Nursi noted that only those "who assume that the world is a guest house" could hope to lead the best and happiest of lives. Hence, such a frame of mind leads one to acquire Allah's consent and to behave sincerely.

*"I observe that the most fortunate person in this worldly life is he who sees the world as a military guest-house, and submits himself and acts accordingly. Through seeing it in this way, he may rise swiftly to the rank of Allah's pleasure, the highest rank. Such a person will not give the price of a lasting diamond for something of the value of glass that will be broken. He will pass his life uprightly and with pleasure. Yes, the matters to do with this world are like pieces of glass doomed to be broken, while the lasting matters of the Hereafter have the value of flawless diamonds. The intense curiosity, fervent love, terrible greed, and stubborn desires, and other intense emotions*

*in man's nature were given in order to gain the matters of the Hereafter. To direct those emotions in intense fashion towards transitory worldly matters means giving the price of eternal diamonds for pieces of glass that are to be smashed."*<sup>19</sup>

In these words, Bediuzzaman compared this worldly life to a breakable bottle, and the hereafter to a diamond. Anyone acting insincerely, by becoming carried away by this worldly life, will lose his heavenly recompense, just as a man sacrificing a diamond for a worthless glass bottle. On the other hand, one who comprehends that this world is a guest-house will not commit the same error, and will exert himself to the utmost in this world and the next.

## **Thinking about Death, the Day of Judgment and the Hereafter**

Some appraise the significance of death in the wrong way. They consider it as a termination, a putting to an end of the blessings of this worldly life, causing them to say a last farewell to this life, never to return again, and to vanish by decomposition in the earth. However, these thoughts stem from a failure to duly comprehend Allah's existence, as well as the reason for creation of themselves and of this worldly life. They are not aware that their worldly life is nothing but a test to determine the course of their true lives after their passing away. They consider this world as the reality and the hereafter as a delusion. For this reason, they perceive death, which merely ends this worldly life and begins the other worldly one, as a termination.

Due to such ideas, "death" or even "thinking about death" becomes frightening and disturbing to them. They come to believe that they will not be able to find any pleasure in this worldly life, and that all enjoyments will lose their excitement if they start to think about death. Consequently, they aim to derive the most pleasure from the blessings of this world, and to become more immersed in this life, by ignoring the subject of death.

However, whether or not a person thinks about or forgets death, the ultimate result will remain unchanged. As already mentioned by the verse quoted here, each man will certainly meet his death:

**Say: "Death, from which you are fleeing, will certainly catch up with you. Then you will be returned to the Knower of the Unseen and the Visible and He will inform you about what you did." (Surat al-Jumu'a: 8)**

Therefore, the wise approach will be to prepare oneself to encounter this inevitability, rather than avoiding it in neglect or forgetfulness. If one leads a life to gain Allah's consent, then death will bring no loss or harm to him. On the contrary, it will be the means to enable him to start his eternal and more sublime life. If this person has

turned to Allah with a sincere heart, death will not be painful, regardless of its means. In the Qur'an, Allah refers to those **"who gently draw out the souls of the blessed."** (**Surat an-Nazi'at: 1-2**) Therefore, if a man is faithful and sincere, death will not be a painful end for him.

On the other hand, thinking about death is an important means enabling one to derive the greatest pleasure from the blessings of this world. It doesn't diminish his enjoyment of this world, as is misperceived by most. Rather, one can enjoy such blessings in the best possible way only when he comprehends that they are merely transient and temporal, instead of becoming greedily attached to them. In one of his speeches, the Prophet (saas) has indicated the importance of thinking about death as follows:

*"Speak a lot about death. Because this removes a man from the world. And makes him free of sin."*<sup>20</sup>

Besides, death is not an end to life, nor to blessings or to pleasure, as people tend to believe. On the contrary, death is the beginning of the real life; the transition to the real world, where people will live eternally in accordance with the choices they made during their time in this world. If one has appreciated the greatness of Allah, and has lived with this knowledge in mind, then he will spend his eternal life among in Paradise. However, if he has immersed himself in this worldly life, and forgotten about death, the Day of Judgment, and the hereafter, then his eternal residence will be Hell. Refraining from thinking about death while here on this earth will in no way prevent that person from meeting his ultimate destiny.

## **A Man Could Face Death Anywhere and at Any Moment**

Thinking about death and coming to terms with this truth are essential matters of consideration if one is to always act sincerely and in a conscientious manner. One who sincerely believes in the existence of Allah and the hereafter clearly knows that Allah controls not only life but also death. No one could delay nor advance his end. Death will come when Allah approves and under circumstances that He pleases. As indicated by the verse, **"Every nation has an appointed time. When their time comes, they cannot delay it a single hour or bring it forward"** (**Surat al-A'raf: 34**), one who is aware of this truth behaves with a clear mind, knowing he may have to face death at any time. As already mentioned, death will certainly come by Allah's will. It does not depend on one's age or health or whether or not he has acted cautiously. By the Will of Allah, a sudden accident, an unanticipated illness, or even a very minor cause could bring one's term to an end.

Anyone, who is capable of understanding the significance of death in its numerous facets, is aware that he could meet his death anywhere and at any moment. His life could come to a sudden end. That understanding directs him to always act sincerely, and to make the best possible use of his wisdom, conscience and abilities. He acts with the clear conscience that even in the next moment he may find himself having to account for his deeds in front of Allah. Thus, at any moment, he could be sent to Paradise or Hell. He spends his life in this world with faith and sincerity, as if he has already been to the hereafter to see Paradise and Hell, and has been fully assured that they are real and near. He passes each moment with a profound fear of Allah, as if he were to meet the angels of death coming to take his life, the book containing his deeds were to be opened, and as if he was awaiting the decision of whether he was to be sent to Paradise or Hell. He guides his behavior by always remembering the nearness and horror of the torment of Hell. He constantly retains the fear of possibly experiencing this torment forever. On the other hand, he also becomes filled with the hope of escaping Hell, and living an eternal life in Paradise as a servant befriended by Allah. He acts by knowing with certainty that vain excuses, such as "I did not know," "I did not understand," "I did not realize," "I forgot," "I became distracted along with other people who were unaware," "I behaved irresponsibly," "I followed the Devil" or "I thought that Allah would surely forgive me," "I was performing my religious duties and I thought this would be enough," put forth on the Day of Judgment before Allah will be useless.

Such awareness reveals itself in a strong conscience, firm comprehension, advanced wisdom and a consistent sincerity. As one knows that the advent of death is only a matter of time, he never puts off performing any good deed, never procrastinates or behaves lazily, under any circumstances, and never acts unenthusiastically. He considers that his life may not be long enough to be able to perform a deed that he plans to realize in the near future, whether in the next hour or the following day. He is aware that he might be greatly regretful in the hereafter for these incomplete or postponed deeds.

He knows that he must behave with an understanding of sincerity like that of the prophets. He avoids being among those who feel regret in the hereafter, and who will utter **"I wish I had done more pious deeds, come to the aid of more people, behaved with high morality and led the pious and Muslims, devoted myself to Allah's religion more firmly, strove with greater effort to inform people about the morality of religion, ordered people to do good and prevented them from doing wrong, did not put off making myself ready for the hereafter instead of being carried away by worldly concerns, when I had the opportunity to become one of those who has succeeded today."**

As he may face death at any instant, the more righteous deeds he performs sincerely, the more profit he reaps in return. He is aware that he must act with such devotion and sincerity in order to evade a dreadful end like Hell. He is conscious that

behaving irresolutely, being reluctant to do something, or preferring the lesser among finer and better alternatives will cause him to remorse in the hereafter. His profound awareness and sincerity shine through under all circumstances; he adopts a sincere attitude in his approach unto Allah and in his respect, affection and genuineness towards Muslims, his fine morality, his self-sacrifices, his hard work, his worship, his prayers, that which he spends with his wealth and person, his words, his enthusiasm and his vigor.

One could only hope to acquire such superior understanding of sincerity if he lived his life continually thinking about death. In his *Treatise*, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi emphasized the benefits of thinking about death as follows:

*"... O my companions in the service of the Qur'an! One of the most effective means of attaining and preserving sincerity is 'contemplation of death.' Yes, like it is worldly ambition that damages sincerity and drives a person to hypocrisy and the world, so it is contemplation of death that causes disgust at hypocrisy and gains sincerity. That is, to think of death and realize that this world is transient, and so be saved from the tricks of the soul. Yes, through the instruction the Sufis and people of truth received from verses of the All-Wise Qur'an like, '**Every soul shall taste death.**' (Surah Al 'Imran: 185) they made the contemplation of death fundamental to their spiritual journeyings, and dispelled the illusion of eternity, the source of worldly ambition. They imagined and conceived of themselves as dead and being placed in the grave. Through prolonged thought the evil-commanding soul becomes saddened and affected by such imagining and to an extent gives up its far-reaching ambitions and hopes. There are numerous advantages in this contemplation. The Hadith the meaning of which is, "Frequently mention death which dispels pleasure and makes it bitter" teaches this contemplation.*

*However, since our way is not the Sufi path but the way of reality, we are not compelled to perform this contemplation in an imaginary and hypothetical form like the Sufis. To do so is anyway not in conformity with the way of reality. Our way is not to bring the future to the present by thinking of the end, but to go in the mind to the future from the present in respect of reality, and to gaze on it. Yes, having no need of imagination or conception, one may look on one's own corpse, the single fruit on the tree of this brief life. In this way, one may look on one's own death, and if one goes a bit further, one can see the death of this century, and going further still, observe the death of this world, opening up the way to complete sincerity."*<sup>21</sup>

With these words, Bediuzzaman recommends people to evaluate death with a clearness of mind and maturity as if they had really been put into their graves, seen their own deaths and funerals, and observed the death of the world from the hereafter. He also accentuates the fact that thinking about death can constitute an important means to purify oneself from all kinds of behavioral and moral weaknesses appropriated in the life of this world.



# AVOIDING ATTITUDES HARMING SINCERITY

In previous chapters, we underlined the characteristics that anyone wishing to acquire sincerity should possess. To this end, the second important issue is to purify oneself from all manners of thinking "impeding sincerity" or "totally obfuscating sincerity." Hence, as Bediuzzaman Said Nursi stressed, by saying *"My brothers! There are many obstacles before great works of good. Satans put up a powerful struggle against those who assist those works. One has to rely on the strength of sincerity in the face of these obstacles and satans. You should avoid things which harm sincerity the same as you avoid snakes and scorpions. In accordance with the words of Joseph (as),"****Nor do I absolve my own self [of blame]; the [human] soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Sustainer do bestow His mercy," (Surah Yusuf:53)*** *the evil-commanding soul should not be relied on. Do not let egotism and the soul deceive you!"*<sup>22</sup>, the devil is the enemy of those aiming at acquiring sincerity and attaining true genuineness. He wants to lead them astray, and to interfere with their sincerity by encouraging the evil penchants of their souls. Against these determined efforts the devil, any true believer should take the morality of the Prophet Yusuf (as) as a model. He doesn't yield to his lower-self and ardently avoids all its commands. In the following chapters, we will edify the true believer by discussing these attitudes that destroy sincerity and the ways to be purified from them.

## Cleansing of the Evil of the Lower-self

As the test of this life entails—unless otherwise willed by Allah—the lower-self was created to continuously invite men to commit evil deeds. One of these evil deeds is to act insincerely. In order to destroy sincerity, the lower-self directs itself in a way as to encourage all kinds of evil thoughts. As indicated in the verse quoted below, the wicked side of the soul is comprised of "incessant sin and evil."

**And the self and what proportioned it and inspired it with depravity or with its sense of duty. (Surat ash-Shams: 7-8)**

However, Allah also inspires man ways to avoid this incessant evil and to cleanse and purify his soul.

The subsequent verse maintains that those who corrupt their souls will fail and those who purify them will be among those who succeed as follows:

**He who purifies it has succeeded, he who covers it up has failed. (Surat ash-Shams: 9-10)**

Certainly, the one who aims to acquire sincerity and to be among the pious servants of Allah should make such a choice. Allah calls attention to the genuine efforts made by the true believers in the following verse:

**And among the people there are some who give up everything, desiring the good pleasure of Allah. Allah is Ever-Gentle with His servants. (Surat al-Baqara: 207)**

However, what is important is that one should conduct himself with honesty and sincerity, and should in no way pity nor support the wicked side of his soul. Thus, he must train himself to this effect, purifying his soul of evil, and rendering it submissive. Therefore, he should never confuse the wicked side for his real soul, nor ever support it. He should know that the wicked side of his soul is always wrong, opposes the Qur'an, and acts as the devil's speaker. One should evaluate anything received from it with this understanding.

Just as one feels no pity towards another person's lower-self, or feel compelled to defend it or prove that it is in the right, he should act similarly in regards to his own self. He should treat the wicked side of his soul as an alien and take opposing side to it. He should admonish it when it encourages evil, and should listen to his conscience's voice, without submitting to the evil compulsion. Only in this way could he detect any deceptive methods used by his lower-self, evaluate it objectively, and judge it on the basis of the Qur'an. Only then could he acquire sincerity and Allah's consent. Allah informs us of this truth in a verse as follows:

**But as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and forbade the lower self its appetites, the Garden will be his refuge. (Surat an-Nazi'at: 40-41)**

## **Preferring Another Believer's Soul over One's Own**

One of the attitudes that harms sincerity is the "greediness and selfishness" innate in one's self. Allah made light of this tendency with the words:

**Truly man was created headstrong—desperate when bad things happen, begrudging when good things come. (Surat al-Ma'arij: 19-21)**



In order to acquire sincerity, one should be superior over this negative aspect of his soul, and instead replace it with self-sacrifice and self-denial. As Allah informs us in the verse below, to be successful, one must purify himself from the greediness of his soul:

**... It is the people who are safe-guarded from the avarice of their own selves who are successful. (Surat at-Taghabun: 16)**

It is easy for someone to train his soul in this way. Not believing himself to be self-sufficient, and always being suspicious of the wicked side of one's soul, is what is most necessary. However, the vices of selfishness and greed should not be misunderstood. In ignorant communities, where people lack fear of Allah and faith in the hereafter, selfishness and greed are a philosophy of life. These people perceive as vigilance placing their needs above others and defending merely their own wishes; and assume this to be a good quality. Hence, they never take into consideration their responsibility towards Allah. In light of the verses of the Qur'an, it would be wrong to attribute greedy and selfish passions only to these people and limit the issue to ignorant people alone. These people practice this morality to the extreme. However, some people who are not commonly thought of as greedy or selfish could secretly or openly harbor these tendencies in themselves. Such tendencies prevent them from acting sincerely under any condition, and of being sincere. It is truly very simple for one to purify his soul of these evils. For this purpose, he will only have to practice the morality of the Qur'an to its fullest and most perfect extent.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, called attention to the solution revealed in a verse of the Qur'an as follows:

*"Gain complete sincerity in accordance with the verse, '**... [they] prefer them to themselves even if they themselves are needy...**' (Surat al-Hashr:9)"<sup>23</sup>*

In His verse, Allah stresses that true believers prefer their brothers before themselves, even if they are themselves hungry or needy; and that they stood by their brothers, against themselves, when they had to make a choice. Muslims living in Medina were not troubled to help their fleeing brothers from Mecca. They provided them shelter and food, regardless of their limited means. On the contrary, they were happy and rejoiced at having beaten the selfish and niggardly tendencies of their souls and given priority to their brothers for Allah's sake. In that situation, they clearly knew that such behavior was the most noble, conscientious and sincere, and in compliance with the Qur'an. Moreover, Allah has and will increase their reward for their self-sacrifice many times, both in this world and the hereafter. Allah announces the reward to be granted to those who practice such morality as follows:

**If you set apart for Allah a goodly portion, He will double it for you and forgive you; and Allah is the Multiplier (of rewards), Forbearing. (Surat at-Taghabun: 17)**

## **Not to be Deceived by the Temptations of One's Lower-soul**

If one were to consider the matter honestly, he would see that throughout his day he is constantly being confronted with the incitements of his lower-self. These incitements of the lower-self encourage him not to abandon his worldly inclinations. For instance, Allah has indicated in one of His verses that spending in charity out of what one loves is what is best. Only in this way can a person become truly good:

**You will not attain true goodness until you give of what you love. Whatever you give away, Allah knows it. (Surah Al 'Imran: 92)**

Though he may sacrifice everything he owns, one could still be passionately attached to some of his belongings, thus, be reluctant to give them up. Or, when he is to share his belongings with a fellow Muslim, he may prefer himself to his brother. He may keep his favorite belongings for himself and leave only the remaining to his brother. However, his conscience would nevertheless remind him that spending out of what he loves is more worthy. However, such desire in himself will prevent him from behaving in accordance to his better moral judgement and acting sincerely.

However, true good is in offering one's favorite possessions immediately when he sees that another is in need. If his possession had been so dear to him, then the other person will enjoy and be pleased with it as equally. Therefore, keeping one's favorite things for oneself and giving away to others only those less desirable shows that one's soul is not yet fully purified of selfishness. Hence, Allah has called attention to the fact that this attitude should first be established before one could hope to attain goodness.

If one prefers the good of another to his own, always looks out for the betterment, health and happiness of others, then he is said to be sincere. For instance, if a difficult and tasking job is to be performed, he should come forward and volunteer for it. It is insincere to avoid a difficult task and expect others to take care of it. What is more befitting to a Muslim is to complete such jobs secretly, without there being anybody to thank him. As indicated in the verse "**race each other to the good**," what is truly representative of sincerity is to immediately embark upon a task and to complete it in the best possible manner. Such an act is also a sign that the said person prefers his brothers to himself. He chooses difficulty over comfort and ease, with thoughts of self-sacrifice such as, "Let me be tired instead of my Muslim brother," "Let me be burdened

with the difficulty of this work while he rests," or "Let myself and not he spend the time to do this." In this way he may hope to gain Allah's consent with this sincere behavior.

In one of his works, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi underlined the goodness of giving precedence to other Muslims when it comes to innocent, harmless benefits in order to be free of the selfish passions of the soul by saying, *"Choose your brothers' souls to your own soul in honor, rank, acclaim, in the things your soul enjoys like material benefits. Even in the most innocent, harmless benefits like informing a needy believer about one of the subtle, fine truths of belief. If possible, encourage one of your companions who does not want to, to inform him, so that your soul does not become conceited. If you have a desire like, 'Let me tell him this pleasant matter so I'll gain the reward,' it surely is not a sin and there is no harm in it, but the meaning of sincerity between you could be damaged."*<sup>24</sup> Thus, he reminds the Muslims that sacrificing that which is pleasing to one's soul, such as honor, reputation, authority, material benefits, and affection, should become a means to acquire sincerity. For instance, a believer can remain in the background and let one of his brothers receive the attention if he were to make a good suggestion or say something important.

Any man who avoids these incitements from his soul, and strives to gain sincerity and Allah's consent, will be welcomed by Allah and be successful in his endeavors. Allah gives the good news to the believers as follows:

**But as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and forbade the lower self its appetites, the Garden will be his refuge. (Surat an-Na'ziat: 40-41)**

## **Conquering Greed and Jealousy**

Allah informs us in the following verse that human soul is swayed by greed as follows:

**... people are prone to selfish greed. If you do good and do your duty, Allah is aware of what you do. (Surat an-Nisa: 128)**

Thus, as with other evils, we are all prone to struggle internally with feelings of jealousy and greed. One should strive to purify himself of them. Otherwise, he will never be able to duly practice the morality of the Qur'an and to fully gain Allah's consent. Similarly, in another verse of the Qur'an, it is indicated that people disagreed among each other and strayed from the straight path because of the "envy" they felt against each other, in spite of having received the Book guiding them to the straight path:

**Mankind was a single community. Then Allah sent out prophets bringing good news and giving warning, and with them He sent down the Book with truth to**

**decide between people regarding their differences. Only those who were given it differed about it, after the Clear Signs had come to them, envying one another. Then, by His permission, Allah guided those who believed to the truth of that about which they had differed. Allah guides whoever He wills to a straight path. (Surat al-Baqara: 213)**

This instance related in the Qur'an is of a great importance for aiding people to understand the extent of harm jealousy can cause. Although being aware of and seeing the right path, one could take the wrong turn, merely as a result of jealousy. Feelings of jealousy and greed prevent one from thinking rationally and of properly evaluating events. When confronted with certain situations, one overcome by such feelings could in no way react according to the values of the Qur'an. He could not speak of what pertains to Allah, or act in a sincere and genuine manner. Under such circumstances, he would not be ruled by his mind and conscience, but rather by his lower-soul, taking on the role as the devil's advocate. His lower-self directs him towards the morality of evil.

In order to be purified of these vices, one should, first and foremost, understand that feelings of jealousy and greed are contrary to religion. These feelings emerge from worldly values. People become jealous of the material or moral virtues of others, and therefore vie against them. Whereas, the true believers are those who refrain from becoming excessively attached to worldly possessions. Essentially, they long only for the hereafter. A true believer knows for certain that worldly benefits are granted by Allah, and will again be taken back by Him when the time comes. Although he may derive benefits from them in a way that pleases Allah, he never becomes passionately devoted to them. He does not become consumed with ambition for more. He gives thanks to Allah for what He bestowed upon him, and knows how to be content with what he has. And, as stated in the subsequent verse, if Allah for some reason bestows more of His blessings upon another, he knows that this is for a purpose:

**The Keys of the heavens and earth belong to Him. He expands the provision of anyone He wills or restricts it. He has knowledge of all things. (Surat ash-Shura: 12)**

## **Thinking About the Hereafter Eliminates Jealousy and Greed**

Each person is being tested through the blessings that Allah either makes ample and straightens for him. Thus, those who approach Allah with gratitude differ from those who behave ungratefully by abandoning the morality of the Qur'an. Hence, it is impossible for one to become greedy or jealous of the worldly blessings of another if he

comprehends that this worldly life is an ephemeral place created merely to test people. For instance, being jealous of another because he is rich, handsome or endowed with authority is not in accord with the morality of the Qur'an. One, who lives by the high level of morality of the Qur'an, knows clearly that Allah will bestow great blessings upon him in the hereafter. Thus, he lives with the peace of mind of that awareness of this truth brings. However, those who fail to understand fate, the real nature of this worldly life, the fact that Allah is the Creator of all things and to put their faith in Him, get carried away by feelings of jealousy and greed. Any true believer well aware of that truth, refrains from committing such wrongdoing.

Even if it is for traits reflecting the sublime morality of the Qur'an, a true believer carefully avoids becoming jealous. Instead, he will desire to adopt the fine morality of that fellow Muslim. His wish to "keep-up" never leads to greediness. In compliance with the verse of the Qur'an that states, **"race each other to the good,"** he strives with sincere effort to become among the beloved servants of Allah, and to practice the morality of the Qur'an in the most ideal manner. Nevertheless, this competition is not based upon feelings of jealousy or rivalry. This is a competition aimed at approaching closer to Allah rather than human beings. Similarly, such a person also wishes for other believers to be among Allah's most beloved servants, just like he does for himself. Not only does he pray for this sincerely, but also strives for it.

True believers are aware that, like all creatures, they are weak. They fear Allah, and they do not refrain from admitting to their weaknesses when faced with their Lord. A verse of Surat al-A'raf enlightens us this truth:

**Say: "I possess no power to help or harm myself, except as Allah wills. If I had had knowledge of the Unseen, I would have sought to gain much good and no evil would have touched me. I am only a warner and a bringer of good news to people who believe." (Surat al-A'raf: 188)**

One who places more importance on the hereafter than the worldly things never adopts a morality that is based on the opinion of others. He strives to gain only Allah's consent. Thus, he never tries to be better than others, gain esteem or to secure a place among them and achieve an important role in society. As understood from the issues mentioned up to this point, if one recognizes such tendencies or deficiency in himself, he should then be aware that he is practicing a morality which will ultimately harm his sincerity and prevent him from gaining Allah's consent.

In his works, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi dealt profoundly upon this issue, and stressed a number of important points in order to guide the true believers. In his commentary on sincerity, he described rivalry among believers as follows:

*"In matters relating to religion and the hereafter there should be no rivalry, envy or jealousy; indeed there can be none of these in truth. The reason for envy and jealousy is*

*that when several hands reach out after a single object, when several eyes are fixed on a single position, when several stomachs hunger for a single loaf of bread, first envy arises as a result of conflict, dispute and rivalry, and then jealousy. Since many people desire the same thing in the world, and because the world, narrow and transitory as it is, cannot satisfy the limitless desires of man, people become rivals of each other. However, ... It is ... clear that there is no cause for rivalry in the hereafter, nor can there be rivalry. In that case, neither should there be any rivalry with respect to those good deeds that entail reward in the hereafter; there is no room for jealousy here. The one jealous here is either a hypocrite, seeking worldly result through the performance of good deeds, or a sincere but ignorant devotee, not knowing the true purpose of good deeds and not comprehending that sincerity is the spirit and foundation of all good deeds. By cultivating a kind of rivalry and hostility toward Allah's saints, he is in fact placing in doubt the breadth of Allah's compassion...*

*O people of the truth and the path! The service of the truth is like carrying and preserving a great and weighty treasure. Those who carry that trust on their shoulders will be happy and grateful whenever powerful hands rush to their aid. Far from being jealous, one should proudly applaud the superior strength, effectiveness and capacity of those who in upright love come forward to offer their help. Why then look on true brothers and self-sacrificing helpers in a spirit of rivalry, thus losing sincerity?"<sup>25</sup>*

Here, Bediuzzaman has reminded true believers that jealousy and rivalry have no place in the morality of Paradise. Just as rivalry has no place in Paradise, pious deeds aiming to gain Paradise could never be tainted with jealousy or rivalry. True believers are friends, guardians and brothers of each other, both in the life of this world and in the hereafter. Each serves the same purpose. The more they support each other, the more they will be pleasing to Allah. For this reason, what befits a true believer is to help and be proud of the other, rather than being jealous of his noble qualities and competing with him. In all situations, this is what best reflects sincerity. The Prophet (saas) told of the need for this unity, mutual affection and comraderie among true believers as follows:

*"You will observe that the believers are like the parts of the body in relation to each other in matters of kindness, love and affection. When one part of the body is afflicted, the entire body feels it; there is loss of sleep and a fever develops."<sup>26</sup>*

In another one of his works, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi reminded Muslims that true believers could overcome jealousy and rivalry by taking pride in the superior characteristics of each other. He also stressed that each and everybody practicing such morality will leave his own personality aside to dissolve within the morality of the entire Muslim community. Thus, every noble virtue will be attributed to each and every one of them:

*"This is to imagine your brothers' virtues and merits in your own selves, and to thankfully take pride at their glory. The Sufis have terms they use among themselves, 'annihilation in the shaykh, annihilation in the Prophet (saas);' I am not a Sufi, but these*

*principles of theirs make a good rule in our way, in the form of 'annihilation in the brothers.' Among brothers this is called 'tafânî;' that is, 'annihilation in one another.' That is to say, to forget the feelings of one's own carnal soul, and live in one's mind with one's brothers' virtues and feelings. In any event, the basis of our way is brotherhood. It is not the means which is between father and son, or shaykh and follower. It is the means of true brotherhood. At the very most a Master [Ustad] intervenes. Our way is the closest friendship. This friendship necessitates being the closest friend, the most sacrificing companion, the most appreciative comrade, the noblest brother. The essence of this friendship is true sincerity. One who spoils this true sincerity falls from the high pinnacle of this friendship. He may possibly fall to the bottom of a deep depression. There is nothing onto which he may cling in between."*<sup>27</sup>

## **Jealousy and Rivalry Destroy the Power of Believers**

Bediuzzaman also emphasized the harm caused by disagreements arising among believers. He said that, just as disagreements and rivalry destroy the power of believers, agreements and alliance render them even more powerful:

*"... As for the people of neglect and misguidance, in order not to lose the benefits with which they are infatuated and not to offend the leaders and companions they worship for the sake of benefit, in their utter humiliation, abasement and lack of manliness, they practise union at all costs with their companions, however abominable, treacherous and harmful they be, and wholeheartedly agree with their partners in whatever form may be dictated by their common interest. As a result of this wholeheartedness, they indeed attain the benefits desired."*<sup>28</sup>

As understood from the words of Said Nursi, people who do not believe in Allah or in the hereafter could forget the rivalry among them and establish an alliance with each other only to gain more power, worldly benefits and rewards. Their excessive fondness for these benefits could eliminate the jealousy and rivalry among them, and could immediately make them the closest of friends. They hope to benefit from their alliance, and thus reap its rewards.

As even those who deny Allah could form such powerful alliances, only to gain benefits and rewards, it would be impossible for true believers, who aim to gain Allah's consent, to fail to abandon jealousy or rivalry and establish such an alliance. Their enthusiasm to gain Allah's assent can easily overcome the jealousy or rivalry whispered to them by their lower-souls. Most important is that they understand that such disagreements could harm both themselves and their religion. They are reminded that conflicts and disagreements cause their power to diminish.

The Prophet Muhammad (saas) has also expressed that Muslims should always complement the deficiencies of each other and cover their mistakes by saying, "*If anyone covers up a Muslim [his sins], Allah will cover him up [his sins] on the Resurrection Day.*"<sup>29</sup> Otherwise, the unity among them will be eliminated and their power will be diminished. When the power of the Muslims diminishes, those who deny Allah will grow in strength. No Muslim would like to be held accountable for such a thing, just for fulfilling the desires of his lower-self. Essentially, Muslims are expected to practice the morality of the Qur'an to the best of their abilities, to be examples for others, and to encourage them to live according to the religion. It is apparent that one, who hasn't succeeded in overcoming the jealousy or rivalry within him, could not correctly fulfill this responsibility. Therefore, he acts in a way that diminishes the power of the believers and strengthens those who deny Allah. Consequently, such a person is not only a bad example for his friends and family, but also bears a great deal of guilt. Therefore, he should immediately cease to behave in such a fashion and adopt a nobler morality. Only then could he acquire sincerity and attain a level of morality consented by Allah. As Bediuzzaman said, what befits a Muslim is to "establish a genuine alliance with Muslims" in compliance with the verse which states, "**Help one and another in goodness and piety,**" and to keep sincerity alive:

*"The cure and remedy for this disease of discord among the people of truth is to make one's rule of conduct the Divine prohibition contained in this verse: '**Do not fall into dispute, lest you lose heart and your power depart,**' (Surat al-Anfal: 46) and the wise Divine command for social life contained in this verse: '**Work together for the sake of virtue and piety.**' (Surat al-Ma'ida: 2) One must further realize how harmful to Islam dispute is, and how it helps the people of misguidance to triumph over the people of truth, and then, wholeheartedly and self-sacrificingly, join the caravan of the people of truth, with a sense of his own utter weakness and impotence. Finally, one must forget his own person, abandon hypocrisy and pretension, and lay hold of sincerity."*<sup>30</sup>



## Abandoning Arrogance

In this chapter, we discussed that which harms a believer's sincerity, and examined the inclinations of the soul such as rivalry, ambition, and preferring oneself to others. All of these traits of one's lower-self are based upon a much greater evil: Arrogance.

Arrogance is found in one who disdains to worship Allah, by forgetting his weaknesses, despising others, and feeling proud. However, man is a weak creature. He depends upon Allah's power to exist and sustain his existence. Allah is the sole Power Who has created man from nothing, imparted him with spirit, sheltered and fed him, caused him to breathe, and bestowed countless other blessings upon him. Allah is the Lord of the Universe. In spite of the clarity of this truth, one who thinks of himself as a being independent of Him, and believes his qualities and abilities to result from himself, is evidently suffering from a grave self-delusion.

In fact, one has no right to be proud. The truth that Allah could take back all blessings bestowed upon him when He pleases is sufficient evidence. From time to time, we all observe the harm caused by one who behaves proudly on account of his or her physical beauty, knowledge, ability, wealth or social status. We can also observe what becomes of them when they suddenly lose these for any reason. If such qualities had resulted in the person from his or her own doing, then there would be no reason for him or her to lose them. Likewise, Allah creates many afflictions and difficulties in this worldly life to help people understand this truth. He tests mankind through many frailties, such as ageing and illness.

One who comprehends that Allah bestows all he possesses, and that he has no power without His help and assistance, may then discern in return the wisdom of Allah in His creation, and acquire humility by recognizing his own weakness. According to Bediuzzaman, the most important step taken towards acquiring sincerity is to abandon arrogance:

*"To preserve truth from the assaults of falsehood, to abandon the self and its egoism, and give up the mistaken concepts of self-pride, and cease from all insignificant feelings aroused by rivalry. [If these precepts are adhered to], sincerity will be preserved and its function perfectly performed."*<sup>31</sup>

It is necessary to adhere to this morality in order to acquire sincerity. Arrogance causes one to behave in a way as to favor himself rather than Allah. Arrogance means loving one's self more than any other, listening to himself rather than the others, and protecting that which he owns at all cost. Hence, one who is swept away by pride closes his conscience from any warnings. Therefore, as he does not listen to the voice of his conscience, he could in no way behave sincerely.

In the Qur'an, Allah defines the influence of arrogance as follows:

**When he is told to heed Allah, he is seized by pride which drives him to wrongdoing. Hell will be enough for him! What an evil resting-place! (Surat al-Baqara: 206)**

What is truly befitting a believer is to put aside his arrogance and lower-self, and behave according to that which is pleasing to Allah. The following verse reads:

**And among the people there are some who give up everything, desiring the good pleasure of Allah. Allah is Ever-Gentle with His servants. (Surat al-Baqara: 207)**

In Surat al-Qasas Allah informs us of the end met by the tribes who behaved haughtily towards the Messengers sent by Him:

**He said, "I have only been given it because of knowledge I have." Did he not know that before him Allah had destroyed generations with far greater strength than his and far more possessions? The evildoers will not be questioned about their sins. (Surat al-Qasas: 78)**

## **Realizing What is Lost through Arrogance**

It is possible to observe the damage done by arrogance on one's sincerity in every phase of one's life. One claiming to be superior to others is closed against all kinds of criticism, warning or advice coming from them. Even if the other were to remind him of a point he had not considered, he would be influenced adversely by his sense of superiority. Instead of surrendering to truth, he will defend his views, even if they are wrong. Therefore, he becomes insincere, and is ruled by his lower self. However, what exemplifies sincerity is to comply with what the other had said, and surrender without the need to feel superior.

For this purpose, one should, first and foremost, abandon the feelings of his ego which cause arrogance, and refrain from stubbornly defending himself. Only then can he hope to act in compliance with the spirit of the Qur'an and behave sincerely. Likewise, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi reminded the true believer that the most efficient antidote against the ambition to be superior and to be in the right, stemming from arrogance, is to "surrender to the mind of true believers without supporting one's self":

*"The sole remedy for this disease is to accuse your own soul before others raise these charges, and always to take the side of your fellow, not your own soul. The rule of truth and equity established by the scholars of the art of debate is this: "Whoever desires, in debate on any subject, that his own word should turn out to be true, whoever is happy that he turns out to be right and his adversary to be wrong and mistaken—such*

*a person has acted unjustly." Not only that, such a person loses, for when he emerges the victor in such a debate, he has not learned anything previously unknown to him, and his probable pride will cause him loss. But if his adversary turns out to be right, he will have learned something previously unknown to him and thereby gained something without any loss, as well as being saved from pride. In other words, one fair in his dealings and enamoured of the truth will subject the desire of his own soul to the demands of the truth. If he sees his adversary to be right, he will accept it willingly and support it happily."*<sup>32</sup>

Considering one's successes to be achieved merely by virtue of one's self stems from arrogance and destroys sincerity. However, Allah is the One Who has bestowed upon mankind their mind and ability. As stated in the following verse, man knows nothing except what Allah has taught him:

**They said, "Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise." (Surat al-Baqara: 32)**

Man is a weak creature Allah has created from nothing. All of man's powers are the result of the generous gifts and benevolence of Allah. When taking into account the endless wisdom, limitless power and knowledge of Allah, clearly, one who considers having acquired these qualities by himself is in grave error. Carried away by pride, he forgets these realities, and thinks that his success arises out of his own accomplishment. He may become arrogant and insincere. What is more befitting for a true believer is never to consider any of his successes as his own, even if he were the most able, intelligent and perfect man ever to set foot on earth. Arrogance should never take hold of him. If he behaves in a manner by which he takes account of his own weakness, in spite of all these blessings, then Allah will bestow even greater favors upon him. He will make him obtain His consent, compassion and enter Paradise, on account of his sincerity. Yet, most people forget that this worldly life is nothing but a test. They turn to Allah in times of affliction, and yet, act ungratefully when they are granted blessings. They also commit a great error by believing that these blessings are the outcome of their own abilities, and that the success belongs to them alone. In Surat az-Zumar, Allah commands the following:

**When harm touches man he calls on Us. Then when We grant him a blessing from Us he says, "I have only been given this because of my knowledge." In fact it is a trial but most of them do not know it. (Surat az-Zumar: 49)**

Another tendency frequently found among people under the influence of arrogance is the "ambition to lead." The lower-soul tempts a man to act ambitiously even while

performing good and pious deeds, and attempt to destroy his sincerity by putting forth excuses that would seem reasonable. As Said Nursi affirmed, saying: *"Moreover sincerity and adherence to the truth require that one should desire the Muslims to benefit from anyone and at any place they can. To think 'Let them take lessons from me so that I gain the reward' is a trick of the soul and the ego."*<sup>33</sup>, in various circumstances, some people act by deciding that, "I will be the one to complete this job" without taking into account quality of the outcome or the benefits to be gained as a consequence. This attitude, ruled by the desire to lead and arrogance, completely destroys sincerity.

As expressed by Bediuzzaman, who said *"Thinking to oneself 'Let me gain this reward, let me guide these people, let them listen to me,' he takes up a position of rivalry towards the true brother who faces him and who stands in real need of his love, assistance, brotherhood and aid. Saying to oneself, 'Why are my pupils going to him? Why don't I have as many pupils as him?' he falls prey to egoism, inclines to the chronic disease of ambition, loses all sincerity, and opens the door to hypocrisy"*<sup>34</sup>, a peevish man considers his Muslim brothers as his rivals. Unwilling that another be endowed with important responsibilities, and complete his tasks successfully, is to be understood as not wishing anyone else to gain the rewards of Paradise, nor to accept a responsibility which will grant him entry into Paradise. Yet, the noblest attitude according to the Qur'an, that which is most sincere, is to let others earn the access to Paradise and to encourage them to embark on tasks pleasing to Allah.

A Muslim should wish to make others gain the rewards of Paradise and take on noble tasks leading to favor in the hereafter, just as he wishes to perform pious deeds for his own benefit. Turning a good deed into one for the sake of a worldly ambition, by saying "I am the most qualified person to do this job," "Let them see how good I can manage this job, and understand how superior are my qualities," "I will undertake this job in order to acquire a status and prestige among the believers," is not in accordance with sincerity. Instead, one should give preference to another believer. He should point out that he also possesses superior qualities to enable him to practice good morality and to act sincerely. In order to conquer one's arrogance and the ambition to authority, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi gave the following recommendation:

*"The cure and remedy for this serious disease is to be proud of the company of all those travelling the path of truth, in accordance with the principle of love for Allah's sake; to follow them and defer leadership to them; and to consider whoever is walking on Allah's path to be probably better than oneself, thereby breaking the ego and regaining sincerity. Salvation is also to be had from that disease by knowing that an ounce of deeds performed in sincerity is preferable to a ton performed without sincerity, and by preferring the status of a follower to that of a leader, with all the danger and responsibility that it involves. Thus sincerity is to be had, and one's duties of preparation for the Hereafter may be correctly performed."*<sup>35</sup>

By these words, Said Nursi has once again underlined the importance of sincerity, and reminded the believers that those who aim to live in Paradise should be cleansed of selfish feelings, such as ego, rivalry, and the ambition to lead. He also made note of the importance of giving preference to another believer as an act of sincerity, of allowing him to lead and of being pleased with his accomplishments. He reminded believers that what is truly reflecting of sincerity is to believe that others could be superior to oneself and to surrender to them.

## **Refraining from Hypocrisy**

Hypocrisy is one of those tendencies that is encouraged by the lower-soul, which, though, is contrary to the laws of the Qur'an. Hypocrisy means that the true thinking hidden within a person differs from his outward behavior. The person is a two-faced, by not behaving according to what he believes. Thus, hypocrisy is a vice that destroys sincerity. The fact that a person could behave so insincerely and could adopt two different characters, inside and out, indicates that he has not yet fully grasped the meaning of faith, or appreciated the extent of Allah's power and wisdom.

Allah surrounds all, knows the secret of the secrets, hears the thoughts in people's minds, and sees them everywhere. If one hides his true feelings and strives to appear otherwise, then he has forgotten these attributes of Allah. Even if this person succeeds in pleasing others around him through his behavior or words, Allah knows what he hides in his heart.

One who fears Allah should avoid behaving in such a way that displeases Him. People could praise someone in this worldly life due to his hypocritical outward behavior. However, he will not gain any favor in the hereafter. It should always be kept in mind that any benefits gained during this worldly life are trivial when compared with those gained in the hereafter. Allah reminds us of this truth as follows:

**... Are you happier with the life of this world than the hereafter? Yet the enjoyment of the life of this world is very small compared to that of the hereafter. (Surat at-Tawba: 38)**

One who is hypocritical is insincere and pretentious. By Allah's Will, true believers would be able to detect such characteristics. In particular, Allah's prophets, aided by a knowledge imparted to them by Allah, were capable of recognizing such people, those who hide what they really think by acting hypocritically, and who display a different identity than their true one, by the tone of their speech and their features. Even if these people are not detected by the true believers, Allah knows about their affected and

insincere behavior, hears their every word, and sees their every action. Allah makes the following known in one of His verses:

**He knows everything in the heavens and earth. He knows what you keep secret and what you divulge. Allah knows what the heart contains. (Surat at-Taghabun: 4)**

No true believer needs to rely on hypocrisy to make people love or accept him. Because, it is only Allah Who is capable of placing love among people. All believers naturally support and love the believer who strives to gain Allah's consent. It is in the nature of their faith for believers to love a decent, sincere, honest and genuine person. Obtaining Allah's consent results ultimately also in gaining the consent of true believers. However, any deed done solely to gain people's consent is worthless in gaining Allah's consent.

For this reason, one should not harken to these incitements of his soul. He should purify himself of any kind of hypocritical thought and attitude in order to acquire sincerity.

## **Abandoning the Ambition to Acquire Authority and Position**

Another reason that prevents people from aiming solely to gain Allah's consent, and from striving sincerely for only Paradise, is their excessive fondness of worldly values such as authority, status and reputation. However, such worldly values will mean nothing in terms of the hereafter. Allah announces that the superiority between humans will be determined, not in accordance with their authority or status, but in accordance with their level of righteousness:

**Mankind! We created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you might come to know each other. The noblest among you in Allah's sight is the one who best performs his duty. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware (Surat al-Hujurat: 13)**

In one of his works, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi affirmed this fact as follows:

*"[The second obstacle destroying sincerity] is to flatter the ego and give high status to the evil-commanding soul through attracting attention to oneself and public acclaim, driven by the desire for fame, renown, and position. This is a serious spiritual sickness, so too it opens the door to the hypocrisy and self-centredness called 'the hidden association of partners with Allah,' and damages sincerity"*<sup>36</sup>

The belief that authority and position implies superiority is a deception quite common in ignorant societies. Any true believer who grasps the meaning of faith should in no way incline to the insinuations of his lower-self. He should instead seek superiority through sincerity. Hence, one who purifies his soul of these desires will gain authority of a sort far above the worldly variety. He will be bestowed upon with true honor and respect. Mankind are reminded of this truth in the following verse of the Qur'an:

**If you avoid the serious wrong actions you have been forbidden, We will erase your bad actions from you and admit you by a Gate of Honor. (Surat an-Nisa': 31)**

To deserve such a place of honor, the believer should grasp the following truth:

**If anyone wants power, all power belongs to Allah. All good words rise to Him and He raises up all virtuous deeds... (Surah Fatir: 10)**

Allah is the sole Possessor of honor. The only way to acquire honor, is to sincerely perform good deeds.

In his works, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi also called special attention to this matter. He highlighted the insignificance of worldly authority, such as status and reputation, when compared to the honored place to be gained in the hereafter. He quoted Allah's verse that says, "**nor sell My Signs for a small price**," and stated the following:

*"We are in utter need of instilling sincerity in ourselves. Otherwise what we have achieved so far in our sacred service will in part be lost, and will not persist; and we shall be held responsible. We shall manifest the severe threat contained in the Divine prohibition '**Nor sell my signs for a small price**' (Surat al-Baqara:41) and destroy sincerity, thus harming eternal happiness for the sake of meaningless, unnecessary, harmful, sad, self-centred, tedious, hypocritical base feelings and insignificant benefits. And in so doing we would violate all our brothers' rights, transgress against the duty of service to the Qur'an, and be disrespectful towards the sacredness of the truths of belief."<sup>37</sup>*

This desire to acquire status and authority prevents a person from being sincere in deed and leads him to become dishonest. Such a person, who aims at gaining Allah's consent and heavenly reward, on the one hand, may also aim to acquire honor and repute in this life. This will cause him to invalidate his deeds inadvertently. Any true believer should heed these reminders of the Qur'an, and cleanse his soul of the worldly desires to acquire repute and honor. He should endeavor to gain glory and honor with Allah.

Otherwise, a person will become diverted by the "mutual rivalry for piling up," until he reaches the end of his life, as stated in the following verse: "**Fierce competition for**

**this world distracted you until you went down to the graves."** (Surat at-Takathur: 1-2) He will only understand his doom in the hereafter, as the result of many lost years spent aiming to fulfill the vain desires of his lower-soul. All his effort would have been in vain. More fitting for a true believer is to purify himself of the evil side of his soul while there is still time. He should acquire sincerity, a level of morality consented by Allah.

## **Not Worrying about One's Property or One's Life**

Another corrupt tendency of the lower-soul is its passionate attachment to material objects and to one's physical self. For this reason, the lower-soul continuously encourages the person to be more ambitious for these two things. However, material objects and one's physical self were not created for passionate attachment to worldly things but only to test men, as the following verse says:

**You will be tested in your wealth and in yourselves... (Surah Al 'Imran: 186)**

Allah gave the glad tidings of Paradise to those who preferred to sacrifice their worldly possessions to gain His assent, instead of pursuing them obsessively. He informed humanity that they should only in this manner attain happiness and success, as in the following verse:

**Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth in return for the Garden. They fight in the Way of Allah and they kill and are killed. It is a promise binding on Him in the Torah, the Injil and the Qur'an and who is truer to his contract than Allah? Rejoice then in the bargain you have made. That is the great victory. (Surat at-Tawba: 111)**

Therefore, true believers should carefully refrain from becoming passionately attached to their wealth and their selves. The soul will certainly incite a man to these motives. However, a believer who is aware of the promise of Allah could in no way incline to his lower-soul. Hence, nothing gained through one's property or personal effort in this worldly life could match the eternal blessings of the hereafter. Therefore, Allah instructs men to **"rejoice in your bargain that you have made."** Humans are destined to enjoy the blessings of this world only briefly. At death, one will be forced to leave behind not only his body, but also the belongings he had accumulated. The blessings to be bestowed by Allah in the hereafter are the true means for one's attainment of success or happiness.



Bediuzzaman expresses the condition of those who are deeply attached to their belongings and lives, and who then come to comprehend their futility, as follows:

*"Thus, there are in man thousands of emotions, each of which has two degrees, one metaphorical, the other, true. For example, the emotion of anxiety for the future is present in everyone. Then a person is intensely anxious at the future, but he sees that he possesses nothing to guarantee that he will reach the future he is anxious about. Also, in respect of sustenance, there is an undertaking for it, and the future is brief and not worth such intense worry. So he turns away from the future towards the true future beyond the grave, which is long lasting, and which for the heedless, there is no undertaking."*<sup>38</sup>

In the same work, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi points out the futility of men's passion for material objects and their personal selves in the following manner:

*"Man also displays intense ambition for possessions and position, then he sees that the transient property which has been put temporarily under his supervision, and calamitous fame and position, which is dangerous and leads to hypocrisy, are not worth such intense ambition. He turns away from them towards spiritual rank and degrees in closeness to Allah, which constitute true rank, and towards provisions for the Hereafter, and good works which are true property. Metaphorical ambition, which is a bad quality, is transformed into true ambition, an elevated quality."*<sup>39</sup>

If one worries about his belongings and of his life, then it will be impossible for him to approach unto Allah with a sincere heart, to duly surrender himself to Him. These passions that are hidden deep in his soul will direct him furtively, and cause him to act on behalf of his own gain rather than for Allah's consent. For instance, when he encounters someone in need, he prefers to secure his own benefit rather than giving alms and support to the needy. Yet, as Allah has informed in the verse below, that which is more representative of sincerity is to willingly give to another, even if it means he will have to do without:

**Those who were already settled in the abode [i.e., Medina], and in faith, before they came, love those who have migrated to them and do not find in their hearts any need for what they have been given and prefer them to themselves even if they themselves are needy. It is the people who are safeguarded from the avarice of their own selves who are successful. (Surat al-Hashr: 9)**

Similarly, his personal desires will overshadow his concern for gaining Allah's consent. Allah informs us in the Qur'an that such a choice will only bring disgrace:

**Say: "If your fathers or your sons or your brothers or your wives or your tribe, or any wealth you have acquired, or any business you fear may slump, or any**

**house which pleases you, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His command. Allah does not guide people who are deviators." (Surat at-Tawba: 24)**

As outlined by Our Lord, one's wealth will not be of any avail in the hereafter: **"His wealth will not help him when he plummets to the depths." (Surat al-Layl: 11)** However, only those who are sincere will be rewarded with endless and eternal blessings:

**Those who best perform their duty will be far removed from it: those who give their wealth to purify themselves —not to repay someone else for a favor done—desiring only the Face of their Lord Most High. They will certainly be satisfied. (Surat al-Layl: 17-21)**

The Qur'an relates various examples of the condition of those who worry as much for their lives as for their wealth. Thus they lose their sincerity, and become unable to gain Allah's consent. When the Prophet (saas) invited people to fight with their selves for Allah's sake, some said that, **"Had we been able to, we would have gone out with you" (Surat at-Tawba: 42)** and others voiced, **"Do not go out to fight in the heat." (Surat at-Tawba: 81)** Hence, they preferred their own selves by putting forth excuses. While fabricating such excuses, some went beyond that by pronouncing an oath by Allah to demonstrate that they were speaking the truth. However, Allah affirmed that He was well aware of their lies, that they have committed their souls to punishment for their insincerity. The comportment of true believers as portrayed in the verse quoted below is that which is truly representative of sincerity:

**But the Messenger and those who believed along with him have struggled with their wealth and with themselves. They are the people who will have the good things. They are the ones who are successful. (Surat at-Tawba: 88)**

Believers should strive hard with their property and their selves to gain Allah's consent. In another of His verses, Allah gave the glad tidings to the true believers that those who strive hard in His way, with their belongings and persons, and those who grant a greater importance to Allah's consent, will have a higher degree with Him. The verse states as follows:

**Those believers who stay behind—other than those forced to by necessity—are not the same as those who strive in the Way of Allah, sacrificing their wealth and themselves. Allah has given those who strive with their wealth and themselves a higher rank than those who stay behind. Allah has promised the**

**Best to both, but Allah has preferred those who strive over those who stay behind by an immense reward. (Surat an-Nisa': 95)**

# **THE STRENGTH OF BELIEVERS IS DERIVED FROM THEIR SINCERITY**

In general, the association of those who do not believe in Allah and the hereafter is based on the importance they attach to worldly goods and the hope for worldly rewards. By their association, such people may conclude an agreement out of mutual interests. Each party supports the other, and thus, they hope to obtain mutual benefit. Without admitting it, those who form such alliances know that their association is not based upon mutual trust or friendship, and that their participation is conditional. When one of the parties is no longer of benefit to the other, then the alliance is terminated. The opposing party remains indifferent to the needs of the party in difficulty. Hence, such alliances only arise merely from the hope of greater strength through increased numbers and for the attainment of some worldly gain. Therefore, it is to be expected that such an alliance would disintegrate as soon as the possibility of attaining these things vanishes. As Allah informs mankind in the Qur'an, the hearts of those who deny Allah are not inclined to one another, even if they appear externally to be as one single body:

**... Their hostility towards each other is intense. They are full of bravado in each other's company. You consider them united but their hearts are scattered wide. That is because they are people who do not use their intellect. (Surat al-Hashr: 14)**

For this reason, such alliances formed among those who deny Allah are always prone to fall apart. In this world, there is only one thing capable of ensuring a true unity, real friendship and alliance among men, and that is "faith." When those of true faith, who fear the Day of Judgment, unite in this world, they lay the foundations of a sound alliance, which will last eternally into the hereafter. They love and befriend each other solely for Allah's sake. They unite with sincere intentions, without expecting any other benefit. This union takes its origin from love and fear of Allah, the only true source of alliance. Therefore, it is impossible for it to be destroyed unless Allah wills so. Believers form a power resembling "**a well-built wall**" that cannot be penetrated. The verse quoted below declares as follows:

**Allah loves those who fight in His Way in ranks like well-built walls. (Surat as-Saff: 4)**

Those who have faith and who are sincere are granted the determination and enthusiasm to overcome, even if they are outnumbered by millions. This is stated in the following verse as follows:

**... But those who were sure that they were going to meet Allah said, "How many a small force has triumphed over a much greater one by Allah's permission! Allah is with the steadfast." (Surat al-Baqara: 249)**

They gain Allah's support by always remaining sincere. Since Allah is the "Unconquerable (*Al-Aziz*)," they ultimately succeed. They are aware of the secret announced in the verses of Allah as, **"...You will be uppermost if you are [true] believers." (Surah Al 'Imran: 139)**. Consequently, they are extraordinarily resilient and powerful, a quality to which the discord, disagreement and suspicion created by the outsiders cannot penetrate.

Each of those who form such a union fears Allah, and surrenders himself unconditionally to the verses of the Qur'an. As they strive solely to gain Allah's consent, and fear none but Allah, each is like an entire army.

## **Their Sincerity is the Reason for their Solidarity**

As they seek Allah's consent with great sincerity, they are never faced with turmoil, disagreement or discord among themselves. Because, Allah's word is one, and the verses of the Qur'an are clear. Where all believers adhere unconditionally to the Qur'an, and act only to gain Allah's consent, a great harmony and order exist. As all obey Allah and the Qur'an sincerely, all their affairs are settled easily and without conflict. When problems do arise out of self-interest, each of them favors the good of the other, always preferring the interests of the religion. They prefer the good of their brothers to their own. Hence, great solidarity, union and mutual support is formed among them. It is not always required that believers be gathered together in order to form this union. What is important for true believers is to form a sound and strong moral solidarity, despite their distances from each other, what language they speak or which country they live in.

As such people aim to become friends abiding eternally in the hereafter, they are devoted to each other with a profound love, respect and fidelity. For this reason, they never allow rivalry, discord or disagreements to come between them. Even if they are faced with trouble or distress, they are not carried away by suspicion, laxity or lack of determination, due to their fear of Allah and their sincerity. If one of them makes a mistake, then the other's faith and sincerity guides him to truth. As they continuously enjoin good and forbid evil, their faith becomes stronger. Thus, their sincerity and strength increase. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi referred to this incredible power and strength

of sincere believers who share common goals, effort and devotion, with the following example:

*"...For just as one of man's hands cannot compete with the other, neither can one of his eyes criticize the other, nor his tongue object to his ear, nor his heart see his spirit's faults. Each of his members completes the deficiencies of the others, veils their faults, assists their needs, and helps them out in their duties. Otherwise man's life would be extinguished, his spirit flee, and his body be dispersed. Similarly, the components of machinery in a factory cannot compete with one another in rivalry, take precedence over each other, or dominate each other. They cannot spy out one another's faults and criticize each other, destroy the other's eagerness for work, and cause them to become idle. They rather assist each other's motions with all their capacity in order to achieve the common goal; they march towards the aim of their creation in true solidarity and unity. Should even the slightest aggression or desire to dominate interfere, it would throw the factory into confusion, causing it to be without product or result. Then the factory's owner would demolish the factory entirely. And so, O Risale-i Nur students and servants of the Qur'an! You and I are members of a collective personality such as that, worthy of the title of 'perfect man.' We are like the components of a factory's machinery which produces eternal happiness within eternal life. We are hands working on a dominical boat which will disembark the Community of Muhammad (saas) at the Realm of Peace, the shore of salvation."*<sup>40</sup>

This example put forth by Bediuzzaman is of great importance in helping us to understand the solidarity and union needed among true believers. As they are purified of all kinds of sentiments likely to damage their sincerity, they gain an indomitable moral strength, resembling factory wheels coming together to form a giant power.

In another of his works, communicating how true believers gained greater strength by being aware of the secret of sincerity, Bediuzzaman gave the following example:

*"So we are surely in need of solidarity and true union, obtained through gaining sincerity—for the mystery of sincerity secures through four individuals the moral strength of one thousand one hundred and eleven—indeed, we are compelled to obtain it.*

*Yes, if three alifs do not unite, they have the value of three. Whereas if they do unite, through the mystery of numbers they acquire the value of one hundred and eleven. If four times four remain apart, they have a value of sixteen. But if, through the mystery of brotherhood and having a common goal and joint duty, they unite coming together shoulder to shoulder on a line, they have the strength and value of four thousand four hundred and forty-four. Just as numerous historical events testify that the moral strength and value of sixteen self-sacrificing brothers have been greater than that of four thousand.*

The underlying reason for this mystery is this: each member of a true and sincere union may see also with the eyes of the other brothers, and hear with their ears. As if

*each person of a true union of ten has the value and strength of seeing with twenty eyes, thinking with ten minds, hearing with twenty ears, and working with twenty hands."*<sup>41</sup>

## **What is Earned from Sincerity**

Sincerity is a great power bestowed upon true believers to enable them to earn eternal blessings, both in this world and the hereafter. As Bediuzzaman said, *"it is the most important principle in works pertaining to the hereafter in particular; it is the greatest strength, and the firmest point of support, and the highest quality, and the purest worship."* There is not a doubt that the greatest of the blessings bestowed upon man, either in this world or the next, is Allah's consent.

The secret of acquiring Allah's consent and approbation lies in sincerity. Allah announces in the subsequent verse the good news to those who fear Allah that the noblest recompense in the hereafter is His good pleasure:

**Say, "Shall I tell you of something better than that?" Those who do their duty will have Gardens with their Lord, with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, for ever, and purified wives, and the Pleasure of Allah. Allah sees His servants. (Surah Al 'Imran: 15)**

This is the ultimate goal of the effort expended by the true believers during their worldly life.

In many of His verses, our Lord gives the glad tidings to the sincere believers, who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgment, who do good deeds to approach closer unto Allah and obtain the prayers and good wishes of His Messenger (saas), that they will finally acquire Allah's consent and gain entry into Paradise. The related verses state:

**And among the desert Arabs there are some who believe in Allah and the Last Day and regard what they give as something which will bring them nearer to Allah and to the prayers of the Messenger. It does indeed bring them near. Allah will admit them into His mercy. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. The forerunners—the first of the Muhajirun [those who emigrated from Mecca and settled in Medina] and the Ansar [the inhabitants of Medina who had accepted Islam]—and those who have followed them in doing good: Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. He has prepared Gardens for them with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, for ever and ever. That is the great victory. (Surat at-Tawba: 99-100)**

**And the Garden will be brought up close to those who do their duty, not far away: "This is what you were promised. It is for every careful penitent: those who fear the All-Merciful in the Unseen and come with a contrite heart." (Surah Qaf: 31-33)**

**Anyone, male or female, who does right actions and is a believer, will enter the Garden. They will not be wronged by so much as the tiniest speck. (Surat an-Nisa': 124)**

## **A Beautiful Life in This World**

In addition to eternal blessings, Allah grants sincere believers great rewards in this world. As indicated in the subsequent verse, Allah guides those who turn to Him to the straight path:

**... Allah misguides whoever He wills and guides to Himself all who turn to Him. (Surat ar-R'ad: 27)**

In another verse, Allah declares that He will support and assist sincere believers as follows:

**By it, Allah guides those who follow what pleases Him to the ways of Peace. He will bring them from the darkness to the light by His permission, and guide them to a straight path. (Surat al-Ma'ida: 16)**

Our Lord also bestows innumerable blessings upon sincere believers during their worldly lives. He takes them away from the miserable, distressed and futile lives of those who deny Allah. As announced in the Qur'an, He enables them to lead noble lives in the following way:

**Anyone who acts rightly, male or female, being a believer, We will give them a good life and We will recompense them according to the best of what they did. (Surat an-Nahl: 97)**

One who turns to Allah wholeheartedly will be distanced from all the troubles and distresses of the worldly life. He can lead his life peacefully and in confidence because he fears Allah alone. As he does not fear the condemnations of others, he has no worries in regards his worldly affairs. As he only aims to acquire Allah's consent, nobody can upset or distress him. Since he aims to obtain the hereafter, he is not obsessed with worldly



belongings and possessions. Neither the loss or increase of his possessions alarms him. He always acts with submission, trust, faith, kindness, compassion, patience and modesty.

In deeds accomplished with sincerity, only Allah's consent is aimed to be obtained. To acquire the consent of others, or worldly rewards, or the fulfilment of desires or ambitions must be disregarded. In this way the outcome will always be successful. Allah affirmed that the believers, who do not associate partners with Him, turn to Him in an unadulterated manner, after being purified of their desire to acquire the consent of others and of worldly rewards, will succeed. The pertinent verse is as follows:

**Allah has promised those of you who believe and do right actions that He will make them successors in the land as He made those before them successors, and will firmly establish for them their religion with which He is pleased and give them, in place of their fear, security. "They worship Me, not associating anything with Me." Any who disbelieve after that, such people are deviators. (Surat an-Nur: 55)**

# CONCLUSION

Allah has set forth Ibrahim (as), Ishaq (as) and Yaqub (as) as examples for true believers, as in the following:

**And remember Our servants Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of true strength and inner sight. We purified their sincerity through sincere remembrance of the Abode . (Surah Sad: 45-46)**

Allah also stressed that Musa (as) reached a high level of purification. A verse states as follows:

**Mention Musa in the Book. He was truly sincere and was a messenger and a prophet. (Surah Maryam: 51)**

We must ponder deeply the high morality of Allah's prophets, and strive like them to become purified servants.

The Qur'an announced that only those who are blind and deaf will not benefit from the reminders and verses of Allah. True believers, on the other hand, are **"those who, when they are reminded of the Signs of their Lord, do not turn their backs, deaf and blind to them."** (Surat al-Furqan: 73) Those who fear Allah and guard against evil are capable of perceiving the wisdom of the verses of the Qur'an. They draw lessons from them, and thus, acquire sincerity. Therefore, believers could never be indifferent to such reminders from Allah. Even if someone has until then failed to think about the importance of sincerity, just one moment spent to check his intentions would be sufficient to purify himself. With Allah's permission, this improvement converts later deeds into pious ones, and grants the person the honor of being "the best of creatures" in Allah's sight.

Otherwise, if one sullies his deeds done to acquire Allah's assent, by letting worldly ambitions interfere and invalidates them, instead of aiming to acquire sincerity, then he will certainly be acting immorally. This person may strive day and night and consider himself guided on the straight path of morality. However, he will not be among those who turn to Allah purely, as he does not strive to acquire sincerity. Surat al-Kahf puts forth the example of such losers as follows:

**Say: "Shall I inform you of the greatest losers in their actions? People whose efforts in the life of this world are misguided while they suppose that they are doing good." (Surat al-Kahf: 103-104)**

However, when he looks back upon his life, he will realize that there is nothing left to indicate that he had spent those years in this world. Neither the people whose consent he strove to acquire, nor the worldly goals he pursued, nor his arrogance, nor the devil who deceived him to damage his sincerity, will stand by him. He will stand in Allah's presence alone and unaided, as he failed to turn to Him with a pure heart, and had harmed his sincerity by combining his faith, service and worship with other impurities. In Surat al-Hadid, Allah announces that this worldly life is nothing but a great deception:

**Know that the life of the world is merely a game and a diversion and ostentation and a cause of boasting among yourselves and trying to outdo one another in wealth and children: like the plant-growth after rain which delights the cultivators, but then it withers and you see it turning yellow, and then it becomes broken stubble. In the hereafter there is terrible punishment but also forgiveness from Allah and His good pleasure. The life of the world is nothing but the enjoyment of delusion. (Surat al-Hadid: 20)**

Would one like to see that he has been striving in vain, in spite of his greater effort, merely because he had failed to endeavor to acquire sincerity, and did not live in accordance with the spirit of the Qur'an? Or, would one like to be one of the "best of creatures" who is granted "a wage which never fails" by purifying his intentions, heart and conscience and turns to Allah with heartfelt devotion, firmly embraces Him, and desires to acquire nothing but His consent? It is apparent that, for anyone who loves Allah, and who wishes to befriend Him and to turn to Him, the latter option is the only option to be taken.

Therefore, with this book, we are inviting all those sincere believers, who love Allah, wish to befriend Him, and turn to Him, to search for the secret that leads to being among the successful. As Bediuzzaman mentioned, a single deed performed sincerely may well be more precious than thousands of insincere ones. Always keep in mind that if your intentions are sincere, and your deeds are pious; even the most trivial of them which you perform for Allah's sake, will not go unnoticed by Him. Because as He informed us in the Qur'an, **"Your Lord knows best what is in your selves. ..."** (Surat al-Isra': 25) and **"...Allah knows those who have done their duty."** (Surah Al 'Imran: 115)

# THE EVOLUTION MISCONCEPTION

Every detail in this universe points to a superior creation. By contrast, materialism, which seeks to deny the fact of creation in the universe, is nothing but an unscientific fallacy.

Once materialism is invalidated, all other theories based on this philosophy are rendered baseless. Foremost of them is Darwinism, that is, the theory of evolution. This theory, which argues that life originated from inanimate matter through coincidences, has been demolished with the recognition that the universe was created by Allah. American astrophysicist Hugh Ross explains this as follows:

*Atheism, Darwinism, and virtually all the "isms" emanating from the eighteenth to the twentieth century philosophies are built upon the assumption, the incorrect assumption, that the universe is infinite. The singularity has brought us face to face with the cause—or causer—beyond/behind/before the universe and all that it contains, including life itself.<sup>42</sup>*

It is Allah Who created the universe and Who designed it down to its smallest detail. Therefore, it is impossible for the theory of evolution, which holds that living beings are not created by Allah, but are products of coincidences, to be true.

Unsurprisingly, when we look at the theory of evolution, we see that this theory is denounced by scientific findings. The design in life is extremely complex and striking. In the inanimate world, for instance, we can explore how sensitive are the balances which atoms rest upon, and further, in the animate world, we can observe in what complex designs these atoms were brought together, and how extraordinary are the mechanisms and structures such as proteins, enzymes, and cells, which are manufactured with them.

This extraordinary design in life invalidated Darwinism at the end of the twentieth century.

We have dealt with this subject in great detail in some of our other studies, and will continue to do so. However, we think that, considering its importance, it will be helpful to make a short summary here as well.

## The Scientific Collapse of Darwinism

Although a doctrine going back as far as ancient Greece, the theory of evolution was advanced extensively in the 19th century. The most important development that made the theory the top topic of the world of science was the book by Charles Darwin titled *The Origin of Species* published in 1859. In this book, Darwin denied that different living species on the earth were created separately by Allah. According to Darwin, all

living beings had a common ancestor and they diversified over time through small changes.

Darwin's theory was not based on any concrete scientific finding; as he also accepted, it was just an "assumption." Moreover, as Darwin confessed in the long chapter of his book titled "Difficulties of the Theory," the theory was failing in the face of many critical questions.

Darwin invested all his hopes in new scientific discoveries, which he expected to solve the "Difficulties of the Theory." However, contrary to his expectations, scientific findings expanded the dimensions of these difficulties.

The defeat of Darwinism against science can be reviewed under three basic topics:

- 1) The theory can by no means explain how life originated on the earth.
- 2) There is no scientific finding showing that the "evolutionary mechanisms" proposed by the theory have any power to evolve at all.
- 3) The fossil record proves completely the contrary of the suggestions of the theory of evolution.

In this section, we will examine these three basic points in general outlines:

## **The First Insurmountable Step: The Origin of Life**

The theory of evolution posits that all living species evolved from a single living cell that emerged on the primitive earth 3.8 billion years ago. How a single cell could generate millions of complex living species and, if such an evolution really occurred, why traces of it cannot be observed in the fossil record are some of the questions the theory cannot answer. However, first and foremost, of the first step of the alleged evolutionary process it has to be inquired: How did this "first cell" originate?

Since the theory of evolution denies creation and does not accept any kind of supernatural intervention, it maintains that the "first cell" originated coincidentally within the laws of nature, without any design, plan, or arrangement. According to the theory, inanimate matter must have produced a living cell as a result of coincidences. This, however, is a claim inconsistent with even the most unassailable rules of biology.

### **"Life Comes from Life"**

In his book, Darwin never referred to the origin of life. The primitive understanding of science in his time rested on the assumption that living beings had a very simple structure. Since medieval times, spontaneous generation, the theory asserting that non-living materials came together to form living organisms, had been widely accepted. It was commonly believed that insects came into being from food leftovers, and mice from wheat. Interesting experiments were conducted to prove this theory. Some wheat was

placed on a dirty piece of cloth, and it was believed that mice would originate from it after a while.

Similarly, worms developing in meat was assumed to be evidence of spontaneous generation. However, only some time later was it understood that worms did not appear on meat spontaneously, but were carried there by flies in the form of larvae, invisible to the naked eye.

Even in the period when Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species*, the belief that bacteria could come into existence from non-living matter was widely accepted in the world of science.

However, five years after the publication of Darwin's book, Louis Pasteur announced his results after long studies and experiments, which disproved spontaneous generation, a cornerstone of Darwin's theory. In his triumphal lecture at the Sorbonne in 1864, Pasteur said, "*Never will the doctrine of spontaneous generation recover from the mortal blow struck by this simple experiment.*"<sup>43</sup>

Advocates of the theory of evolution resisted the findings of Pasteur for a long time. However, as the development of science unraveled the complex structure of the cell of a living being, the idea that life could come into being coincidentally faced an even greater impasse.

## **Inconclusive Efforts in the Twentieth Century**

The first evolutionist who took up the subject of the origin of life in the twentieth century was the renowned Russian biologist Alexander Oparin. With various theses he advanced in the 1930's, he tried to prove that the cell of a living being could originate by coincidence. These studies, however, were doomed to failure, and Oparin had to make the following confession: "*Unfortunately, however, the problem of the origin of the cell is perhaps the most obscure point in the whole study of the evolution of organisms.*"<sup>44</sup>

Evolutionist followers of Oparin tried to carry out experiments to solve the problem of the origin of life. The best known of these experiments was carried out by American chemist Stanley Miller in 1953. Combining the gases he alleged to have existed in the primordial earth's atmosphere in an experiment set-up, and adding energy to the mixture, Miller synthesized several organic molecules (amino acids) present in the structure of proteins.

Barely a few years had passed before it was revealed that this experiment, which was then presented as an important step in the name of evolution, was invalid, the atmosphere used in the experiment having been very different from real earth conditions.<sup>45</sup>

After a long silence, Miller confessed that the atmosphere medium he used was unrealistic.<sup>46</sup>

All the evolutionist efforts put forth throughout the twentieth century to explain the origin of life ended with failure. The geochemist Jeffrey Bada from San Diego Scripps Institute accepts this fact in an article published in *Earth Magazine* in 1998:

*Today as we leave the twentieth century, we still face the biggest unsolved problem that we had when we entered the twentieth century: How did life originate on Earth?*<sup>47</sup>

## The Complex Structure of Life

The primary reason why the theory of evolution ended up in such a big impasse about the origin of life is that even the living organisms deemed the simplest have incredibly complex structures. The cell of a living being is more complex than all of the technological products produced by man. Today, even in the most developed laboratories of the world, a living cell cannot be produced by bringing inorganic materials together.

The conditions required for the formation of a cell are too great in quantity to be explained away by coincidences. The probability of proteins, the building blocks of cell, being synthesized coincidentally, is 1 in  $10^{950}$  for an average protein made up of 500 amino acids. In mathematics, a probability smaller than 1 over  $10^{50}$  is practically considered to be impossible.

The DNA molecule, which is located in the nucleus of the cell and which stores genetic information, is an incredible databank. It is calculated that if the information coded in DNA were written down, this would make a giant library consisting of 900 volumes of encyclopaedias of 500 pages each.

A very interesting dilemma emerges at this point: the DNA can only replicate with the help of some specialized proteins (enzymes). However, the synthesis of these enzymes can only be realized by the information coded in DNA. As they both depend on each other, they have to exist at the same time for replication. This brings the scenario that life originated by itself to a deadlock. Prof. Leslie Orgel, an evolutionist of repute from the University of San Diego, California, confesses this fact in the September 1994 issue of the *Scientific American* magazine:

**It is extremely improbable that proteins and nucleic acids, both of which are structurally complex, arose spontaneously in the same place at the same time. Yet it also seems impossible to have one without the other. And so, at first glance, one might have to conclude that life could never, in fact, have originated by chemical means. <sup>48</sup>**

No doubt, if it is impossible for life to have originated from natural causes, then it has to be accepted that life was "created" in a supernatural way. This fact explicitly invalidates the theory of evolution, whose main purpose is to deny creation.

## Imaginary Mechanisms of Evolution

The second important point that negates Darwin's theory is that both concepts put forward by the theory as "evolutionary mechanisms" were understood to have, in reality, no evolutionary power.

Darwin based his evolution allegation entirely on the mechanism of "natural selection." The importance he placed on this mechanism was evident in the name of his book: *The Origin of Species, By Means Of Natural Selection...*

Natural selection holds that those living things that are stronger and more suited to the natural conditions of their habitats will survive in the struggle for life. For example, in a deer herd under the threat of attack by wild animals, those that can run faster will survive. Therefore, the deer herd will be comprised of faster and stronger individuals. However, unquestionably, this mechanism will not cause deer to evolve and transform themselves into another living species, for instance, horses.

Therefore, the mechanism of natural selection has no evolutionary power. Darwin was also aware of this fact and had to state this in his book *The Origin of Species*:

*Natural selection can do nothing until favorable individual differences or variations occur.*<sup>49</sup>

## Lamarck's Impact

So, how could these "favorable variations" occur? Darwin tried to answer this question from the standpoint of the primitive understanding of science in his age. According to the French biologist Lamarck, who lived before Darwin, living creatures passed on the traits they acquired during their lifetime to the next generation and these traits, accumulating from one generation to another, caused new species to be formed. For instance, according to Lamarck, giraffes evolved from antelopes; as they struggled to eat the leaves of high trees, their necks were extended from generation to generation.

Darwin also gave similar examples, and in his book *The Origin of Species*, for instance, said that some bears going into water to find food transformed themselves into whales over time.<sup>50</sup>

However, the laws of inheritance discovered by Mendel and verified by the science of genetics that flourished in the twentieth century, utterly demolished the legend that acquired traits were passed on to subsequent generations. Thus, natural selection fell out of favor as an evolutionary mechanism.

## Neo-Darwinism and Mutations



In order to find a solution, Darwinists advanced the "Modern Synthetic Theory," or as it is more commonly known, Neo-Darwinism, at the end of the 1930's. Neo-Darwinism added mutations, which are distortions formed in the genes of living beings because of external factors such as radiation or replication errors, as the "cause of favorable variations" in addition to natural mutation.

Today, the model that stands for evolution in the world is Neo-Darwinism. The theory maintains that millions of living beings present on the earth formed as a result of a process whereby numerous complex organs of these organisms such as the ears, eyes, lungs, and wings, underwent "mutations," that is, genetic disorders. Yet, there is an outright scientific fact that totally undermines this theory: Mutations do not cause living beings to develop; on the contrary, they always cause harm to them.

The reason for this is very simple: the DNA has a very complex structure and random effects can only cause harm to it. American geneticist B.G. Ranganathan explains this as follows:

*First, genuine mutations are very rare in nature. Secondly, most mutations are harmful since they are random, rather than orderly changes in the structure of genes; any random change in a highly ordered system will be for the worse, not for the better. For example, if an earthquake were to shake a highly ordered structure such as a building, there would be a random change in the framework of the building which, in all probability, would not be an improvement.*<sup>51</sup>

Not surprisingly, no mutation example, which is useful, that is, which is observed to develop the genetic code, has been observed so far. All mutations have proved to be harmful. It was understood that mutation, which is presented as an "evolutionary mechanism," is actually a genetic occurrence that harms living beings, and leaves them disabled. (The most common effect of mutation on human beings is cancer). No doubt, a destructive mechanism cannot be an "evolutionary mechanism." Natural selection, on the other hand, "can do nothing by itself" as Darwin also accepted. This fact shows us that there is no "evolutionary mechanism" in nature. Since no evolutionary mechanism exists, neither could any imaginary process called evolution have taken place.

## **The Fossil Record: No Sign of Intermediate Forms**

The clearest evidence that the scenario suggested by the theory of evolution did not take place is the fossil record.

According to the theory of evolution, every living species has sprung from a predecessor. A previously existing species turned into something else in time and all species have come into being in this way. According to the theory, this transformation proceeds gradually over millions of years.

Had this been the case, then numerous intermediary species should have existed and lived within this long transformation period.

For instance, some half-fish/half-reptiles should have lived in the past which had acquired some reptilian traits in addition to the fish traits they already had. Or there should have existed some reptile-birds, which acquired some bird traits in addition to the reptilian traits they already had. Since these would be in a transitional phase, they should be disabled, defective, crippled living beings. Evolutionists refer to these imaginary creatures, which they believe to have lived in the past, as "transitional forms."

If such animals had really existed, there should be millions and even billions of them in number and variety. More importantly, the remains of these strange creatures should be present in the fossil record. In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin explained:

*If my theory be true, numberless intermediate varieties, linking most closely all of the species of the same group together must assuredly have existed... Consequently, evidence of their former existence could be found only amongst fossil remains.*<sup>52</sup>

## **Darwin's Hopes Shattered**

However, although evolutionists have been making strenuous efforts to find fossils since the middle of the 19th century all over the world, no transitional forms have yet been uncovered. All the fossils unearthed in excavations showed that, contrary to the expectations of evolutionists, life appeared on earth all of a sudden and fully-formed.

A famous British paleontologist, Derek V. Ager, admits this fact, even though he is an evolutionist:

*The point emerges that if we examine the fossil record in detail, whether at the level of orders or of species, we find—over and over again—not gradual evolution, but the sudden explosion of one group at the expense of another.*<sup>53</sup>

This means that in the fossil record, all living species suddenly emerge as fully formed, without any intermediate forms in between. This is just the opposite of Darwin's assumptions. Also, it is very strong evidence that living beings are created. The only explanation of a living species emerging suddenly and complete in every detail without any evolutionary ancestor can be that this species was created. This fact is admitted also by the widely known evolutionist biologist Douglas Futuyma:

*Creation and evolution, between them, exhaust the possible explanations for the origin of living things. Organisms either appeared on the earth fully developed or they did not. If they did not, they must have developed from pre-existing species by some process of modification. If they did appear in a fully developed state, they must indeed have been created by some omnipotent intelligence.*<sup>54</sup>

Fossils show that living beings emerged fully developed and in a perfect state on the earth. That means that "the origin of species" is, contrary to Darwin's supposition, not evolution but creation.

## The Tale of Human Evolution

The subject most often brought up by the advocates of the theory of evolution is the subject of the origin of man. The Darwinist claim holds that the modern men of today evolved from some kind of ape-like creatures. During this alleged evolutionary process, which is supposed to have started 4-5 million years ago, it is claimed that there existed some "transitional forms" between modern man and his ancestors. According to this completely imaginary scenario, four basic "categories" are listed:

1. Australopithecus
2. Homo habilis
3. Homo erectus
4. Homo sapiens

Evolutionists call the so-called first ape-like ancestors of men "*Australopithecus*" which means "South African ape." These living beings are actually nothing but an old ape species that has become extinct. Extensive research done on various *Australopithecus* specimens by two world famous anatomists from England and the USA, namely, Lord Solly Zuckerman and Prof. Charles Oxnard, has shown that these belonged to an ordinary ape species that became extinct and bore no resemblance to humans.<sup>55</sup>

Evolutionists classify the next stage of human evolution as "homo," that is "man." According to the evolutionist claim, the living beings in the Homo series are more developed than *Australopithecus*. Evolutionists devise a fanciful evolution scheme by arranging different fossils of these creatures in a particular order. This scheme is imaginary because it has never been proved that there is an evolutionary relation between these different classes. Ernst Mayr, one of the most important proponents of the theory of evolution in the 20th century, contends in his book *One Long Argument* that "*particularly historical [puzzles] such as the origin of life or of Homo sapiens, are extremely difficult and may even resist a final, satisfying explanation.*"<sup>56</sup>

By outlining the link chain as "*Australopithecus > Homo habilis > Homo erectus > Homo sapiens*," evolutionists imply that each of these species is one another's ancestor. However, recent findings of paleoanthropologists have revealed that *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus* lived at different parts of the world at the same time.<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, a certain segment of humans classified as *Homo erectus* have lived up until very modern times. *Homo sapiens neandarthalensis* and *Homo sapiens sapiens* (modern man) co-existed in the same region.<sup>58</sup>

This situation apparently indicates the invalidity of the claim that they are ancestors of one another. A paleontologist from Harvard University, Stephen Jay Gould, explains this deadlock of the theory of evolution although he is an evolutionist himself:

*What has become of our ladder if there are three coexisting lineages of hominids (A. africanus, the robust australopithecines, and H. habilis), none clearly derived from another? Moreover, none of the three display any evolutionary trends during their tenure on earth.*<sup>59</sup>

Put briefly, the scenario of human evolution, which is sought to be upheld with the help of various drawings of some "half ape, half human" creatures appearing in the media and course books, that is, frankly, by means of propaganda, is nothing but a tale with no scientific ground.

Lord Solly Zuckerman, one of the most famous and respected scientists in the U.K., who carried out research on this subject for years, and particularly studied Australopithecus fossils for 15 years, finally concluded, despite being an evolutionist himself, that there is, in fact, no such family tree branching out from ape-like creatures to man.

Zuckerman also made an interesting "spectrum of science." He formed a spectrum of sciences ranging from those he considered scientific to those he considered unscientific. According to Zuckerman's spectrum, the most "scientific"—that is, depending on concrete data—fields of science are chemistry and physics. After them come the biological sciences and then the social sciences. At the far end of the spectrum, which is the part considered to be most "unscientific," are "extra-sensory perception"—concepts such as telepathy and sixth sense—and finally "human evolution." Zuckerman explains his reasoning:

*We then move right off the register of objective truth into those fields of presumed biological science, like extrasensory perception or the interpretation of man's fossil history, where to the faithful [evolutionist] anything is possible—and where the ardent believer [in evolution] is sometimes able to believe several contradictory things at the same time.*<sup>60</sup>

The tale of human evolution boils down to nothing but the prejudiced interpretations of some fossils unearthed by certain people, who blindly adhere to their theory.

## **Technology In The Eye and The Ear**

Another subject that remains unanswered by evolutionary theory is the excellent quality of perception in the eye and the ear.

Before passing on to the subject of the eye, let us briefly answer the question of "how we see." Light rays coming from an object fall oppositely on the retina of the eye.

Here, these light rays are transmitted into electric signals by cells and they reach a tiny spot at the back of the brain called the centre of vision. These electric signals are perceived in this centre of the brain as an image after a series of processes. With this technical background, let us do some thinking.

The brain is insulated from light. That means that the inside of the brain is solid dark, and light does not reach the location where the brain is situated. The place called the centre of vision is a solid dark place where no light ever reaches; it may even be the darkest place you have ever known. However, you observe a luminous, bright world in this pitch darkness.

The image formed in the eye is so sharp and distinct that even the technology of the twentieth century has not been able to attain it. For instance, look at the book you read, your hands with which you hold it, then lift your head and look around you. Have you ever seen such a sharp and distinct image as this one at any other place? Even the most developed television screen produced by the greatest television producer in the world cannot provide such a sharp image for you. This is a three-dimensional, colored, and extremely sharp image. For more than 100 years, thousands of engineers have been trying to achieve this sharpness. Factories, huge premises were established, much research has been done, plans and designs have been made for this purpose. Again, look at a TV screen and the book you hold in your hands. You will see that there is a big difference in sharpness and distinction. Moreover, the TV screen shows you a two-dimensional image, whereas with your eyes, you watch a three-dimensional perspective having depth.

For many years, tens of thousands of engineers have tried to make a three-dimensional TV, and reach the vision quality of the eye. Yes, they have made a three-dimensional television system but it is not possible to watch it without putting on glasses; moreover, it is only an artificial three-dimension. The background is more blurred, the foreground appears like a paper setting. Never has it been possible to produce a sharp and distinct vision like that of the eye. In both the camera and the television, there is a loss of image quality.

Evolutionists claim that the mechanism producing this sharp and distinct image has been formed by chance. Now, if somebody told you that the television in your room was formed as a result of chance, that all its atoms just happened to come together and make up this device that produces an image, what would you think? How can atoms do what thousands of people cannot?

If a device producing a more primitive image than the eye could not have been formed by chance, then it is very evident that the eye and the image seen by the eye could not have been formed by chance. The same situation applies to the ear. The outer ear picks up the available sounds by the auricle and directs them to the middle ear; the middle ear transmits the sound vibrations by intensifying them; the inner ear sends

these vibrations to the brain by translating them into electric signals. Just as with the eye, the act of hearing finalises in the centre of hearing in the brain.

The situation in the eye is also true for the ear. That is, the brain is insulated from sound just like it is from light: it does not let any sound in. Therefore, no matter how noisy is the outside, the inside of the brain is completely silent. Nevertheless, the sharpest sounds are perceived in the brain. In your brain, which is insulated from sound, you listen to the symphonies of an orchestra, and hear all the noises in a crowded place. However, if the sound level in your brain was measured by a precise device at that moment, it would be seen that a complete silence is prevailing there.

As is the case with imagery, decades of effort have been spent in trying to generate and reproduce sound that is faithful to the original. The results of these efforts are sound recorders, high-fidelity systems, and systems for sensing sound. Despite all this technology and the thousands of engineers and experts who have been working on this endeavour, no sound has yet been obtained that has the same sharpness and clarity as the sound perceived by the ear. Think of the highest-quality HI-FI systems produced by the biggest company in the music industry. Even in these devices, when sound is recorded some of it is lost; or when you turn on a HI-FI you always hear a hissing sound before the music starts. However, the sounds that are the products of the technology of the human body are extremely sharp and clear. A human ear never perceives a sound accompanied by a hissing sound or with atmospherics as does HI-FI; it perceives sound exactly as it is, sharp and clear. This is the way it has been since the creation of man.

So far, no visual or recording apparatus produced by man has been as sensitive and successful in perceiving sensory data as are the eye and the ear.

However, as far as seeing and hearing are concerned, a far greater fact lies beyond all this.

## **To Whom Does the Consciousness that Sees and Hears Within the Brain Belong?**

Who is it that watches an alluring world in its brain, listens to symphonies and the twittering of birds, and smells the rose?

The stimulations coming from the eyes, ears, and nose of a human being travel to the brain as electro-chemical nervous impulses. In biology, physiology, and biochemistry books, you can find many details about how this image forms in the brain. However, you will never come across the most important fact about this subject: Who is it that perceives these electro-chemical nervous impulses as images, sounds, odours and sensory events in the brain? There is a consciousness in the brain that perceives all this without feeling any need for eye, ear, and nose. To whom does this consciousness belong? There is no doubt that this consciousness does not belong to the nerves, the fat

layer and neurons comprising the brain. This is why Darwinist-materialists, who believe that everything is comprised of matter, cannot give any answer to these questions.

For this consciousness is the spirit created by Allah. The spirit needs neither the eye to watch the images, nor the ear to hear the sounds. Furthermore, nor does it need the brain to think.

Everyone who reads this explicit and scientific fact should ponder on Almighty Allah, should fear Him and seek refuge in Him, He Who squeezes the entire universe in a pitch-dark place of a few cubic centimetres in a three-dimensional, colored, shadowy, and luminous form.

## **A Materialist Faith**

The information we have presented so far shows us that the theory of evolution is a claim evidently at variance with scientific findings. The theory's claim on the origin of life is inconsistent with science, the evolutionary mechanisms it proposes have no evolutionary power, and fossils demonstrate that the intermediate forms required by the theory never existed. So, it certainly follows that the theory of evolution should be pushed aside as an unscientific idea. This is how many ideas such as the earth-centered universe model have been taken out of the agenda of science throughout history.

However, the theory of evolution is pressingly kept on the agenda of science. Some people even try to represent criticisms directed against the theory as an "attack on science." Why?

The reason is that the theory of evolution is an indispensable dogmatic belief for some circles. These circles are blindly devoted to materialist philosophy and adopt Darwinism because it is the only materialist explanation that can be put forward for the workings of nature.

Interestingly enough, they also confess this fact from time to time. A well known geneticist and an outspoken evolutionist, Richard C. Lewontin from Harvard University, confesses that he is "first and foremost a materialist and then a scientist":

*It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, so we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.* <sup>61</sup>

These are explicit statements that Darwinism is a dogma kept alive just for the sake of adherence to the materialist philosophy. This dogma maintains that there is no being save matter. Therefore, it argues that inanimate, unconscious matter created life. It insists that millions of different living species; for instance, birds, fish, giraffes, tigers,

insects, trees, flowers, whales and human beings originated as a result of the interactions between matter such as the pouring rain, the lightning flash, etc., out of inanimate matter. This is a precept contrary both to reason and science. Yet Darwinists continue to defend it just so as "not to allow a Divine Foot in the door."

Anyone who does not look at the origin of living beings with a materialist prejudice will see this evident truth: All living beings are works of a Creator, Who is All-Powerful, All-Wise and All-Knowing. This Creator is Allah, Who created the whole universe from non-existence, designed it in the most perfect form, and fashioned all living beings.



# **The Theory of Evolution is the Most Potent Spell in the World**

It needs to be made clear that anyone free of prejudice and the influence of any particular ideology, who uses only his reason and logic, will clearly understand that belief in the theory of evolution, which brings to mind the superstitions of societies with no knowledge of science or civilization, is quite impossible.

As has been explained above, those who believe in the theory of evolution think that a few atoms and molecules thrown into a huge vat could produce thinking, reasoning professors, university students, scientists such as Einstein and Galileo, artists such as Humphrey Bogart, Frank Sinatra and Pavarotti, as well as antelopes, lemon trees and carnations. Moreover, the scientists and professors who believe in this nonsense are educated people. That is why it is quite justifiable to speak of the theory of evolution as "the most potent spell in history." Never before has any other belief or idea so taken away peoples' powers of reason, refused to allow them to think intelligently and logically and hidden the truth from them as if they had been blindfolded. This is an even worse and unbelievable blindness than the Egyptians worshipping the Sun God Ra, totem worship in some parts of Africa, the people of Saba worshipping the Sun, the tribe of the Prophet Ibrahim (as) worshipping idols they had made with their own hands or the people of the Prophet Musa (as) worshipping the Golden Calf.

In fact, this situation is a lack of reason pointed to by Allah in the Qur'an. He reveals in many verses that some peoples' minds will be closed and that they will be powerless to see the truth. Some of these verses are as follows:

**As for those who disbelieve, it makes no difference to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. Allah has sealed up their hearts and hearing and over their eyes is a blindfold. They will have a terrible punishment. (Surat al-Baqara: 6-7)**

**... They have hearts they do not understand with. They have eyes they do not see with. They have ears they do not hear with. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the unaware. (Surat al-A'raf: 179)**

**Even if We opened up to them a door into heaven, and they spent the day ascending through it, they would only say, "Our eyesight is befuddled! Or rather we have been put under a spell!" (Surat al-Hijr: 14-15)**

Words cannot express just how astonishing it is that this spell should hold such a wide community in thrall, keep people from the truth, and not be broken for 150 years. It is understandable that one or a few people might believe in impossible scenarios and

claims full of stupidity and illogicality. However, "magic" is the only possible explanation for people from all over the world believing that unconscious and lifeless atoms suddenly decided to come together and form a universe that functions with a flawless system of organization, discipline, reason and consciousness, the planet Earth with all its features so perfectly suited to life, and living things full of countless complex systems.

In fact, Allah reveals in the Qur'an in the incident of the Prophet Musa (as) and Pharaoh that some people who support atheistic philosophies actually influence others by magic. When Pharaoh was told about the true religion, he told Musa (as) to meet with his own magicians. When Musa (as) did so, he told them to demonstrate their abilities first. The verses continue:

**He said, "You throw." And when they threw, they cast a spell on the people's eyes and caused them to feel great fear of them. They produced an extremely powerful magic. (Surat al-A'raf: 116)**

As we have seen, Pharaoh's magicians were able to deceive everyone, apart from Musa (as) and those who believed in him. However, the evidence put forward by Musa (as) broke that spell, or "swallowed up what they had forged" as the verse puts it.

**We revealed to Musa, "Throw down your staff." And it immediately swallowed up what they had forged. So the Truth took place and what they did was shown to be false. (Surat al-A'raf: 117-119)**

As we can see from that verse, when it was realised that what these people who had first cast a spell over others had done was just an illusion, they lost all credibility. In the present day too, unless those who under the influence of a similar spell believe in these ridiculous claims under their scientific disguise and spend their lives defending them abandon them, they too will be humiliated when the full truth emerges and the spell is broken. In fact, Malcolm Muggeridge, an atheist philosopher and supporter of evolution admitted he was worried by just that prospect:

*I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially the extent to which it's been applied, will be one of the great jokes in the history books in the future. Posterity will marvel that so very flimsy and dubious an hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible credulity that it has. 62*

That future is not far off: On the contrary, people will soon see that "chance" is not a god, and will look back on the theory of evolution as the worst deceit and the most terrible spell in the world. That spell is already rapidly beginning to be lifted from the shoulders of people all over the world. Many people who see the true face of the theory of evolution are wondering with amazement how it was that they were ever taken in by it.

**They said, "Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us.**

**You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."**

**(Surat al-Baqara: 32)**

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