

**THIRD INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM ON
BEDIUZZAMAN
SAID NURSI**

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

**24th-26th September, 1995
Istanbul**

Translated from the Turkish
by Şükran Vahide

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For information, address:

Sözler Neşriyat A.Ş., Nuruosmaniye Cad., Sorkun Han No: 28/2,
Cağaloğlu, İstanbul, Turkey.

Tel: 0212 - 527 76 07

Fax: 0212 - 520 82 31

E Mail: sozler@ihlas.net.tr

Printed at: Sözler Ofset A.Ş., İstanbul, 1997.

***Tawhid* (The Affirmation of Divine Unity) in Bediuzzaman's Thought**

Sami 'Afifi Hijazi

On the one hand, the Holy Qur'an invites those it addresses to believe in Divine Unity, and on the other it relates certain things about previous religions; it questions the nations, civilizations, and sects that were current at the time it was revealed, proves with evidence that they were corrupt and null and void, and makes comparisons between them and the revealed religions.

Investigation of the ideological struggles in mankind's history shows that the question of divinity has preoccupied man since earliest times, and that in order to prove and make the question clear, messengers chosen from angels and men have always been sent, who act as intermediaries between heaven and earth. Almighty God describes this as "*God chooses Messengers from among angels and men.*"¹ The function of messengership was concluded with the messengership of Muhammad (PBUH), the Prophet of Islam, and the revelation of the Qur'an, which illuminates both the physical world and the world of the mind.

The function of all the prophets in this respect was to alert hearts and minds to belief in Divine Unity, and to instill it in their inner beings. Belief in Divine Unity is innate to man; God created him in accordance with this belief. He said:

"And so set your face steadfastly towards the [one ever-true] faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition which God has instilled into man; [for] not to allow any change to corrupt

Prof. Dr. SĀMĪ 'AFĪFĪ HĪJĀZĪ

Prof. Hijazi was born in Menūfiyya in Egypt in 1949, and at present lectures in the Dept of 'Aqa'id and Philosophy in the *Usuluddin* Faculty of al-Azhar University, Egypt. He is a member of the Egyptian Philosophical Society. He has numerous published works, among which are:

A Critique of John Locke's Theory of Knowledge; An Introduction to the Science of Kalām; The Relationship of Belief and Ethics.

1. Qur'an, 22:75.

what God has thus created — this is the [purpose of the one] ever-true faith; but most people know it not.”²

Belief in Divine Unity is the principal teaching of all the Divinely revealed religions. It forms the basis of Islam, together with declaring there is nothing similar to Almighty God or contrary to him.

This Divine system was revealed to the Trustworthy Prophet from the Sustainer of All the Worlds and is assented to and accepted by Muslims. Since prophethood came to an end with the messengership of Muhammad (PBUH), all matters that subsequently appeared in the lives of Muslims and did not conform to the basis of the religion have been carefully corrected in two fields. One of these is the field of belief and its obligations, and the other, actions and their obligations.

The aspects of the religion of Islam that concern the lives of Muslims are these: the tenets of belief, the Shari'a, and ethics. The tenets of belief take the believer to the Shari'a. While the Shari'a is the acceptance by the heart, which has acquired sensitivity through the tenets of belief, of the Divine commands, and is the living of these commands. Ethics, or morality, are the fruit of belief and the Shari'a. Hence the saying of Prophet: “I was sent only to complete good morality.”³

Islamic scholars who have researched into the history of thought have noted that these facts may be traced back to the earliest days of man's history; their predecessors always followed this line. The author of the *Risale-i Nur*, who acted in accordance with his knowledge, also followed it in order to disprove certain currents of thought and ensure the manifestation of the truths of Divine Unity. Some of the currents the *Risale-i Nur* answers are these: the *Dahriyyun* and their followers, Naturalism, the Sabeans, the Brahmins, the Magians, who had numerous followers in Persia, Christians who believe in the Trinity, the Jews, and others.

With his penetrating thought and powerful proofs, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi spread his protective wings over numerous important questions of religion, and in the *Risale-i Nur*, studied and discussed them in such a way as to bring together the Shari'a of creation and the Shari'a of the Qur'an. He analysed them with extraordinary skill, and presented them to mankind.

Yes, addressing all mankind, Bediuzzaman said:

“If you want knowledge of reality and true wisdom, acquire knowledge of Almighty God. For the realities of all beings are the rays of the Name of Truth and the manifestations of His Names and attributes.”⁴

It is clear that Bediuzzaman was a scholar who developed his own methodology, completely opposed to the false principles of the Sophists. There is a matter on which Bediuzzaman laid great stress in the *Risale-i Nur* that I cannot pass

2. Qur'an, 30:30.

3. Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, ii, 181; Bayhaqi, *Sunan*, vii, 192.

4. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, *Sözler*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1980, 442 / *The Words* [Eng. trans: Şükran Vahide], Sözler Publications 1992, 488-9; al-Sayih, Ahmad, *al-Imām Sa'īd Nūrsī ve Athāruhu fī Tarsikh al-Imān*.

without mentioning and that is 'the human element.' It is also the chief aim of the Holy Qur'an.

Yes, the Qur'an is a discourse which both speaks of man and addresses him. Bediuzzaman alludes to this: man is like a seed of the world, and the Risale-i Nur focusses on him in all the questions it discusses. For gaining eternal happiness has greater importance for man than anything, while the losing of it is the greatest danger facing him.⁵

This question is connected with method, as well as being one of the aims of true prophethood. Divinity, like all the matters of Islam, cannot be dealt with only theoretically. That is to say, the sole aim of this question is not to supply convincing theoretical answers to believers' questions, or silence with proof those who oppose it, or dispel the doubts they give rise to. In order to bring this question to life and give it a living reality, it is also necessary for the Divine message revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) to be accepted in word and deed and for it to express the identity of a positive community; for theoretical principles and rules to be identified with and for them to take on an active and living form. It was for this reason that Bediuzzaman stated that the reason Muslims were confronted by various dangers was their not acquiring the consciousness of belief. Readers of the Risale-i Nur know that anyone who studies the analyses it contains, will understand clearly that the incontestable matters of the Qur'an are tied to the universe and man in such a way that they cannot be separated from one another.

As was mentioned above, it is man Bediuzzaman addresses, saying to him: "If you want knowledge of reality and true wisdom, acquire knowledge of Almighty God."⁶ He points out that the Qur'an's evidences are incomparable. Yes, the Qur'anic proofs of Divine Unity are more powerful than those of any other source. For the proofs it puts forward for unity come from the nature and experience of things themselves, and these are means to knowledge of God. This deductive method of the Qur'an based on the intrinsic nature of things, takes one to Divine Unity.⁷ Almighty God says: "*Indeed this Qur'an does guide to that which is most right, and gives the glad tidings to the believers who work deeds of righteousness that they shall have a magnificent reward.*"⁸

The reason the Risale-i Nur may be benefited from continuously is its being based on the Qur'an. Bediuzzaman says in this connection:

"The Risale-i Nur is directly a clear proof of the Qur'an, a powerful commentary on it; a brilliant, immaterial, flash of its miraculousness; a droplet from that ocean; a ray of that sun; and an interpretation of it inspired by that source of reality and proceeding from its effulgence."⁹

In the Twenty-Second Word, Bediuzzaman puts forward twelve proofs of Divine Unity comprising evidences which are particular, universal, and rational,

5. *Bad'i'u-z-Zamān, Murshid ahl al-Qur'ān.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. Qur'an, 17:9.

9. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, *Şualar*, İstanbul, Çeltut Matbaası 1960, 576-7.

and he says that these are merely a drop from the ocean of Divine Unity.¹⁰ In the Sixteenth Word, he discusses man's self, and in four 'Rays' from the effulgence of the Qur'an, proves the truth of Divine Unity, the creation of the universe, and that the obligatory five daily prayers are "an ascension" and a Divine mercy to God's servants.¹¹

The Thirty-Third Word¹² discusses Divine Unity and Oneness, setting out indications of and evidences for these in order to strengthen belief. It is in the form of "windows" opening onto the truths of belief, which he lists one after the other, as is *Lem'alar* (The Flashes).

Again, in his work called *Mektûbat* (Letters),¹³ he discusses Divine Unity, and the importance of belief in God, knowledge of God, and love of God, in a way that addresses man's inborn nature and so is acceptable by him.¹⁴

As Ibn Khaldun also stated, the science of the affirmation of Divine Unity (*tawhîd*) is the reverse side of the coin of theology to the science of jurisprudence (*fiqh*).¹⁵ Research and discussion of the tenets of belief form the basis of the science of *tawhîd*. For belief in Divine Unity is a condition both for entering Islam, and for being saved in the hereafter. It is necessary at this point to define the terms *tawhîd* and *al-wahdāniyyat al-Ilāhiyya*, and set forward their meanings according to the Shari'a and reason.

The Meaning of *Tawhîd*

Tawhîd is a celestial sphere (*falak*) and any meaning formed within the orbit of an absolute word concerning that sphere; such a meaning is formed due to there being a tie between the two which unites them both in root meaning and derivations. In accordance with this meaning, we may say about the word *tawhîd*, which is the verbal noun of the second form of the verb *wahada*, that is, *wahhada*, "*Wahhadu'llāha*," "I (lit. 'unified' or 'made one') declared God to be One." That is, I believed Him to be One and single and without partner or like in His essence, attributes, and acts. While the meaning of God's attribute *Wāhid* is that He has no 'second,' that *tawhîd* relates to Him and that He has 'Oneness' (*Wahdāniyya*), and that He is single and unique in His creation and acts.

A concise definition of *tawhîd*, therefore, which is to believe that God is One, is this: God is Single (*Awḥad*) and *Mutawahḥid*; that is, *tawhîd* relates to Him. And He is single and unique in His creation and disposal.¹⁶

10. *Sözler*, 260 / *The Words*, 287 ff.

11. *Sözler*, 177 / *The Words*, 209 ff.

12. *Sözler*, 609 / *The Words*, 683 ff.

13. *Mektubat*, İstanbul, Sözler Yayınevi 1981, 211 / *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Letters 1928-1932* [Eng. trans: Şükran Vahide], 272.

14. *Şualar*, 129.

15. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 4th ed., 1981, 436.

16. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, art. *Wahada*, Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 4781; *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīd*, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, i, 344. As is understood from these definitions, when specified, the word *ma'hūd* refers to Almighty God. While if it is used in its absolute, that is general, meaning, it refers to all objects of worship, both true and false. If it is preceded by the definite article 'al', *al-ma'hūd*, it means the True Object of Worship, that is, God. See, Shaykh al-Islām Ibrāhīm al-Bijūrī, *Tuhfat al-Murīd 'alā Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*, 10.

The Meaning of *Tawhīd* according to the Scholars of *Kalām*

It is to believe that God is One is His essence, attributes and acts. That is, man worships the One True Object of Worship; he believes only He is fit to be worshipped; he in no way worships any other being. There can be absolutely no division in Almighty God's Essence, or in regard to His actions, either imaginary or hypothetical. None of His attributes can be compared with the attributes of any other being. The same attribute cannot be numerous; that is, God's attribute of 'power,' for example, cannot be of two different kinds. There can be no partner or participation in His acts; that is, no one, for any reason like self-sufficiency, can have any true effect on any action. God creates all actions, whether good or bad. Beings have only what is called 'acquisition' (*kasb*), which is the basis of accountability, reward and punishment. This definition negates five 'quantities,'¹⁷ which are as follows:

The First: Quantity in His Essence; that is, it negates that the Divine Essence is a compound made up of parts.

The Second: Quantity other than His Essence; that is, it negates the acceptance of any other divine being, and disproves that any other essences are similar to His. Belief in the unity of His Essence negates these two 'quantities.'

The Third: Quantity in His attributes. It negates the possibility of any Divine attribute being numerous. Almighty God cannot have two or more of the same attribute; like possessing two attributes of 'power,' 'will,' or 'knowledge,' that could give existence to and annihilate the other.

The Fourth: Quantity in other than His attributes; that is, negating the existence of attributes in beings other than Him which resemble His attributes. Like other beings possessing the attribute of power which could create and annihilate, or the attribute of will which could specify contingent beings, or the attribute of knowledge which could encompass all things. (God forbid.)

The Fifth: Quantity in other than His actions. That is, it negates the existence of any other being possessing the ability to create or bring into existence, other than Almighty God giving them the ability to do so.¹⁸ So long as He does not will it, no one can perform any action.

It is understood from the above that the Unity of the Divine Essence is necessary. It also means that Almighty God is not a compound body that may be divided into parts. There is no god other than He. His attributes are one; there are no attributes resembling His. His actions are also one; that is, no one can perform acts similar to His.

To put it another way, the unity of His Essence negates any quantity that could be thought of either in His Essence, or other than His Essence. The unity of His acts negates the idea that any acts could exist similar to His.

17. See, al-Bijūrī's glosses to *al-Jawhara*, 1st edn. 1310H, 35.

18. Ibid.

The Meaning of *Tawhīd* in the language of the Shari'a

Tawhīd is belief; that is, the unshakeable belief, untouched by any doubt, in the Divine existence and unity: there is nothing whatever similar to or equal to him. He sees and hears all things. That is, His sublime Essence necessitates that He possesses infinite perfections fitting for His Essence and that He is free of every sort of defect.

This definition is related to the dictionary definition we discussed above.

Having said this, what is meant by the science of *tawhīd* is this: basing it on the Holy Qur'an and authentic Sunna of the Prophet, it is to defend the belief in Divine Unity. This includes understanding true *tawhīd* and defending it.

The First: To prove the tenets of belief by means both of the Qur'an and Sunna, and through the use of reason.

The Second: To refute the arguments of those who oppose it or are uncertain, and to answer their doubts.¹⁹

We may say the following about the aim of the science of *tawhīd*:

- i. To elucidate the tenets of belief and related matters.
- ii. To refute doubts and arguments put forward with hostile intention in order to defend the tenets of belief and preserve them from all kinds of association of partners with God.
- iii. To destroy false beliefs thus ensuring the well-being of Islam, which is belief in Divine Unity and conforms with man's inborn nature. It is for this reason that the affirmation of Divine Unity is as important for humanity as the heart is for the body; it ties together the Shari'a of Islam with the Shari'a of, that is, the laws of, creation.²⁰

It is the profession of Divine Unity, "There is no god but God," which proclaims this meaning of *tawhīd*, and proves it.

In this connection, Bediuzzaman says the following, that it "proves Divine Unity at the level of the Greatest Name in summary and allusive form.

"The First Phrase: 'There is no god but God.' In this phrase is an affirmation of the Unity of the Godhead and of the True Object of Worship. An extremely powerful proof of this degree in the affirmation of Divine Unity is as follows:

"A most orderly activity is apparent on the face of the universe, especially on the page of the earth. And we observe there a most wise creativity. And we clearly see a most systematic unfolding; that is, the opening up and giving of an appropriate shape and form to everything..."²¹

The meaning of this key to belief is that there is absolutely nothing at all apart from God which is fit to be worshipped. This belief is the basis of Islam. Its cornerstones are as follows: whenever this belief settles in the heart and the soul surrenders to it, it takes the person to belief in the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH). And whenever belief in the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) is

19. Hījāzī, Sāmī 'Afīfī, *Madkhal li-'Ilm al-Kalām*, 1st edn. 1988, 37.

20. Ibid.

21. *Mektûbat*, 211 / *Letters*, 272.

firmly rooted in the heart and the soul is contented with it, it takes the person to belief in the angels, revealed scriptures, prophets, and the Last Day, and all mention of these in the Qur'an and Sunna, and in Divine Determining and that both good and evil are from God. In this way, belief will be perfected.

It is for this reason that Bediuzzaman addresses all mankind with these words:

"Our belief, which due to the pre-eternal contract, is our oath and pledge, has been inscribed on this sacred proclamation. Islam, the water of life, flows forth from this spring of life."²²

Later in the same passage he says:

"It is an eternal proclamation in the hands of the tongue, the eloquent orator which is deputed to deliver the mysterious address of the conscience to all the universe, and is the eloquent herald of belief which proclaims the Pre-Eternal Sovereign to the universe."

Then he explains this further:

"All the atoms in existence, while hesitant as regards essence, attributes and other aspects amid innumerable possibilities, take one way which results in wondrous benefits, thus testifying to the necessary existence of the Maker. This lights up from the subtle inner faculties of man—which are samples of the worlds of the unseen—the lamp of belief, which proclaims the Maker."

"Due to the source of assistance and point of support in his heart, man's conscience does not forget the Maker. Even if his mind ceases to work, his conscience does not; it is preoccupied with two important duties. It is like this: if one refers to his conscience, [he will see that] like the physical heart conveys life to all the parts of the body, knowledge of the Maker, the source of life of the heart, spreads life to all man's various desires and inclinations which arise from his unlimited abilities and potentialities; it affords them pleasure and value and expands and extends them. This is the point of assistance...

"It is also knowledge of the Maker which is the only point of support against the calamities and troubles of a tumultuous world in which life—the field of conflict and struggle—is constantly under attack.

"Yes, if man does not believe in the All-Wise Maker and His works, all of which are in accordance with wisdom and order, and blindly ascribes them to chance, and if he thinks of the total insufficiency of his power in the face of disaster, because of the resulting hellish and piteous state, comprising terror, desolation, anxiety, and fear, he will become more wretched than anything, and will oppose the perfect order and regularity of the universe. This is the point of support; yes, the only refuge is knowledge of the Maker.

"... the Maker's existence is manifested in the conscience from these two points, which are two windows. Even if the intellect does not see it, man's essential nature does. The conscience is the observer, and the heart its window."²³

Those who study Bediuzzaman's ideas about the truths of *tawhīd*, will find that their minds and hearts are aroused by these truths and those of creation, and that their humanity is renewed. Looking at the universe in the light of his discus-

22. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Muhâkemat*, İstanbul, Sözlcr Yayınevi 1977, 103.

23. Ibid.

sions about belief, from the first to the last of The Words (*Sözler*), they will feel themselves to be central points in the universe, and will understand why the Qur'an, which explains man's nature, addresses man as it does. Yes, those who consider the Divine Book which is recited (the Qur'an) and the Divine Book which is observed (the book of the universe) in the way he shows will certainly perceive this. It is because of this that if they study the entire Risale-i Nur carefully and what Bediuzzaman writes about *tawhîd* and the essential nature of things, they will decide that whatever it expresses for the eye of light, it expresses the same for the mind and reason. As Bediuzzaman himself said when defining it, the Risale-i Nur is a proof of the Qur'an. It is not the product of the author's knowledge and various branches of knowledge, like other works. It has no source other than the Qur'an. It has no master other than the Qur'an. It recognizes no authority other than the Qur'an. Its author referred to no other work while writing it. It was inspired directly from the effulgence of the Qur'an. It was revealed from the skies of the Qur'an, from the stars of its verses.²⁴

We can see this fact clearly in the Third Station of the Second Ray:

"The evidences, signs, and proofs of the reality of Divine Unity are incalculable. In the Third Station, three summary proofs out of thousands were deemed sufficient.

"*The First sign and proof*, the result of which is the phrase 'He is One.'

"*The Second sign and proof*, the result of which is the phrase 'He has no partner.'

"*The Third sign and proof*, which indicates 'His is the dominion and His is the praise.'"

A. The First sign and proof indicates the following proof:

"There is a unity in everything, and unity points to one. Yes, a work that has unity clearly was produced by a single author. One comes from one. Since in all things there is a unity, it demonstrates surely that they are the work and art of one being."

Bediuzzaman then illumines the intellect by explaining further the above concise truth:

"Yes, the universe resembles a rosebud in which are enfolded a thousand unities... That is, the wisdom, favour, regulation, and providing which are at work in the universe are all one and the same, and the mercy which hastens to assist the needy, and the rain —a dispenser of that mercy's sherbet— are one and the same. The fact that throughout the world all these things are the same forms a self-evident proof of the Single One of Unity as brilliant as the sun."²⁵

"Also, all the elements and realms of creation being the same throughout the universe, and their encompassing the whole face of the earth, and their being one within the other and their coming together demonstrating their mutual relations, and even mutual assistance, is a self-evident proof that their Owner, Master and Maker is one and the same."²⁶

This truth is expounded in numerous places in the Risale-i Nur. The following are some examples:

24. *Sualar*, 576-7.

25. *Sualar*, 24.

26. *Ibid*.

"Yes, both unity and singleness come about through everything being connected with the One of Unity, and through reliance on Him. And this reliance and connection may become a boundless power and strength for the thing. Through the strength of the reliance and connection, that small thing may perform works far exceeding its individual strength, and produce results."²⁷

"We look to the beginning and end of all things, and we see, particularly in animate creatures, that their beginnings, origins, and roots are such that it is as if their seeds contain all the systems and members of those creatures, each in the form of an instruction sheet and timetable. And their fruits and results are such that the meanings of those animate creatures are filtered and concentrated in them; they bequeath their life histories to them. It is as if their seeds are collections of the principles according to which they were created, and their fruits and results a sort of index of the commands of their creation."²⁸

"Thus, when we study all beings carefully, we observe that their beginnings are instruction sheets prepared by One possessing Knowledge, and that their ends are plans and manifestos of a Maker; that their outer faces are skilful and beautifully proportioned dresses of artistry devised by One Who Chooses and Wills, and their inner faces, most well-designed machines of an All-Powerful One."²⁹

"Since the Pre-Eternal Monarch is Single and One, He has no need of any sort. If to suppose that He did have need, He would send all things to the assistance of everything and assemble the army of the universe behind one thing and everything could rely on a strength as great as the universe and in the face of everything, all things—to suppose that He did have the need—could become like the Single Commander's strength. If there was no Divine Singleness, everything would lose all this strength and become as nothing; their results too would dwindle to nothing."³⁰

The above show without doubt that all things came into existence out of one, that all are the creatures of the Eternally Besought One of Unity, Who is One, Single and Unique, Who neither begets nor is begotten, and Who has no equal or like, and that all beings perform their duties of worship towards Him.

B. The second sign and proof

The second proof of Divine Unity and the Affirmation of Divine Unity is that

"all things in the universe from minute particles to the stars are within a faultless order and perfect harmony and just balance. Yes, perfect order and balanced harmony can only occur through unity. If many hands interfere in a single work, it causes confusion."³¹

Addressing humanity at large, Bediüzzaman expands this succinct statement, saying:

"Come and behold the vast splendour of this order: it has made the universe a palace each stone of which contains as much art as the whole palace; and it has made it a city in which its infinite incomings and outgoings and innumerable foods and

27. Nursî, Bediüzzaman Said, *Lem'alar*, İstanbul, Sözlür Yayınevi 1985, 305 / *The Flashes Collection* [Eng. trans: Şükrân Vahide], İstanbul 1995, 416.)

28. *Mektûbat*, 212 / *Letters*, 373.

29. *Mektûbat*, 212 / *Letters*, 374.

30. *Lem'alar*, 305 / *Flashes Collection*, 417.

31. *Şualar*, 24.

goods arrive with perfect order and regularity from beyond the veil of the unseen, from unexpected places at exactly the right time; and it has turned the universe into a most meaningful miraculous book every letter of which expresses the meanings of a hundred lines, and every line, the meanings of a hundred pages, and every page, the meanings of a hundred chapters, and every chapter, the meanings of a hundred books; and all the chapters, pages, lines, words, and letters of which look to each other and allude to each other."

Later in the same passage, he writes:

"Again come, and behold the perfect justice of this balance within the order and cleanliness: microscopic living creatures that are visible only on being magnified a thousand times, and stars and suns a thousand times larger than the earth are weighed according to the measure and balance of those scales and everything necessary given to them without deficiency. Those microscopic living beings and those vast creatures stand shoulder to shoulder before the balance of justice. Yet if some of those vast beings were to lose their balance even for an instant, it could destroy the balance of the entire world, and cause doomsday."³²

It may be seen from this that Bediuzzaman takes man on a journey through signs and proofs in the exhibitions of the universe, and purifies the conscience by means of a belief gained through observing these signs, which Islam claims and man's unspoiled nature responds to and accepts. This creativity and miraculous harmony which embraces all things, are decisive and clear proofs of Divine Unity and its affirmation, more brilliant than the noonday sun. Continuing, Bediuzzaman says:

"Beings are created in two ways; one is creation from nothing called 'origination' and 'invention,' and the other is the giving of existence through bringing together existent elements and things, called 'composition' and 'assembling.'"³³

He then explains these:

"When in accordance with the manifestation of Divine Singleness and mystery of Divine Oneness, this occurs with an infinite ease, indeed, such ease as to be necessary. If not ascribed to Divine Singleness, it would be infinitely difficult and irrational, difficult to the degree of impossibility."

Addressing humanity, he continues:

"However, the fact that the beings in the universe come into existence with infinite ease and facility and no difficulty at all, and in perfect form, self-evidently shows the manifestation of Divine Singleness and proves that everything is directly the art of the Single One of Glory."³⁴

Those who study carefully the proofs of and evidences for Divine Unity and its affirmation that Bediuzzaman describes, will see that he as though stands at the centre of a circle and is urging people to the straight path, good morality, and salvation. Bediuzzaman demonstrates with perfect clarity that there is no deficiency in the Qur'an's statements about Divine Unity, and points out that the following verse is to be included among these:

32. Ibid.

33. *Lem'alar*, 306 / *Flashes Collection*, 417.

34. Ibid.

*O you people! Worship your Sustainer, Who created you and those who came before you, that you may attain to righteousness, * Who has made the earth your couch and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; then set not up rivals unto God now that you know [the truth].*³⁵

When expounding in his Qur'anic commentary *Isharat al-I'jaz* (Signs of Miraculousness) the vocative form used in "O you...!", Bediuzzaman makes the following important points:

"The vocative, which in many places in the Qur'an is expressed in the form of *yā ayyuhā*, is strengthened in three ways, with three particles.

"The First is the interjection O! (*yā*).

"The Second is the vocative particle *ayyū*-, which is used for to find something by searching for its signs.

"The Third is the emphatic suffix *hā*, which is used to arouse and attract attention.

"It is understood from this form of strengthened address that the phrase is making many subtle allusions:

"The reducing, through the pleasure of being addressed by Almighty God, of the hardship involved in the obligation of worship.

"It indicates that man can only rise from the lower station of addressing Almighty God in His absence to the high station of His presence by means of worship, which indicates also that there is no intermediary between God and His servants.

"It indicates that man is charged with worship in three respects:

"i. He is charged with surrender and submission to God with his heart;

"ii. And with belief and the affirmation of Divine Unity with his mind;

"iii. And with worship and action with his heart."³⁶

Here, Bediuzzaman has related the matters that have to be established in man to the means, which are the way of his essential nature and the affirmation of Divine Unity. As Sa'd al-Din Taftazani said also: "There are three causes, that is, means, for obtaining knowledge: sound senses, true information, and intellect."³⁷ The senses of hearing and sight, and the heart and intellect, are what are addressed by the Qur'an, which is true information, and those beings which are charged with particular duties in this world and will be called to account in the hereafter. Man's physical and spiritual aspects are interrelated, and his personality can only attain maturity and perfection through the co-operation of his physical and spiritual aspects and their joint functioning. In this way man attains mental stability, assurance of heart, and an active will, which constitute the maturing of his personality and perfecting of his belief.³⁸

Shahristani said the following on this subject: "God Almighty established His

35. Qur'an, 2:21-2.

36. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, *Işârâtü'l-I'câz*, Istanbul, Sözlür Yayınevi 1978, 107-8.

37. Taftazani, Sa'd al-Din, *al-Aqâ'id al-Nasafiya*, Karachi n.d., 11.

38. Hijazi, Sâmi 'Afîfî, *al-Istidlâl al-Qur'ânî Manhajuhu wa Mumayyizâtuhu*.

religion on man, the model of all creatures."³⁹ That is to say, belief in Divine Unity has mutual relations with man's various powers and faculties.

While elucidating this matter, that is, the matter of belief in Divine Unity, the Holy Qur'an employs evidences which will illuminate both the intellect and mind, and the senses of hearing and recollection, in order to establish it in the heart in such a way that no doubt remains.

In the Qur'an, Almighty God says:

*And your God is One God; there is no god but He, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. * Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which God sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth —[here] indeed are signs for a people that thinks.⁴⁰ * If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides God, there would have been confusion in both!⁴¹*

While setting forth evidence, with a style that addresses the conscience and senses, the Qur'an directs the senses towards affirming Divine Unity:

God is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see; then He established Himself on the Throne [of authority]; He has subjected the sun and the moon [to His law]! Each one runs [its course] for a term appointed. He regulates all affairs, explaining the signs in detail, that you may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Sustainer.⁴²

Again, while setting forth evidence for Divine Unity, the Qur'an directs attention towards the inner face of things, and satisfies man's emotions with proofs that are to be observed on it. It points out actual evidences that man sees, hears, and feels, so that he may obtain complete certainty concerning God's unity and His perfect power. For example, Almighty God says:

*On the earth are signs for those of assured faith, * as also in your own selves; will you not then see?⁴³*

Then, as the fruit of this tie between the things man feels and hears, that his heart and conscience perceive, and his heart feels attachment for, it reaches the stage of recalling. At this point Almighty God relates these windows opening onto creation and Divine Unity, and says:

It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affection; that you may give thanks [to God].⁴⁴

39. Shahristānī, *al-Mīlāl wa'l-Nihāl* [tahqīq: Badrān], 45.

40. Qur'an, 2:163-4.

41. Qur'an, 21:22.

42. Qur'an, 13:2.

43. Qur'an, 51:20-1.

44. Qur'an, 16:78.

In this connection, Ibn Qayyim says: "Offering advice and demonstrating the truth of a thing requires the use of the reason and something written requires memory. Thought is the door to these. Man sees when he thinks, and remembers when he sees."⁴⁵ Having enumerated all the means to perception He has bestowed on His creatures, He says "so that you might give thanks," as their necessary consequence. Yes, there is a close tie between bounty and thanks; man should therefore thank His Creator. For thanks leads man to worship of God with a pure heart.

I want here to make the following point: as Muhammad Iqbal also stated, the Qur'an's chief aim is to provoke awareness in man of his various relations with his Creator and the universe.⁴⁶ The great importance of the Qur'an's method may be understood from this. It is also the method the Risale-i Nur follows. It does not discuss abstract, lifeless matters. On the contrary, it constructs the matters that proceed from the reality of man's self and intellect, and of the universe on Divine Unity and the true nature of things. Bediuzzaman says the following in this connection:

"Man has an intense, unshakeable, passionate desire for immortality. Only One Who through the mystery of Singleness holds the whole universe in His grasp and can close down this world and open up the hereafter as easily as shutting up one house and opening another can bring about that desire. Like this desire, man's thousands of desires which stretch to eternity and are spread throughout the universe are tied to the mystery of Singleness and the reality of Divine Unity. If not for Divine Singleness, they would not be, they would be fruitless. And if not for the Single One, Who through Divine Unity has disposal over the entire universe, those desires would not come about. Even supposing they did, they would do so very deficiently."⁴⁷

Here we may consider the development in the views of Ibn Qayyim, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bediuzzaman, who were mentioned above. We should see what the Qur'an says, since it is the last of the books revealed by Almighty God to the prophets. The points they all agree on are these:

- i. Belief in Divine Unity and there being a single Creator: He has no partner.
- ii. Worship of the One God: there is no being apart from Him who is worthy of being worshipped.
- iii. There being nothing that resembles or is similar to Him in either its essence, attributes or actions.⁴⁸

Yes, here man's inborn nature and the nature of the universe meet in the Creator's system in the Qur'an. And all beings seek assistance from the Unity of the Creator, Who neither begets nor is begotten, to whom there is nothing equal, and Who is One, Single, Unique, and Eternally Besought.

45. Ibn al-Qayyim, *Miftāh Dār al-Sa'āda*, i, 214.

46. Iqbal, Muhammad, *Tajdīd al-Fikr al-Dīnī*, 15.

47. *Lem'alar*, 310 / *The Flashes Collection*, 423.

48. al-Şafī, Muhyī al-Dīn, *Bil'l-İştirāk fī'l-'Aqida wa'l-Akhlāq*, 1992, p. 12.

C. The Third Sign and Proof which indicates the truth of Divine Unity:

This is "His is the dominion and His is the praise," which Bediuzzaman elucidated. I received considerable effulgence from these innumerable allusions to Divine Unity.

"As the sun's reflection in a mirror shows the sun, so on all things, whether particular or universal, from the particles to the planets, is a mirror-like stamp which points to the Sun of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity and testifies to His Unity. Many of those innumerable stamps have been described in detail in *The Light-Giving Lamp (Siracü'n-Nur)*, and here we shall only look at a brief allusion to them, as follows:

"Just as a vast seal of Unity has been put on the totality of the universe, comprising the mutual assistance, co-operation, mutual resemblance, and interpenetration of all the realms of beings, so on the face of the earth is a stamp of Unity, placed through the Divine army of the four hundred thousand animal and plant species being given all their different provisions, arms, uniforms, instructions and demobilizations in perfect order at exactly the right time with none being confused. So too on man's face is a seal of Unity, stamped through each having marks distinguishing it from all other faces. On the faces of all beings, too, whether particular or universal, a stamp of Unity is to be observed, and on all creatures, whether great or small, a seal of Oneness is to be seen. The stamps on living beings are particularly brilliant. Indeed, all living beings are themselves each a stamp of Unity, a seal of Oneness, and a signature of Eternal Besoughtedness."⁴⁹

Here, with his powerful ideas and proofs, Bediuzzaman is describing the fruits of belief in Divine Unity:

"*First Fruit:* In Divine Unity and the affirmation of it, Divine beauty and perfection become apparent.

"*Second Fruit:* Through the affirmation of Divine Unity, the perfections of the universe are realized.

"*Third Fruit:* All man's perfections and all his elevated goals are tied to Divine Unity and find existence through its mystery."⁵⁰

The great importance Bediuzzaman attached to belief in Divine Unity—to which the Qur'an invites man—is understood from this, for from it the truths of belief are manifested, for which man has innate need.

"Just as the elements in this country all surround and encompass it, and their owner can only be one who owns the whole country; similarly, since the works of art spread throughout it resemble each other and display a single stamp, they show that they are the art of a single person who governs everything."⁵¹

As Bediuzzaman writes in *Hizmet Rehberi*,

"The true affirmation of Divine Unity that we are seeking is not merely a conception or conceptual knowledge; it is rather an assent or affirmation, called knowledge (*'ilm*), which is the result of proof and is far more valuable than the concep-

49. *Şualar*, 27.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Sözler*, 266 / *The Words*, 294.

tual knowledge of logic. The true affirmation of Divine Unity is a judgement, assent, submission, and acceptance that may find its Sustainer through all things."⁵²

While expounding the following verse, Bediuzzaman sets forth with proofs the ways of all the philosophers and scholars of *kalām*: *O you people! Worship your Sustainer, Who created you and those who came before you, that you may attain to righteousness, * Who has made the earth your couch and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; then set not up rivals unto God now that you know [the truth].*⁵³

"The only thing that instills the Divine ordinances concerning belief and the tenets of faith into believers through rendering them strong and firm is worship. Yes, the tenets of belief pertain to the conscience and reason; if they are not nurtured and strengthened through worship, which consists of doing what God commands and abstaining from what He forbids, they remain ineffective and weak."⁵⁴

Anyone who studies the above verses carefully will see that the Divine address begins with proving the Divine existence and Unity.

"*Firstly*: It puts forward evidence from themselves to prove Divine Unity. The sentence: *Worship your Sustainer, Who created you* alludes to this.

"*Secondly*: Their fathers and forefathers are given as evidence; *and those who came before you* alludes to this.

"*Thirdly*: It puts forward all the living creatures on the earth as evidence, alluding to it with the phrase *Who has made the earth your couch*.

"*Fourthly*: It alludes to all the beings of the heavens with the words *and the heavens your canopy*.

"*Fifthly*: It puts forward all the events that occur between the heavens and the earth as proof, alluding to them with *and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance*.

"Having mentioned these five proofs, it states the desired result; that is, *then set not up rivals unto God now that you know*."⁵⁵

It may be understood from this on which truths Bediuzzaman based the method he followed in the *Risale-i Nur* in proving the questions of Divine Unity. The same is seen in the *Qur'an*. For the *Risale-i Nur* is a proof of the *Qur'an* and is an interpretation of its meaning which proceeded from its effulgence. It addresses man's inner being and arouses him, so that he may have lofty aims and elevated truths may be established in his heart, he may submit to them with his mind, consent to them in his heart, and obey Almighty God with all his being.

"...the parts of the *Risale-i Nur*, which prove as clearly as the sun to the most stubborn philosophers and obdurate atheists. *Qur'anic* truths like the Prophet's ascension and bodily resurrection which are imagined to be distant from pure reason..."⁵⁶

52. *Sualar*, 129.

53. *Qur'an*, 2:21-2.

54. *İşârâtü'l-İ'caz*, 92.

55. See, Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī, *'Ajā'ib al-Qur'ān (tahqīq: 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā)*, 1st ed. 1982, 26; al-Dardir, *'Abd al-'Azīz, al-Tefsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 1st ed. 1982, 26.

56. Nursi, Bediuzzaman Said, *Emirdağ Lahikası*, Istanbul, Sinan Matbaası 1959, i, 47.

The works making up the Risale-i Nur like *Sözler* (The Words), *Şualar* (The Rays), *Mektûbat* (Letters), and *Isharat al-I'jaz*, are not just the bits of paper used in a cold intellectual exercise masking dark aims; on the contrary, they comprise a broad 'belief culture' based on the true nature of things and the affirmation of Divine Unity. They are revolutionary ideas arousing man's senses and inborn nature, and comprise the most convincing answer to those sects and currents, whether excessive or negligent, which follow their own delusions and desires. Yes, all these treatises are like lights which receive their power from Divine revelation.

In Short: This knowledge is beneficial because it proves with extensive rational evidence the tenets of belief, and silences, again with rational proofs, the doubts of enemies and those who oppose them. Furthermore, it raises belief from the level of being purely imitative to the degree of certainty, lacking all doubt; instills good morals in man; and makes it understood that man is observed by Almighty God at all times, in all conditions, both open and secret. As 'Adud al-Din al-Ijî stated also, the benefits of this knowledge may be summarized in the following five matters:

i. It raises belief which is imitative to the peaks of certainty. Almighty God says in this connection:

*God will raise up to [suitable] ranks, those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge. And God is well-acquainted with all you do.*⁵⁷

ii. Through explanations based on proof, it guides those who want to find the right path; it silences with firm evidence obstinate deniers; it refutes the corrupted ideas of 'innovators' belonging to false schools of thought and movements.

iii. It preserves the bases of religion from being shaken by the arguments of enemies.

iv. It constructs the sciences of the Shari'a on this, for their basis is the science of *tawhîd* or the affirmation of Divine Unity, and they are nourished by it.

v. It strengthens belief and purifies intentions. For it is through these two factors that actions become acceptable. The result of all these is the attainment of happiness in this world and the next.⁵⁸

Through his learning, Bediuzzaman allowed us to profit from this knowledge. His works illuminate with the light of belief the lives of people from many different walks of life. God willing, this will continue to the end of time.

* * *

57. Qur'an, 58:11.

58. al-Ijî, 'Adud al-Dîn, *al-Mawâqif*, 8. See also, al-Tahâwunî, *Kashshâf Iştîlâhât al-'Ulûm wa'l-Funûn*; Imam Ghazzâlî, *al-Munqid Min al-Dalâl* (*taḥqîq*: 'Abd al-Halîm Maḥmûd), 90.