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SAID NURSI**

**THE RECONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC
THOUGHT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
AND BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI**

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by Şükran Vahide

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Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Ideas on the Qur'an's Miraculousness

'Abd al-Ghafur Mahmud Mustafa Ja'far

*In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
All praise be to God, and His blessings and peace be upon our master,
His Prophet, and on his Family and Companions.*

As readers will see from this limited study, the question of Bediuzzaman's ideas on the Qur'an's miraculousness is a subject which requires extensive study. Success is only from God Almighty.

An outline of Bediuzzaman's life

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was born in the village of Nurs in eastern Anatolia in 1293/1873, and died on 25th Ramadan 1379/1960. He was given the name of Bediuzzaman from a young age due to his extraordinary intelligence and learning.

He made marked progress in the sciences of Arabic and the Shari'a, and in addition studied mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, physics, geology, philosophy and other sciences. He attached great importance to the founding of a university in which would be taught the Islamic sciences, and schools where the modern sciences would be taught in conjunction with the religious sciences. He undertook to answer all questions asked of him, and worked for the deliverance from despotism, and for the maintenance of order and security. At the same time, he suffered many difficulties and much oppression. He left behind him numerous and extensive works, some of which are *Sözler*, *Mektûbat*, *Şualar*, *Lem'alar*, etc. His most important work in the field of Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsîr*)

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and miraculousness is *Ishārāt al-I'jāz fī Mazānn al-Ījāz*. These and other similar works number around 210. They have been described as "works supported by reasoned argument in the fields of Qur'anic commentary, rhetoric, and the tenets of belief ('*aqīda*')."¹

The concept and definition of miraculousness

I'jāz (miraculousness): originally to prove someone's impotence in a matter. It was later used to mean to display another person's impotence in some matter.

I'jāz al-Qur'an (the Qur'an's miraculousness): proving the Qur'an's aspects which any creature would be impotent to bring into being. Here the verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) is used in reference to the 'doer' (*fā'il*), and the passive (*maf'ūl*) and others are omitted. But the thing intended here is not the above-mentioned proof or the display of the thing it necessitates, it is the thing which is 'necessary.' That is, it is to show that this Book of Truth has come from God, and that it was sent to His faithful Prophet. After grasping this, one reaches the conclusion that man is impotent to produce the like of such a work in the field of knowledge and that it has proceeded from God, Who is in absolutely no way impotent. One also concludes that this characteristic corroborates and affirms the Envoy who brought the elevated book to us. And so, believing that this Envoy is God's Prophet, they endeavour to follow him in this world and the next.² All this agrees with the things written in Bediuzzaman's works.

The extent of the miraculousness

Bediuzzaman wrote about this: "...Then, not the whole Qur'an, or a sura, or a verse, but each of its words became like a miracle."³ Alluding to the same truth, he said: "And I understood that not only the Qur'an's verses and words, but some of its letters even like the '*nūn*' of '*na'budu*,' were luminous keys to important truths."⁴

Ibn Hajar al-Haythami mentioned this. He said: "The fact that people are powerless to create anything similar to even the easily expressible verses is witness to this question."⁵ And, "The various sorts of relationships between some of the previous and subsequent verses is another wonder."⁶ "In truth man is impotent to express the subjects stated by certain verses and explained in one verse in particular⁷ taking into consideration the relations with previous and following verses."⁸ "If one has to put it clearly, someone looking from the outside would

1. These works have all been printed; they are listed in the book by Ihsan Qasim al-Salihi, *Badi' u'z-Zaman Sa'id al-Nursi, Nazara 'amma 'an Hayatihi wa Atharihi*, Istanbul, Sözlür Publications 1985.

2. See, al-Balini, 'Abd al-Rahim Faraj, *I'jāz al-Qur'an al-Karim*, 1-2; Muhammad al-Hakim, *I'jāz al-Qur'an*, 1398H, 40-41.

3. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, *Mektubat*, Istanbul, Sözlür Yayınevi 1981, 369 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi—Letters 1928-1932* [Eng. trans: Şükran Vahide], Sözlür Publications 1994, 462.

4. *Mektubat*, 369 / *Letters*, 462.

5. Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, *Sharh Hamziyya al-Büsrî*, 1326H, 134.

6. *Ibid*.

7. See, Qur'an, 74:21.

8. *Sharh Hamziyya*, 134.

be powerless to set in sequence anything resembling the three verses. For he will have heard nothing from anyone resembling what they express."⁹

And I say it is clearly apparent that when saying that a single letter is a miracle, Bediuzzaman's intention it not to see it as unconnected with preceeding and subsequent letters, or when discussing a word, again it is not without drawing attention to its neighbours. His basic purpose is to point out the aspects from which the meanings emerge and which become apparent through the relationships of the words with the subject, and about which no idea could be formed when on their own disjoined from the others, and the coming together of whose meanings in anything produced by man would be impossible. As is known, in man's words or writing, the changing of any word has no great effect on the meaning, and sometimes has no effect at all.

Moving on from the meanings the like of which man is powerless to produce, we may say that whether the words by which the meanings are expressed are many or few, they are all miracles. And in regard to the meanings mentioned above where the words are seen in context, the allusive meanings of a single letter also are of this sort. If we consider to be a miracle the fact that another word cannot be exchanged for a word that serves as a word of Divine speech, in the same way we can understand a letter even being a miracle only by taking into consideration its position in relation to other words.

The following are two examples:

"Here, we shall demonstrate the word-order in the parts of a sentence as a whole. For example: *But if a breath of your Sustainer's punishment touches them.*¹⁰ In this sentence, it wants to point out the terribleness of the punishment by showing the severity of the least amount. That is to say, it expresses littleness or fewness, and all the parts of the sentence also look to this littleness or fewness, and reinforce it.

"Thus, the words, 'But if' signify doubt, and doubt looks to littleness or fewness.

"The word 'touches' means to touch lightly and expresses a small amount.

"And just as the word 'a breath' is merely a whiff, so too is it in the singular form. Grammatically it is a *maṣḍar al-marra* and signifies once. Also the *tanwīn* indicating indefiniteness in 'a breathe' expresses littleness or fewness and means it is so insignificant that it can scarcely be known.

"The word 'of' signifies division or a part; it means a bit and indicates paucity.

"The word 'punishment' points to a light sort of punishment in relation to chastisement (*nakāl*) or penalty (*i'qāb*), and suggests a small amount.

"And by alluding to compassion and being used in place of Subduer, All-Compelling, or Avenger, the word 'Sustainer' indicates littleness or fewness. It says, if the small amount of punishment suggested in all this paucity has such an effect, you can compare how dreadful Divine chastisement would be. How much then do the small parts of this sentence look to one another and assist one another.

9. Ibid.

10. Qur'an, 21:46.

How each reinforces the aim of the whole. This example looks to the words and aim in one degree."¹¹

In my opinion, these are sufficient as examples of the miraculousness of the Qur'an's words made by Bediuzzaman and al-Haythami.

Secondly: About the miraculousness of the letters, Bediuzzaman wrote the following:

"At one time I was pondering over the use of the first person plural in *You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help*,¹² and my heart was seeking the reason why the first person singular had been transposed into the first person plural of 'we worship' (*na'budu*). Suddenly from that 'nūn' the mystery and virtues of performing the prayers in congregation was unfolded to me. I saw that my participating in the congregation in Bayezid Mosque, where I was performing the prayer, made each of the congregation a sort of intercessor for me, who testified to and affirmed each of the statements I pronounced in reciting the prayers. In the midst of the great, multiple worship of the congregation, I received the courage to offer my deficient worship to the Divine Court. Then a further veil was lifted. That is, all the mosques of Istanbul were added. The city became like Beyazid Mosque. Suddenly I felt as though I was receiving their prayers and affirmation. Then within that, I saw myself in the mosque of the face of the earth, in the circular rows around the Ka'ba. I declared: 'All praise be to God, the Sustainer of All the Worlds!' I have intercessors to this great number; they say exactly the same words as I say in the prayers, confirming me. Since this veil was raised by the imagination, the Noble Ka'ba became like the *mihrāb*. Taking advantage of this opportunity, I called on the ranks of the congregation to testify and entrusted the interpreter of belief, 'I testify that there is no god but God, and I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of God' to the Black Stone. While saying this, a further situation was laid open before me: I saw that the congregation of which I was a part was separated into three circles:

"The First Circle was the vast congregation of believers and those who affirm Divine Unity on the face of the earth.

"The Second Circle: I looked and saw that I was part of a congregation consisting of all beings, all of which, performing prayers and glorification, were occupied with the prayers and glorification particular to its group and species. Their worship consists of the activities we observe, called 'the duties of things.' Declaring: 'God is Most Great!' before this, I bowed my head in wonderment, and looked at myself:

"Within a Third Circle I saw an astonishing microcosm which was apparently and in quality small, but in reality, number, and duties, great. This, from the particles of my being to my external senses was a congregation in which every group was occupied with duties of worship and thanks. In this circle, the dominical inner faculty in my heart was saying: '*You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help*' in the name of the congregation. Just as in the two former congregations my tongue said it, having formed the intention to say it in their names.

"I n S h o r t : The 'Nūn' of 'na'budu' alludes to these three congregations...."¹³

11. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, *Sözler*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 343 / *The Words* [Eng. trans: Şükran Vahide], Sözler Publications 1993, 380-1.

12. Qur'an, 1:6.

13. *Mektûbat*, 368 / *Letters*, 461-2.

Thus, Bediuzzaman points out the miraculousness encompassing a single letter as the above clearly shows; he was unique in observing such signs of miraculousness from the point of view of the wondrous arrival of inspiration.

We may ask ourselves what the measure of miraculousness is in respect of relating facts about the Unseen [the realms beyond man's normal perceptions]. The answer may be given immediately: it is a matter about which a person could not be informed in limitless fashion by others, be they soothsayers or geniuses, and particularly knowledge of the meanings this miraculousness and certain knowledge express.

If such facts related by the Qur'an are thought of together with someone (PBUH) whose word is trusted and what he has said has come about, and as a human source is well-known, from whom has been heard no lies and no sooth-saying, and about whom are other facts inducing confidence, we should feel no hesitation in the face of such facts, even if they infer a miracle.

The prevailing opinion among the *'ulama* has not limited the measure of miraculousness in a sura or verse in respect of eloquence and manner of exposition. For such a measure facilitates the understanding of the miraculousness in the above-mentioned places by a person studying them. In fact, it facilitates the *'ulama's* studying these measures in order to reveal the miraculousness in all its aspects. These results which we have arrived at within specific, limited measures are sufficient for us and for those who think similarly—I mean the limitations made by the *'ulama* in works composed by them.

At this point I call on those who support expressing the miraculousness through specific measures, when considering any of the short suras, to study God's Book with the intention of discovering its aspect or aspects of miraculousness. God Almighty will assist us in our aim.

The Aspects of Miraculousness

In his work entitled *Mu'tarak al-Aqrān fī l'jāz al-Qur'ān*, Suyūṭī states that the Qur'an has thirty-five aspects of miraculousness. The author of *al-Qur'ān Yatahadda* puts this number at forty.¹⁴ By stating that the sorts of miraculousness are forty,¹⁵ Bediuzzaman does not intend to restrict them, as is understood from his mentioning two hundred aspects of miraculousness in another work.¹⁶ Most probably he does not intend any restriction with this number either. However, he chose to expound a limited number of the aspects. With God's help, we shall here try to enumerate these:

1. Word-Order (*Naẓm*)

Bediuzzaman said concerning this:

"An important aspect of the miraculousness is manifested in its word-order; the

14. Since it is Suyūṭī who has mentioned it, see pp. 190-3 of the work. The second author is Aḥmad 'Izz al-Dīn 'Abdullāh the forty aspects he mentions are on pp. 248-9, while descriptions of them continue to page 681.

15. *Sözler*, 339 / *The Words*, 376.

16. *Mektûbat*, 379 / *Letters*, 474.

most brilliant miraculousness consists of the embroideries of the Qur'an's word-order."¹⁷

It is clear Bediuzzaman considered the word-order to be an important aspect of miraculousness. He also wrote:

"The most elevated aspect of its miraculousness is in the eloquence of its word-order. Yes, the sort of the Qur'an's miraculousness is at a degree exceeding the power of man... There is a wonderful eloquence and purity of style in the Qur'an's word-order. From beginning to end, *Ishārāt al-l'jāz* demonstrates this eloquence and conciseness in the word-order. The way the second, minute, and hour hands of a clock each complete the order of the others, that is the way the entire work explains the order in each sentence and passage of the All-Wise Qur'an, and in each of its words, and in the order in the relationships between the sentences..."¹⁸

The word-order and its embellishment has to be conformed to, and similes and metaphors and similar figures of speech should not be eschewed. He wrote the following concerning this:

"Writing should be embellished, but on condition it is natural to its meaning; and the form of the meaning should be made imposing, but on condition permission is sought from the meaning; and the style should be made brilliant, but on condition the relationship with its purpose is taken into consideration and it is content with it; and the imagination should be allowed to roam and to sparkle, but on condition it is not detrimental to reality and is not burdensome, and is a simile for reality and seeks assistance from reality."¹⁹

This is the view of the Word-Order (*Nazm*) School, which looks on writing as having two faces like paper money. Both faces have to be complete and to be in harmony with each other. 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jurjani was of the opinion that there was a wall and barrier between these two faces. Members of the Word (*Lafz*) School responded to this view by stating that there was no need for the meaning to be deep. An example was Muslim b. Walid. However, Jahiz did not agree with these misgivings, and did not follow them. In the same way, the Meaning (*Ma'na*) School joined in this debate by emphasizing the aspects of meaning. They considered giving excessive importance to the words to be artificial, and therefore avoided considering the words to any great extent. If it was necessary or possible to attach importance to the words, they would consider them from the point of view of their serving the meaning. For the words on their own could not be the main aim. The foremost proponent of this school was Ibn Junay.²⁰ Bediuzzaman discussed the most powerful of these schools.

The basis of the miraculousness of the word-order is conciseness. "Conciseness is one of the strongest and most important elements of the Qur'an's miraculousness."²¹ We saw a very clear example concerning the measure for miraculousness, which we explained above. We now turn again to Bediuzzaman's work

17. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, *İşārātü'l-l'caz*, İstanbul, Sözlür Yayınevi 1978, 11.

18. *İşārātü'l-l'caz*, 137; *Sözlür*, 343 / *The Words*, 380.

19. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, *Muhâkemat*, İstanbul, Sözlür Yayınevi 1977, 79.

20. These facts about the three schools are taken from: Dr. Bakrî Shaykh Amin, *al-Balâgha al-'Arabiyya fi Thawbihâ'l-Jadid*, Beirut 1990.

21. *Mektûbat*, 293 / *Letters*, 374.

Ishārāt al-l'jāz, which includes the example *But if a breath of your Sustainer's punishment touches them* and contains many examples of the Qur'an's miraculousness in respect of its word-order. A further example is as follows, where he expounds the verse *And spend [in God's way] out of what We have provided for them*.²²

"There are a number of conditions for *zakāt* and almsgiving finding the places they deserve: ...

i. 'Out of' (*min*), which expresses division [alludes to] the rejection of waste [in the giving of almsgiving].

ii. 'Out of what' (*mimmā*): the placing of this beforehand states that the alms are not [the giver's] property.

iii. 'We have provided' (*razaqnā*): not making [the recipient] feel obliged, since the one giving is God, while His servant is merely the means.

iv. 'We' (*nā*), the ascription here: not being frightened of poverty.

v. '*Rizq*' being mentioned here as absolute and general [infers] that almsgiving includes the giving of things like knowledge and thought.

vi. The use of the verb *nafaqa* in 'spend' indicates that the alms should be used by the one receiving them not on frivolous things but on essential needs."²³

This and the use of the imperfect indicates—as far as I understand it—continuation and repetition. A good thing coming from God is perpetual and lasting. It reaches His creatures in the blinking of an eye. The thing alluded to here is this—from the recipient's point of view. God Almighty using the past tense of the verb indicates that it is a command that has been decreed.²⁴ "*And in the heavens is your sustenance, as [also] that which you are promised*."²⁵ The pen even dries up from writing.²⁶ The angels have inscribed the sustenance appointed for human beings on the secondary tablets.²⁷ Moreover, God Almighty alludes to the sustenance reaching His servants through the use of the pronominal suffix.

Word-order has been accepted by all the *'ulama* as one of the aspects of miraculousness. Bediuzzaman states in the light of the aspects of eloquent word-order that since the Holy Qur'an is a miracle, it is superior to everything. As far as I can see, he directed all his efforts to the word and meaning aspects of miraculousness, not restricting himself to any one of these. Those who want to hear his inimitable descriptions of the reasons for its superiority should turn to his works themselves. One of these is the capacity to make numerous deductions.²⁸ Within the concept he called the degrees of meanings and the indications of

22. Qur'an, 2:3.

23. *Iṣṣārātū'l-l'caz*, 47.

24. This refers to Sura al-Qamar, 54:12.

25. Qur'an, 51:22.

26. The meaning of a Hadith narrated by Ibn 'Abbās. See, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Sūra al-Qamar, 54:49.

27. According to a Hadith narrated by Ahmad b. Hanbal and the Shaykhān, the angel charged with breathing spirit into the embryo is also charged with designating three things: sustenance, the appointed hour, deeds, and whether it is destined for eternal happiness or eternal misery. See, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Sūra al-Mu'minūn, 23:14.

28. *Iṣṣārātū'l-l'caz*, 128.

these are invisible truths which may be perceived only as the air is perceived.²⁹ Due to the strength of the address from the point of view of the correspondence between the parts and the meanings, the word-order and its totality answer one another in pursuit of a common aim.³⁰

As we saw in the example *But if a breath... touches them*, and others like it,

"there is in the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition as a whole a pleasant fluency,³¹ a superior correctness, a firm mutual solidarity, and compact proportionateness, powerful co-operation between the sentences and parts, and an elevated harmony between the verses and their aims."³²

The essential qualities of this elevated eloquence have been called miraculous. From here one may pass to linking words. Each linkage manifests a meaning, and it assumes such a situation that each embroidery of a sequence shows up a vast tapestry. Individual ideas and the faculty of will remain impotent before this characteristic of the Qur'an.³³

"The Qur'an cannot be compared with other words and speech. This is because speech is of different categories, and in regard to superiority, power, beauty and fineness, has four sources: one is the speaker, another is the person addressed, another is the purpose, and another is the form. Its source is not only the form as literary people have wrongly shown. So consider in speech, 'Who said it? To whom did they say it? Why did they say it? In what form did they say it?' Do not consider only the words and stop there. Since speech draws its strength and beauty from these four sources, if the Qur'an's sources are studied carefully, the degree of its eloquence, superiority, and beauty will be understood."³⁴

"The Qur'an's style has a comprehensiveness so wonderful that a single sura contains the ocean of the Qur'an, which in turn contains the universe."³⁵

The Qur'an's word-order, which is one of its aspects of miraculousness, is in such a style that it conforms exactly to all the centuries and all the classes of men.³⁶

One of the conclusions Bediuzzaman reached was "the tendency of some writing (*imāla-i kalām*) is not apparently opposed to the evidence (*dalil*)."³⁷ This states a fact I have seen nowhere else and I did not previously know.³⁸ In my opinion, it is truly a fine statement. Thus, we have seen sufficiently one of the many aspects concerning this.

29. *Muhâkemat*, 88.

30. *Ibid.*, 83.

31. *Sözler*, 384 / *The Words*, 426.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *İşârâtü'l-l'caz*, 34.

34. *Sözler*, 400 / *The Words*, 443.

35. *Sözler*, 370 / *The Words*, 410.

36. *İşârâtü'l-l'caz*, 42.

37. *Muhâkemat*.

38. To summarize: if in a writing the context (*garîna*) is insufficient, a metaphorical meaning may definitely not be taken from it. If a metaphor is without an association, all its meaning lies in there not being a context which prevents or negates the reality. In the event of both being considered together, the point of the metaphor (Turk. *nükte-i mecâz*) and the flow of reality (*isâle-i hakikat*) will become apparent together. Metaphors become equal to reality in the event (Cont. overleaf)

2. The Disjointed Letters (*al-Hurūf al-Muqaṭṭa'āt*)

The 'Disjointed Letters' are the letters, like *Alif. Lām. Mīm., Hā. Mīm.,* and *Ṣād.*, that come at the beginnings of a number of suras. These number half the number of letters of the Arabic alphabet. They are the letters most frequently and most easily used. There are ten sets of pairs of letters in the alphabet. The emphatic (*jahr* or *majhūra*) and the non-emphatic (*hams* or *mahmūsa*) are two of these. Seven are individual letters. Like the tremolo (*qalqala*) letters. The Disjointed Letters at the start of the suras number half the letters of the alphabet. For example, if the number of letters is eighteen, those that are emphatic (*jahr*) are nine. And if the number of letters is ten, those that are non-emphatic (*hams*) are five. In the same way, half the number of letters of every category is included among the seven individual letters. These, however, cannot be equally divided. If they are 'heavy' letters, less than half is taken, and if 'light', more than half. If they are 'heavy' letters like the tremolo (*qalqala*) letters, two of the five letters are taken. While if they are 'light' letters like the labiolinguals (*dhawlāqīyya*), four of the six letters are taken.

In my view, this balance is not the main aim; it is a means for realizing the miraculousness. But perhaps the same is true in the use of all these letters or for each of them. The gist of the matter is as follows:

"1. Not counting the quiescent *alif*, the number of letters in the alphabet is

(38. cont.) of both their 'points' (*nükte*) and the 'flow' (*isāle*) being considered together. The bringing together of the reality and the metaphor is then like the bringing together of two realities which have been expressed without obstacle. Some of the schools of *fiqh*, not all of them, have considered the bringing together of these two with the intention of using them to be forbidden.

In expounding the verse, *And the sun runs in an orbit of its own; [and] that is is laid down by the the Exalted in Might, the All-Knowing* (Yā. Sīn., 36:38), they have benefited from these rules. Philosophers and commentators have expounded this verse in the light of ancient astronomy as follows: "'Runs' does not refer to 'running' around itself; it is rotating around the earth. Its rising and setting comes about in this way. Also, this 'running' bears a metaphorical meaning, not connected with any context (*qarina*).'" However, in the light of modern science and in the shadow of the above-mentioned rule, we say this: in reality, the sun's 'running' is around itself. It has no connection with its rising and setting. At the same time it has this metaphorical meaning: the motion apparent in the course of its rising and setting, arises in reality from the earth's rotating around it. In relation to the sun this has a metaphorical meaning stemming from its visible appearance. In reality and inwardly it has no such meaning. For the modern view sees such a statement as contrary to reality and the evidence.

Bediuzzaman's view was this: the Qur'an did not make these statements with the intention of establishing the false beliefs of ancient men. It afforded them a sort of period of grace until the truth became apparent. These statements are one hundred per cent the Qur'an's; they have been neither changed by anyone, nor added. If the Qur'an had put forward these facts from the outset, most people would not have believed in it; it would have been accused of falsehood; or they would have falsified the facts with the things they themselves believed. If everything had been made known to them explicitly in order to show God's power, the breadth of His knowledge, and the wondrousness of His determining, it would not have served the basic aim. It would have been contrary to the principle of offering evidence and addressing people according to their level. Besides explicit statements, the Qur'an employs hints and allusions in its guidance, and leaves the way open for the truth to be more fully understood as knowledge progresses. In this way, investigative scholars have understood the truth of these verses that were found satisfactory by the people of the past.

Glory be to God, the Exalted, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise, the All-Knowing, the Mighty! The above is clearly an aspect of miraculousness and eloquence. For further information, see, the 6th and 12th Principles, in the section entitled (The Principles of Scholarly Exegesis), in the work *Buhūth fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, by the present author.

twenty-eight. The Qur'an of Mighty Stature mentioned half of them at the start of suras and left half.

"2. The half the Qur'an took are more frequently used than those it left.

"3. Among the letters mentioned at the start of suras, the Qur'an most repeated *Alif. Lām.*, which are the easiest on the tongue.

"4. The [number of] suras in which the Qur'an deposited the letters corresponds to the number of letters of the alphabet.

"5. Half of each sort of the pairs of the letters of the alphabet were again taken, like the (concealed) (*mahmūsa*), the emphatic (*majhūra*), the stressed (*shadīda*), the soft (*rakhwa*), and the *musta'liya*, *munhafiza*, *muntabaqa*, and *munfatiha* letters.

"6. Of those which have no pairs (*awtār*), few have been taken of the 'heavy' and more have been taken from the 'light,' like the tremolo (*qalqala*) and labiolinguals (*dhawlāqiyya*).

"7. The way the Qur'an of Mighty Stature has chosen for the halving of the 'Disjointed Letters' at the start of the suras—in accordance with the method mentioned—is from a choice of five hundred and four. No other way of halving them is possible apart from the one chosen, for the divisions are extremely various and all overlap each other. One who cannot appreciate at all flashes of miraculousness like these should reprove and reproach their [lack of] discernment."³⁹

Here there is a balance between the light and the heavy. I see this in the light of what scholars of letters have written concerning the 'dispositions' of letters. These 'dispositions' are fourfold. 'Fire', so-called because such letters are hot and dry. 'Water', which is cold and fluid. Seven from each of these are found at the start of four suras. The first group of these are *alif, tā, mīm, hā*, and the remainder, *dhāl, shīn, wāw*. Those in the second group are *hā, 'ayn, lām*; while the remainder are *khā, dāl, ghayn*. Those of a 'disposition' between these are three out of seven. Of these, the letters of an 'earth disposition' are cold and dry, and are *ṣād, nūn, yā*; and the remainder are *bā, tā, dād, and wāw*. Those with the 'disposition' of 'air' are hot and fluid. These are *sīn, qāf, and kāf*; while the remainder are *thā, jīm, zāy, and zā*. This is truly a strange matter. They are all known by the great scholars of language, Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), and 'irfān.⁴⁰

Bediuzzaman mentions a number of subtle points connected with the letters at the start of some suras:

"The 'disjoining' of the letters at the start of the suras and their being read according to their names points to the source of the one signified, and why it has [they have] come into existence. These letters being 'disjointed' indicates that the one they signify is assumedly one and not compound."⁴¹

"Through showing the material and source of the art to those it addresses, the disjoining and enumerating of these letters challenges those who seek to dispute it. It says: 'I made miraculous art from the order and embroideries of these letters that you see. What can you say to this?', alluding to their insulting verbal assaults."⁴²

"The mention of these letters, stripped of meaning, indicates that its opponents

39. *İşârâtü'l-İ'caz*, 32-3.

40. See, Ibn Manzûr, *Lisân al-'Arab*. Some leading scholars of this matter are mentioned here.

41. *İşârâtü'l-İ'caz*, 33.

42. *Ibid.*

have been left without proof. Yes, through the tongue of these meaningless letters, the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition proclaims: I don't want elevated speeches and addresses from you expressing eloquent meanings and truths. Just compose the like of these letters I have enumerated; what you compose may even consist of lies and stories!"⁴³

"Spelling out letters syllable by syllable is particular to learners (*mubtadī*) of reading and writing. It is understood from this that the Qur'an is acting as teacher to an illiterate people and primitive (*mubtadī*) environment."⁴⁴

How can someone incapable of recognizing the miraculousness in this matter, and even in a single sentence, produce anything similar to it, and how could literary figures imitate its *fatwa's*?⁴⁵

Yes, these profound mysteries could not have appeared from an unlettered orphan. Even the most proficient master of rhetoric could have no part in them. For the Qur'an is a book bestowed by the Mighty and All-Knowing One as a miracle.

3. Repetitions

"Consider the flashes of miraculousness in its repetitions, which are imagined to be a fault: since the Qur'an is both a book of invocation, and a book of prayer, and a book of summons, the repetition in it is desirable, indeed, it is essential and most eloquent. It is not as the faulty imagine. For the mark of invocation is illumination through repetition. The mark of prayer is strengthening through repetition. The mark of command and summons is confirmation through repetition. Moreover, everyone is not capable of always reading the whole Qur'an, but mostly is able to read one sura. Therefore, since the most important purposes of the Qur'an are included in most of the longer suras, each is like a small Qur'an. That is to say, so that no one should be deprived, certain of its purposes like Divine Unity, the resurrection of the dead, and the story of Moses, have been repeated. Also, like bodily needs, spiritual needs also are various. Man is in need of some of them each breath; like the body needs air, the spirit needs the word *Hū* (He). Some he is in need of each hour, like 'In the Name of God.' And so on. This means the repetition of verses arises from the repetition of need. And it makes the repetition in order to point out the need and awaken and incite it, and to arouse desire and appetite.

"Also, the Qur'an is a founder. It is the basis of the Clear Religion and the foundation of the world of Islam. It changed human social life, and is the answer to the repeated questions of its various classes. Repetition is necessary for a founder in order to establish things. Repetition is necessary to corroborate them. Confirmation, repetition, and repeating are necessary to strengthen them.

"Also, it speaks of such mighty matters and minute truths that numerous repetitions are necessary in different forms in order to establish them in the hearts of everyone. Nevertheless, they are only apparently repetitions, for in meaning each verse has numerous meanings, numerous benefits, and many aspects and levels."⁴⁶ In each

43. Ibid., 34.

44. Ibid.

45. It is as though Bediuzzaman wants to say this through these pieces.

46. According to a Hadith in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Hībān, what is meant by meanings is meanings explicitly known by scholars. The 'people of reality' who study the mysteries that these comprise inwardly and outwardly may be party to these. For further information, see, Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān* 78; Ghazzālī, *ḥiyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, section on *Adab al-Tilāwa*.

place, they are mentioned for a different meaning, benefit, and purpose.

"Also, the Qur'an's being unspecific and concise in certain matters to do with the cosmos is a flash of miraculousness for the purpose of guidance. It cannot be the cause of criticism and is not a fault, like some atheists imagine."⁴⁷

"With regard to repetition being necessary due to the repetition of need, the repetition of certain verses which, as answers to numerous repeated questions over a period of twenty years, instructs numerous different levels of people is not a fault—indeed, to repeat certain sentences so powerful they produce thousands of results and a number of verses which result from countless evidences, which describe an infinite, awesome, all-embracing revolution which, by destroying utterly the vast universe and changing its shape at Doomsday, will remove the world and found the mighty hereafter in its place, and will prove that all particulars and universals from atoms to the stars are in the hand and under the disposal of a single Being, and will show the Divine wrath and dominical anger—on account of the result of the universe's creation—at mankind's wrongdoing, which brings to anger the earth and the heavens and the elements, to repeat such verses is not a fault, but most powerful miraculousness, and most elevated eloquence; an eloquence and lucid style corresponding exactly to the requirements of the subject.

"For example, as is explained in the Fourteenth Flash of the Risale-i Nur, the sentence, *In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate*, which forms a single verse and is repeated one hundred and fourteen times in the Qur'an, is a truth which binds the Divine Throne and the earth, and illuminates the cosmos, and for which everyone is in need all the time; if it was repeated millions of times, there would still be need for it. There is need and longing for it, not only every day like bread, but every moment like air and light.

"And, for example, the verse, *And verily your Sustainer is Exalted in Might, Most Compassionate*, which is repeated eight times in Sura Ta. Sin. Mim. Repeating on account of the result of the universe's creation and in the name of universal dominicality, the salvation of the prophets whose stories are told in the sura, and the punishments of their peoples, in order to teach that that dominical dignity requires the torments of those wrongdoing peoples and Divine Compassion also requires the prophets' salvation, is a concise, miraculous, and elevated miraculousness, for which, if repeated thousands of times, there would still be need and longing.

"And, for example, the verse, *Then which of the favours of your Sustainer will you deny?* which is repeated in Sura al-Rahman, and the verse, *Woe that Day to the rejecters of truth!*, in Sura al-Mursalat shout out threateningly to mankind and the jinn across the centuries and the heavens and the earth, the unbelief, ingratitude, and wrongdoing of those who bring the universe and the heavens and earth to anger, spoil the results of the world's creation, and deny and respond slightly to the majesty of Divine rule, and aggress against the rights of all creatures. If a general lesson thus concerned with thousands of truths and of the strength of thousands of matters is repeated thousands of times, there would still be need for it and its awe-inspiring conciseness and beautiful, miraculous eloquence."⁴⁸

If we look briefly at these expositions of Bediuzzaman, the repetition of the

47. *Mektûbat*, 186-7 / *Letters*, 244-5.

48. *Sözler*, 423-4 / *The Words*, 467-8.

verse *Then which of the favours of your Sustainer will you deny?* is not in reality repetition. For fresh bounties are mentioned after each repetition. Addressing man and the jinn after each mention, God Almighty is questioning them. If it is asked how this question may be asked after the mention of torment, the answer is that the torment being described and man being frightened by it is the greatest bounty. For it is a general restraint from deserved punishment. At the same time, it is encouragement to deserve reward. The verse coming after the mention of Hell and its torments points to the bounty after God describing the torment and frightening men and jinn with its torment. This is undoubtedly a bounty. The question may also arise as to this verse coming after the mention of transience. We may answer this as follows: attaining to happiness after grief, and believers being delivered from the evil of the wicked are both bounties, just as is recounted in Hadiths.⁴⁹

4. Miraculousness in respect of laws and rules

"Indeed, since the Qur'an's principles and laws have come from pre-eternity, they shall go to post-eternity. They are not condemned to grow old and die like civilization's laws. They are always young and strong."⁵⁰ "For example, despite all its societies for good works, all its establishments for the teaching of ethics, all its severe discipline and regulations, civilization has been unable to contest the All-Wise Qur'an on two of its matters, and has been defeated by them."⁵¹ "These two matters are: *Be steadfast in performing the prayers, and give zakāt*,⁵² and, *God has permitted trade and forbidden usury*.⁵³ We shall describe them, this miraculous victory, by means of an introduction. It is like this:

"As is proved in Signs of Miraculousness (*Ishārāt al-I'jāz*), just as the source of mankind's revolutions is one phrase, so too one phrase is the origin of all immorality.

"First Phrase: 'So long as I'm full, what is it to me if others die of hunger.'

"Second Phrase: 'You work so that I can eat.'

"Yes, the upper and lower classes in human society, that is, the rich and the poor, live at peace when in equilibrium. The basis of that equilibrium is compassion and kindness in the upper classes, and respect and obedience in the lower classes. Now, the first phrase has urged the upper classes to oppression, immorality, and mercilessness.⁵⁴ And like the second phrase has driven the lower classes to hatred, envy, and to contend the upper classes, and has negated man's tranquillity for several centuries, so too this century, as the result of the struggle between capital and labour, it has been the cause of the momentous events of Europe well-known by all.⁵⁵ ... The Qur'an, however, eradicates the first phrase with its injunction to pay *zakāt*, and heals it. While it uproots the second phrase with its prohibition on usury and interest, and cures that. Indeed, the Qur'anic verse stands at the door of the world and declares usury and interest to be forbidden. It reads out its

49. See, my work *Dirāsa fī Tafsīr al-Nasafī fī Sūra al-Rahmān*.

50. *Sözler*, 380 / *The Words*, 421.

51. *Ibid*.

52. Qur'an, 2:43.

53. Qur'an, 2:275.

54. *Sözler*, 380 / *The Words*, 421.

55. *Ibid*.

decree to mankind, saying: 'In order to close the door of strife, close the door of usury and interest!' It forbids its students to enter it.⁵⁶

"Second Principle: Civilization does not accept polygamy. It considers the Qur'an's decree to be contrary to wisdom and opposed to man's benefits. Indeed, if the purpose of marriage was only to satisfy lust, polygamy would have been contrary to it. But as is testified to by all animals and corroborated by plants that 'marry', the purpose and aim of marriage is reproduction. The pleasure of satisfying lust is a small wage given by Divine mercy in order to cause the duty to be performed. Since in truth and according to wisdom, marriage is for reproduction and the perpetuation of the species, since women can give birth only once a year, and can be impregnated only half the month, and after the age of fifty fall into despair, and men can impregnate till a hundred years old, and thus one woman is insufficient for one man, civilization has been compelled to accept numerous houses of ill-repute.⁵⁷

"Third Principle: Unreasoning civilization criticizes the Qur'anic verse which apportions to women one third [in inheritance]. Whereas most of the rules in social life exist because of their prevalence in regard to the majority, and mostly a woman finds someone to protect her. As for the man, she will be a burden on him and will have to combine efforts with someone else who will leave her her means of subsistence. Thus, in this form, if a woman takes half of the father's legacy, her husband makes up her deficiency. But if the man receives two parts from his father, one part he will give to maintaining the woman he has married, thus becoming equal with his sister. The justice of the Qur'an requires it to be thus. It has decreed it in this way.⁵⁸

"Fourth Principle: Just as the Qur'an forbids in severe fashion the worship of idols, so also it forbids the worship of forms, which is a sort of imitation of idol-worship. Whereas civilization counts forms as one of its virtues, and has wanted to dispute the Qur'an on this matter. But forms, whether images or concrete, are either embodied tyranny, or embodied hypocrisy, or embodied lust; they excite lust and encourage man to oppression, hypocrisy, and licentiousness."⁵⁹

Bediuzzaman has written other, similar passages expounding the rules and laws of the Qur'an which he discusses under headings such as "The Shari'a of the Qur'an, which is one of the evidences of its miraculousness," and "the miraculousness of the Qur'an's legislation."

If these are compared with what other scholars have written, it will be seen that in regard to objectivity and reasoning, they are both different and superior.

5. "Giving news of the Unseen," that is, relating facts about the realms beyond man's normal perception

The Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition is also miraculous in respect of its giving news of the Unseen, its preserving its youth, and being in conformity with all the classes of men. There are three aspects of miraculousness connected with the first of these:

The First is its giving news of the past, one part of the Unseen. It is agreed

56. Sözlür, 380 / *The Words*, 422.

57. Ibid.

58. Sözlür, 381 / *The Words*, 422.

59. Sözlür, 381 / *The Words*, 423.

unanimously that the All-Wise Qur'an recounts through the tongue of one who was unlettered and trustworthy, all the important events of the prophets from Adam to the Era of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It does this with great power and seriousness and is confirmed by the previous scriptures like the Torah and Gospels...

"The Second is its predicting the future, which is another part of the Unseen...

"The Third is its relating Divine truths, cosmic truths, and the matters of the hereafter. Indeed, the Qur'an's expositions of the Divine truths, and its explanations of the cosmos, which solve the talisman of the universe and riddle of creation, are the most important of knowledge concerning the Unseen... Furthermore it is after the Qur'an has explained these Divine truths and cosmic realities, which it points out, and after the heart has been cleansed and the soul purified, and after the spirit has advanced and the mind been perfected that the human mind affirms and accepts those truths..."⁶⁰

If an example of its predicting the future is needed, we may consider the verse *But if you cannot—and of a surety you cannot...* (2:24) Here it is said: you have not been able to produce anything similar to a single sura of the Qur'an, or to a single letter of it, so in the future you shall most definitely not be able to do so. So with this verse it silenced their retort that since they had not be able to in the past, it did not mean they would not be able to in the future. The Qur'an is relating facts about the Unseen in this way. And just as it said, no one has been able to dispute it.⁶¹

Another example concerns the 'al' of 'alladhīna' in the verse *And as to those who reject faith, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe* (2:6):

"... the five meanings that the definite article 'al' states, 'alladhīna' also states. The most famous of these is 'ahd', one meaning of which is knowledge or the well-known. That is, something known and to which allusion has been made (*ma'hūd*) is intended by both 'al' and 'alladhīna.' Therefore, there is a very strong possibility that through the 'alladhīna,' notorious, well-known, and prominent unbelievers like Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab, Umayya b. al-Khalaf, and others, are intended. This verse, then, is one of those giving news of the Unseen, for they all died still unbelieving."⁶²

There are many other examples that Bediuzzaman gives which corroborate and confirm this. In the same way, we may say since—in Sura Tabbat— Abu Lahab and his wife were going to die as unbelievers, the Qur'an is predicting the future. So too in Sura al-Nasr, here it is made known that the Prophet's (PBUH) death had drawn close. We could give numerous other verses as examples.

If we turn our attention to what Bediuzzaman says about the verses at the end of Sura al-Fath, we see that he sees indications in these to the foremost Companions like the Companions of Badr, Uhud, Hunayn, the Bay'a of Ridwan, and so on. In fact, he reaches this conclusion through *abjad* reckoning and 'coincidences' (*tawāfuqat*), which are forms of the science of *jafr*.⁶³

60. *Sözler*, 376 / *The Words*, 417-9.

61. *İşârâtü'l-İ'caz*, 143.

62. *Ibid.*, 72-3.

63. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar*, 32-5 / *The Flashes Collection* [Eng. trans: Şükran Vahide], Sözler Publications 1995, 45-52.

If this is correct, it means that the science of *jafr* is correct from the point of view of miraculousness, and it too should be accepted as miraculous. But this is not an acceptable and reasonable tendency.⁶⁴

I want to add that concealed aspects of man also pertain to the Unseen. If God does not wish it, neither the Prophet (PBUH) nor anyone else can know these. The Holy Qur'an states on this matter: *And they say to themselves, 'Why does God not punish us for our words?'* (58:8) It is also not possible to contradict this. Bediuzzaman and other scholars have given extensive explanations of this subject, together with there being some minor differences.

The predictions and news the Qur'an gives of the Unseen only come to light when studied very closely. Like Sura al-Nasr. Another verse indicates that none of the Prophet's (PBUH) male children would continue his line after him: *Muhammad is not the father of any of your men...* (33:40). One of Bediuzzaman's explanations of this verse is as follows:

"The Prophet's male children would not remain at the degree of 'men' (*rijāl*); as a consequence of some wise purpose, his line would not continue through men. Only, since through the use of the term '*rijāl*' it suggests that he is the father of women, his line would continue through women."⁶⁵

I should imagine he is the first person to give such an explanation.

6. Miraculousness connected with science and knowledge

In connection with "One flash of the Qur'an's miraculousness which shines on the face of the miracles of the Prophets,"⁶⁶ Bediuzzaman expounds the verse, *We said: O fire! Be cool and [a means of] safety for Abraham* (21:69) as follows:

"[In this verse] are three subtle indications:

"*The First:* Like other natural causes, fire does not act according to its own wishes and nature, blindly, but performs a duty under a command. Therefore, it did not burn Abraham (Upon whom be peace), for it was commanded not to burn him.

"*The Second:* There is a degree of heat which burns through its coldness. That is, it has an effect like burning. Through the word, *Be cool!*, God is saying to the coldness: 'Do not burn him with your coldness, the same as your heat!' That is to say, through its coldness, fire at that degree displays an effect like burning. It is both fire, and cold. Indeed, in natural science, there is a degree of fire, the state of 'white heat,' the heat of which does not spread to its surroundings. Since it attracts the heat around it to itself, with this sort of cold it freezes surrounding liquids like water, and in effect burns them through its cold. Thus, intense cold is a category of

64. *Jafr* and alchemy are sciences about the Unseen or occult sciences, consisting of symbols discovered by those who understand the two tablets or mysteries of divine determining and decree (*qadar wa qadā'*). In these subjects the pen must be used on a straight line. Both of these are based on books. The first, *Alī* (b. *Abī Tālib*) mentioned and taught with. While the mysteries and properties of the second were known only by the Prophet (PBUH). At the same time, the science of *jafr* was known by the Neo-Platonists and practised by them. That is all I know on this subject. So who would accept it? Who would do so reasonably? For further information, see my work, *Dirasāt fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān wa Manāhij al-Mufasssirīn*, ii, 214-6.

65. *Sözler*, 384 / *The Words*, 426.

66. *Sözler*, 249 / *The Words*, 275.

fire which burns through its cold. In which case, there must surely be in Hell, which contains all the degrees and sorts of fire, this intense cold.

"The Third: Like there is an immaterial substance like belief, which is an obstacle to the effects of Hell-fire and affords security from it, an armour like Islam, so too there is a physical substance which prevents the effects of worldly fire. For as is required by the Name of All-Wise, since this world is the abode of wisdom, God carries out His works under the veil of causes. Therefore, like the fire did not burn Abraham's body, neither did it burn his garments; He gave them a state which resisted fire. Thus, through this allusion, in meaning the verse is saying: 'O Nation of Abraham! Be like Abraham, so that your garments may be your armour against the fire, your greatest enemy, both here, and there. Clothe your spirit in belief in God, and it will be your armour against Hell-fire. So too there are certain substances which God has hidden in the earth for you which will protect you from fire's evil. Search for them, extract them, and clothe yourselves in them!' Thus, one of man's important discoveries and steps in his progress was his finding a substance which fire does not burn; and he clothed himself in garments resistant to fire. And see how elevated, subtle, and fine a garment this verse weaves on the loom of *Hanîfan Musliman*, which will not be rent in all eternity."⁶⁷

Bediuzzaman gives really wonderful examples like these, and as far I can see, in some of them interprets the allusive meanings. However, in a situation in which we did not know anything resembling this about the question of the Unseen, or that it was an allusion to it, we understand the meaning the Qur'an alludes to after it has been realized. Contrary to what we know about the Qur'an's allusion, we may see particularly after some period of time, that it comes about in the way the Qur'an indicates. Like in the verse—*and of a surety you cannot.* (2:24).

Prof. Dr. Ibrahim 'Abd al-Rahman Khalifa, the head of the Dept. of Tafsir wa 'Ulum al-Qur'an in the Usul al-Din Faculty in Cairo, said during a conference that the Qur'an's miraculousness connected with science or knowledge is not apparent in its realization, but on the contrary, it is concealed. My view in the light of this, is that the verses alluding to newly discovered things are the verses which allude to the Unseen. Even if the meaning it alludes to as pertaining to the Unseen is realized, it still continues to remain hidden within the Qur'an as one of the aspects of miraculousness.

In *Sözler*, Bediuzzaman did not want to expand the discussion on scientific allusions. In brief, the verses, *And We have created for them similar [vessels] on which they ride*,⁶⁸ and, *Woe to the makers of the pit [of fire], * Fire supplied [abundantly] with fuel; * Behold they sat over against the [fire]*,⁶⁹ allude to the railway train, the very sound of the words conjuring up in the mind a steam train roaring out of a tunnel. In my view, this is an astonishing simile. Similarly, the verse, *The parable of His light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp*...⁷⁰ This brief look is sufficient in my view. For we have not the slightest doubt concerning the Qur'an's value and miraculousness.

68. Qur'an, 36:42.

69. Qur'an, 85:4-6.

70. Qur'an, 24:35.

If we consider Bediuzzaman's position as opposed to that of the *ahl-i 'ilm al-Hadith*, those of the modern era, who oppose the question of the Qur'an's miraculousness connected with science and judge the Qur'an according to their own conceptions, he endeavours to prove the Qur'an's miraculousness employing scholarly and scientific methods, thus compelling obdurate philosophers and scientists to lay down their arms.⁷¹ May God be pleased with him.

7. The aspect of miraculousness pertaining to hearing and the self

That is, causing pleasure and wonderment, not causing boredom, facility, the great pleasure felt by even the unlearned.

"To each of forty classes of men, it opens up a window and shows its miraculousness."⁷²

"The ordinary people even, who only listen to the Qur'an understanding little of its meaning, confirm that it does not resemble any other book."⁷³

"And even to the sick and the dying, who are disturbed by the slightest sound and noise, the murmuring and sound of the Qur'an makes felt a sort of its miraculousness, by being as sweet and agreeable for them as Zamzam water."⁷⁴

Qadi I'yad mentions the extraordinary quality of the Qur'an as one of its aspects of miraculousness. This settles in the hearts and ears of those that hear it, taking them under its effect. He writes: "Evidence for this is that even if they do not understand the meaning or the context, it settles within everyone who hears it. It is narrated that a Christian came upon someone who was reciting the Qur'an, and he stopped and started to listen to it, weeping. When asked why he was weeping, he replied that it was due to its harmony and order."⁷⁵ In my opinion, what is meant by the harmony and order here, is the stress and musical quality of the words, and the sweetness of the letters. In fact, 'Abd al-Qahir Jurjani said about this aspect that it possessed an effectiveness greater than its elevatedness and the high level of the language. We too know that there is in the Qur'an the furthest degree of miraculousness from the point of view of beauty and emotion.

Another aspect is God giving the Qur'an a poetic quality, rather than prose. For such a quality settles more easily in the ear.⁷⁶

A further characteristic is that

"Those that read it do not become bored or wearied. On the contrary, the more it is recited, the more the pleasure increases. Continued reading increases love for it. On each occasion its freshness is revealed in a similar way. Other words and writing, even of the very highest quality as regards beauty and eloquence, cause boredom after a number of repetitions, and the more they are repeated, the more they lose their quality. Our Book affords every sort of sweet pleasure, and at the most

71. *Risale-i Nur Külliyyatı Müellifi. Bediüzzaman Said Nursî, Hayatı, Mesleki, Tercüme-i Hâli*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1976, 84.

72. *Mektûbat*, 166 / *Letters*, 221.

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Mektûbat*, 167 / *Letters*, 222.

75. Qāḍī I'yād, *al-Shifā'*, i, 230-1.

76. *Ibid.*, 236.

distressing of times is the most familiar friend. Other books lose even those who love them most after a certain time. For this reason, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said about the Qur'an: 'Frequent repetition of it does not weary people.'⁷⁷

Bediuzzaman's view is this:

"And to children who try to memorize it, the All-Wise Qur'an shows its miraculousness by settling in their memories with the greatest of ease, despite their small, delicate, weak and simple heads being unable to retain for long a single page of other books, and many of the verses and phrases of that large Qur'an resembling one another, which should cause muddle and confusion."⁷⁸

Qadi I'yad says the following about the aspects of miraculousness: "God Almighty says the following about the ease with which those learning it memorize it: *And We have made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember.*⁷⁹ Whereas those who have memorized the holy scriptures of other religions are so few as to be non-existent. For years this situation has been burdening them. The Qur'an, however, may be easily learnt by heart from even an early age."

Praise and thanks is due to God for the bounties He has bestowed on us, and we beseech Him to grant us useful knowledge and the opportunity to do good works.

I say that all these characteristics are among the attributes and virtues of the Qur'an. It challenges anyone who disputes it claiming similar attributes. Moreover, in respect of great number and elevatedness it has no like. Man is not capable of producing the like of it. This forms another of the aspects of the Qur'an's miraculousness.

Qadi I'yad saying that these virtues and qualities do not arise from miraculousness does not really conform to what he said above. I do not agree with him on this matter; I rather agree with Bediuzzaman (May God grant him mercy).

8. The visible aspect of miraculousness

Similarity, conformity, 'coincidence' (*tawāfuq*), harmony and correspondence.

Bediuzzaman wrote in the Nineteenth Letter: "Here the mention of the aspect of its miraculousness directed to those without ear, heart and knowledge, and who see only with their eyes, is extremely concise, abbreviated, and even deficient."⁸⁰ However, "it has been demonstrated most clearly and brilliantly in the Twenty-Ninth and Thirtieth Letters, so that even the blind can see it."⁸¹ Only, this subject was dealt with more comprehensively in *Ishārāt al-I'jāz*. He even had a copy of the Qur'an written in order to show this aspect clearly, and stated that in this way this aspect would be visible.⁸²

77. Ibid., 233.

78. *Mektûbat*, 166 / *Letters*, 222.

79. Qur'an, 54:17, 22, 32, 40.

80. *Mektûbat*, 167 / *Letters*, 223 fn 384.

81. Ibid.

82. *Mektûbat*, 167 / *Letters*, 223.

As far as I understand, this aspect of miraculousness which Bediuzzaman expounded, is demonstrated in two different copies of the Qur'an. Concerning the first, he says:

"In the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition handwritten by the calligrapher Hafiz Osman and later printed, many of the words look to one another. For example, if a needle is passed through the word 'dog' in the phrase 'they were seven, the dog being the eighth' in Sura al-Kahf (18:22) and through the underlying pages, with a slight deviation it will go through the word 'Qitmir' in Sura al-Fatir (35:13), thus establishing the dog's name. Some time later I saw that many phrases looked to others on the reverse of pages, corresponding to one another in a meaningful way. Thus, since the arrangement of the Qur'an in the writing and script of printed copies of the Qur'an also is through the guidance of the Prophet and Divine inspiration, it contains the sign of a sort of miraculousness. For it is neither the work of chance, nor of the human mind. Sometimes there are deviations, but that is generally the fault of the printing, and if it had been absolutely in order, the words would have corresponded to one another exactly."⁸³

My view on this subject is this: why does the above-mentioned copy differ from the second copy, mentioned below, the Prophet's (PBUH) copy, and others copies of the Ottoman period? Whereas there should be no difference when it comes to the aspects of miraculousness. The existence of one aspect does not necessitate the nullifying of other aspects. In my view, Hafiz Osman's method of writing possesses certain qualities which the second copy also possesses. These qualities display a certain art. Only, the Holy Qur'an is superior to all these. The author [Bediuzzaman] defending these and insisting on offering excuses for small deviations reflects a view particular to himself. It is a fact that there are many similar things pertaining to other aspects, only to call them coincidence would be wrong.⁸⁴

To come to the second copy, Bediuzzaman says:

"... and flashes of a visible sort of the Qur'an's miraculousness, and a source of signs to the ciphers of the Unseen. Later, we had a copy of the Qur'an written which showed in gilded letters a flash of its miraculousness which appeared from the 'coinciding' of the word 'God.'"⁸⁵

I have in my possession a copy written by the calligrapher Hamid al-Amidi, published in 1394/1974, at the end of which is a piece written in the light of the Twenty-Ninth Letter of Bediuzzaman. Truly, it is an exceptional copy due to the way it shows the correspondence of the name 'Allah' in verticle lines. On almost every page, the instances of the name 'Allah' are to be seen in either one or several columns. As with the 'coincidence' of the name Qitmir which we mentioned above, Bediuzzaman states that the 'coincidences' are not limited to the name 'Allah', but are of many sorts. He writes:

"At the bottom of every page of the Qur'an the verses are complete, and they end rhyming in a fine way. The reason is this: when the verse called *Mudāyana* (2:292)

83. Ibid.

84. *Mektûbat*, 168, see footnotes / *Letters*, 224-5, see footnotes.

85. *Mektûbat*, 168-9 / *Letters*, 225 fn 389.

provides the standard for the pages, and the Suras Ikhlas and Kawthar, the standard for the lines, this fine quality of the All-Wise Qur'an and sign of its miraculousness becomes apparent."⁸⁶

I myself have seen these 'coincidences'. Only, they are not an aspect of miraculousness in the full meaning; they are perhaps the result of an art or craft.

However, as I said before, Bediuzzaman is the one speaking. The large number of instances and sorts of these cannot be accepted as the work of blind chance or the work of man, whose partial mind could not encompass these matters.

Finally, I say this: if the last sentence above is considered from the point of view of Bediuzzaman and from that of this aspect being in the Holy Qur'an which was revealed to the Prophet (PBUH), there is no harm in saying, without elevating this idea to the level of the other aspects of miraculousness: "This is a type of miraculousness as well, but we are not in favour of defending it in bigoted manner. We are anyway not in need of such things, for the Mighty Qur'an possesses numerous other aspects which show its miraculousness much more decisively."

If we accept the above two aspects, we see that the two copies containing them differ from one another. For to bring them together with the same characteristics is not possible. If it had been possible, I reckon Bediuzzaman himself would have done it.

Conclusion

In my view, 'coincidences' and correspondences between words in lines is not something substantial. In the same way, Bediuzzaman's deducing events through the use of *jafr* demonstrates its strength in the explanations he gave. He is alone in this matter, which in the above-mentioned way and with regard to interpretation contains many novel aspects. However, in respect to meaning, it is difficult to show anyone equal to him. Evidence for this is the modest paper you have before you.

Bediuzzaman is someone whose ideas should be studied in depth and who should be profited from to the utmost degree.

May God grant that we may benefit from him and from others like him.

And blessings be upon our master Muhammad, the Unlettered Prophet, and on his Family and Companions, and may they be granted peace.

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86. *Mektûbat*, 168 / *Letters*, 225 fn 388.