

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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and with all your faculties; and: Whatever We have bestowed upon you of intelligence and knowledge and understanding and art, employ it in Our cause. We surely guide along Our ways those who strive after Us.

The *sixth* means of achieving this purpose has been described as steadfastness, meaning that a seeker should not get tired or disheartened and should not be afraid of being tried, as God has said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا
تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ ۝ نَحْنُ
أَوْلِيَاكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۚ

That is, upon those who affirm: God is our Lord, and turn away from false gods and are steadfast, that is to say, remain firm under trials and calamities, descend angels, reassuring them: Fear not nor grieve, and be filled with happiness; and rejoice that you have inherited the joy that you had been promised. We are your friends in this life and in the Hereafter. These verses indicate that steadfastness wins the pleasure of God Almighty. It is true, as has been said, that steadfastness is more than a miracle. The perfection of steadfastness is that when one is encircled by calamities and life and honour and

215. *As for* those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and then remain steadfast, the angels descend on them, *saying*: 'Fear you not, nor grieve; and rejoice in the Garden that you were promised. 'We are your friends in this life and in the Hereafter. (The Holy Quran, Ḥā Mim as-Sajdah 41:31-32)

good name are all in peril in the cause of Allah, and no means of comfort are available, so much so, that even visions and dreams and revelation are suspended by God as a trial, and one is left helpless among terrible dangers, at such a time one should not lose heart nor retreat like a coward nor let one's faithfulness be put in doubt in the least. One should not let one's sincerity and perseverance be weakened, one should be pleased with one's disgrace; one should be reconciled to death; one should not wait for a friend to lend one his support in order to keep one firm; nor seek glad tidings from God because of the severity of the trial. One should stand straight and firm despite one's helplessness and weakness and lack of comfort from any direction. Come what may one should present oneself for sacrifice and should be completely reconciled to divine decrees and one should exhibit no restlessness nor utter any complaint, right till the end of the trial. This is the steadfastness which leads to God. This is that the perfume of which still reaches us from the dust of Messengers and Prophets and Faithful ones and Martyrs.

This is also indicated in the supplication:

216 إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ۝ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

Guide us along the path of steadfastness, the path that attracts Thy bounties and favours and by treading along which one wins Thy pleasure. Another verse also

216. Guide us in the right path—The path of those on whom You have bestowed *Your* blessings, (The Holy Quran, al-Fāṭiḥah 1:6-7)

indicates the same:

رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَقَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ²¹⁷

Lord, send down on us steadfastness in this time of trial and cause us to die in a state of submission to Thee. It should be realised that at a time of misfortunes and hardships God Almighty causes a light to descend upon the hearts of those He loves; by being strengthened with this light they face those misfortunes with great serenity; and out of the sweetness of faith they kiss the chains that fetter them. When a godly person is afflicted and the signs of death become manifest, he does not start a contention with his Beneficent Lord that he might be delivered from that condition, inasmuch as to persist in a supplication for security in such a condition means fighting God's decree and is inconsistent with complete submission. A true lover goes further forward under misfortunes and, holding life as nothing at such a time, and saying goodbye to it, submits completely to the will of God and seeks only His pleasure. Concerning such people God Almighty has said:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ
بِالْعِبَادِ²¹⁸

217. Our Lord, pour forth upon us steadfastness and cause us to die resigned unto You.' (The Holy Quran, al-A'raf 7:127)

That is, he whom God loves offers his life in the cause of God in return for God's pleasure. Such people win the compassion of God. This is the spirit of steadfastness through which one meets God. Let him who will understand.

The *seventh* means of achieving the purpose of life is to keep company with the righteous, and to observe their perfect example. One of the needs for the advent of Prophets is that man naturally desires a perfect example, and such an example fosters zeal and promotes high resolve. He who does not follow an example becomes slothful and is led astray. This is indicated by Allah, the Glorious, in the verse:

219 كُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ²²⁰

That is, keep company with the righteous; and in the verse: Guide us along the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. That is to say, you should keep company with the righteous and learn the ways of those who have been the recipients of grace

218. And of men there is he who would sell himself to seek the pleasure of Allāh; and Allāh is Compassionate to *His* servants. (The Holy Quran, al-Baqarah 2:208)

219. be with the truthful. (The Holy Quran, at-Taubah 9:119)

220. The path of those on whom You have bestowed *Your* blessings, (The Holy Quran, al-Fātiḥah 1:7)

before you.

The *eighth* means of achieving the purpose of life are visions and true dreams and revelation. As the path that leads to God Almighty is a difficult one and is studded with misfortunes and hardships and it is possible that a person might go astray while treading along this unfamiliar path and might begin to despair and stop going forward, the mercy of God desires to keep comforting him and encouraging him and augmenting his zeal and eagerness. So it is His way that from time to time He comforts such people with His Word and His revelation and makes it manifest to them that He is with them. Thus they are strengthened and go forward eagerly on this journey. With regard to this, He has said:

لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ 221

The Holy Quran has set forth several other means for the achievement of the purpose of life, but we refrain from setting them down here out of consideration of time.

221. For them are glad tidings in the present life and *also* in the Hereafter—
(The Holy Quran, Yūnus 10:65)

FOURTH QUESTION

The Operation of the Practical Ordinances of the Law in this Life and the Next

We have already stated that the effect of the true and perfect Divine law upon man's heart in this life is that it lifts him from a savage condition and converts him into a human being, and thereafter invests him with high morals, and finally makes him godly. One of the effects of the practical ordinances of the law is that a person who follows the true law progressively recognises the rights of his fellow beings and exercises his faculties of equity, and benevolence, and true sympathy, on their proper occasions. Such a one shares with his fellow beings, according to their respective ranks, the bounties with which God has favoured him, like knowledge, understanding, wealth and means of comfort. He sheds his light like the sun upon the whole of mankind, and like the moon, acquiring light from God, conveys it to others. Being illumined like the day he shows the paths of virtue and goodness to others, and like the night he covers up their weaknesses and provides comfort for those who are weary. Like the sky he provides shelter

under his shade for everyone who is in need, and pours down the rain of grace at its proper time. Like the earth, out of utter humility, he becomes like a floor for everyone's comfort and gathers them close to afford them security, and offers them diverse types of spiritual fruits. Thus, he who adheres to the perfect law discharges his obligations to God and to his fellow creatures to the utmost. He loses himself in God and becomes a true servant of His creatures. This is the effect of the practical ordinances of the law on his life here.

Their effect in the hereafter is that a person who adheres to them will observe his spiritual relationship with God as a manifest reality. The service that he rendered to God's creatures out of his love for God, which was stimulated by his faith, and his yearning for righteous action, will be manifested to him as the trees and rivers of paradise. In this context, God Almighty has said:

وَالشَّمْسُ وَضُحَاهَا ۝ وَالنَّقْمَرِ إِذَا تَلَّهَا ۝ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّهَا ۝ وَاللَّيْلِ
 إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا ۝ وَالسَّمَاءَ وَمَا بَنَاهَا ۝ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا طَرَاهَا ۝ وَنَفْسٍ وَّ
 مَا سَوَّاهَا ۝ فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا ۝ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ۝
 وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا ۝ كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا ۝ إِذِ انبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا ۝
 فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا ۝ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا ۝

فَدَمَدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا ۚ وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا ۝²²²

That is, we call to witness the sun and its light; and We call to witness the moon when it follows the sun and obtains its light from it and conveys it to people; and We call to witness the day when it manifests the light of the sun and shows up the paths; and We call to witness the night when it darkens and envelops everything within itself; and We call to witness the heaven and the purpose for which it has been created; and We call to witness the earth and the purpose for which it has been spread out like a floor; and We call to witness the human soul and its quality which makes it equal to all these other things; that is to say all those qualities which are found dispersed among the other bodies that have been mentioned are all comprehended in the soul of the perfect man. As these bodies serve man in diverse ways, the

222. By the sun and its growing brightness, And *by* the moon when it follows it (the sun), And *by* the day when it reveals its glory, And *by* the night when it draws a veil over it, And *by* the heaven and its making, And *by* the earth and its spreading out, And *by* the soul and its perfection—And He revealed to it what is wrong for it and what is right for it—He indeed *truly* prospers who purifies it, And he who corrupts it is ruined. *The tribe of Thamud denied the truth* because of their rebelliousness. When the most wretched among them got up, Then the Messenger of Allāh said, ‘Leave alone the she-camel of Allāh, and let her drink.’ But they rejected him and hamstringed her, so their Lord destroyed them completely because of their sin, and made it (destruction) *overtake all of them* alike. And He cared not for the consequences thereof. (The Holy Quran, ash-Shams 91:2-16)

perfect man performs all that service by himself, as I have just stated. Then He says: That one will be delivered from death and will attain salvation who purifies his soul, that is to say, who serves God's creatures out of his devotion to God like the sun and the moon and the earth.

It should be kept in mind that in this context life means life eternal, which will be bestowed upon perfect man. This is an indication that the fruit of conforming to the practical ordinances of the law will be the eternal life of the next world, which will be sustained for ever by the vision of God. Then it is said that he who corrupts his soul and does not acquire the qualities for which he was bestowed appropriate capacities and goes back after spending an unclean life, shall be ruined and shall despair of life eternal. Then it is said that this is illustrated by the event of the she-camel of Allah, which was hamstrung by a wretched one of the tribe of Thamūd and was prevented from drinking at its fountain. This is an indication that the soul of man is the she-camel of God which He bestrides, meaning that the heart of man is the place of Divine manifestations. The water of the she-camel is the love and understanding of God which sustain it. Then it is said: when the Thamūd hamstrung the she-camel of God and prevented it

from having its drink, they were overtaken by God's chastisement and He cared not how their dependants would fare. Thus would be ruined one who corrupts his soul and prevents it from taking spiritual nourishment and does not desire to foster it.

The Philosophy of Allah's Swearing by Various things

Here one needs to be reminded that there is a deep philosophy in God's calling the sun and the moon etc. to witness. Some of our opponents, out of their lack of knowledge, criticise God for calling to witness created things. As their intelligence is earthly and not heavenly they fail to appreciate true insights. The purpose of taking an oath is that the one who takes an oath puts forward a testimony in support of his claim. A person who has no witness of his claim calls God to witness, for He knows what is hidden and He is the foremost witness in every controversy. Such a person puts forward the testimony of God by taking an oath in His name, meaning thereby that if God does not thereafter chastise him, that would be proof that God has confirmed the truth of his claim. It is, therefore, not permissible for a person to take the oath of any created thing, for no created thing possesses knowledge of the unseen, nor has it the power to punish one who takes a

false oath. In these verses, God calling various phenomena to witness is not the same thing as a person taking an oath. Divine manifestations are of two types. One, those that are obvious and concerning which there is no controversy. Secondly, there are those Divine manifestations which are inferential concerning which people differ and can fall into error. By calling to witness the obvious phenomena, God Almighty's purpose is to establish by their evidence His inferential manifestations.

It is obvious that the sun and the moon and the day and the night and the heaven and the earth, possess the respective characteristics that we have mentioned, but everyone is not aware of the characteristics possessed by the human soul. Thus, God has set forth His obvious manifestations as witnesses for the purpose of explaining His inferential manifestations. It is as if He says: If you are in doubt with regard to the qualities with which the human soul is invested, then reflect upon the sun and the moon and the other phenomena cited which obviously possess these qualities. You know that man is a microcosm that comprises a tiny representation of the pattern of the universe. As it is clear that the great bodies of the macrocosm possess these qualities and provide benefits for God's creatures, then how can man, who ranks above all those bodies, be without

those qualities? That is not so. Indeed, like the sun, man possesses the light of knowledge and reason whereby he can illumine the world. Like the moon he receives the light of vision and revelation from the Divine and conveys it to others who have not yet arrived at the highest stage of human progress. Then how can you say that prophethood is a false notion and that all prophethoods and purported Divine laws and books are only the imposture and selfishness of certain human beings. You observe how all paths are lit up and the heights and depressions become distinct when the day dawns. In the same way perfect man is the day of spiritual light, by his advent every path becomes clearly distinguishable. He points out the right path, for he himself is the bright day of truth and righteousness. Similarly, you observe how the night accommodates the weary and how the labourers, after working hard during the day, sleep in the gracious lap of the night and rest from their labours. The night also covers up all defects and imperfections. In the same way, the perfect servants of God come to provide comfort for people and the recipients of revelation relieve all wise people of extreme effort. Through them great problems of insight are easily resolved. Also Divine revelation covers up the defects of human reason and, like the night, does not let its faults to become known, inasmuch as wise people

correct their mistakes on their own in the light of revelation, and thus through the blessings of God's holy revelation save themselves from being exposed. That is the reason why no Muslim philosopher offered the sacrifice of a rooster to an idol as was done by Plato. Plato was misled as he was deprived of the light of revelation and despite being a great philosopher he perpetrated such a stupid and hateful act. The following of our lord and master the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, safeguarded the Muslim philosophers against such stupid and unholy practices. This shows how Divine revelation covers up, like the night, the deficiencies of the wise.

You are also aware that the perfect servants of God provide, like heaven, shelter for every weary one. His Prophets and the recipients of His revelation pour down the rain of their beneficence like the sky, and they also possess the qualities of the earth. Diverse types of trees of high knowledge spring forth from their fine souls, from the shade and flowers and fruits of which people derive benefit. Thus, this visible law of nature which is displayed before our eyes is a witness of the hidden law whose testimony God Almighty has cited in these verses by way of oaths. Reflect, therefore, how full of wisdom is the word that is found in the Holy Quran and which issued from the mouth of an unlettered

dweller of the desert. Had it not been the Word of God, the wise ones and those who are called highly educated, being confronted with this fine insight, would not have made it the subject of criticism. It is a common experience that when a person is unable to appreciate something on the basis of his finite reason he criticises that which is based on wisdom and his criticism becomes proof that that point of wisdom is above and beyond the reach of average minds. That is why those who are accounted wise raised an objection against this phenomenon; but now that the mystery has been resolved no reasonable person will criticise it but will derive pleasure from it.

Remember that the Holy Quran has, at another place, recited such an oath for the purpose of citing an instance of the law of nature in support of the phenomenon of revelation, and has said:

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ ○ وَالْأَرْضِ ذَاتِ الصَّدْعِ ○ إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلٌ
فَصْلٌ ○ وَمَا هُوَ بِالْهَزْلِ ○²²³

That is, we call to witness the heaven that sends down rain and the earth that sprouts diverse types of vegetation with the help of such rain, that the Quran is God's word and His revelation, and that it decides

223. By the cloud which gives rain after rain, And *by* the earth which opens out *with herbage*, It is surely a decisive word, And it is not a useless talk. (The Holy Quran, at-Ṭāriq 86:12-15)

between truth and falsehood and is not vain talk, that is to say, it has not been revealed out of time and has come like seasonable rain.

Here God Almighty has set forth a well known law of nature in support of the truth of the Holy Quran, which is His Word. It is a matter of common observation that at a time of need rain comes down from heaven and that the vegetation of the earth all depends upon rain. When rain is held back then gradually the wells also run dry, so that the water in the earth also depends upon rain from heaven. That is why in the rainy season the level of the water in the wells also rises. Why does it rise? The reason for which is that heavenly water exercises a pull upon earthly water. The same is the relationship between divine revelation and human reason. Divine revelation is heavenly water and reason is earthly water which receives sustenance from heavenly water. When heavenly water, that is to say, divine revelation, is held back, the earthly water also dries up gradually. That is the reason why, when a long time passes and no recipient of revelation appears on the earth, the reason of the wise is corrupted, as earthly water is corrupted and dries up. To appreciate this phenomenon it would be enough to cast a glance at the condition of the world immediately before the advent of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon

him. As six hundred years had passed after the time of Jesus, and no recipient of revelation had appeared during the interval, the whole world had been corrupted. The history of every country shows that before the advent of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, falsehood had become current throughout the world. Why did this happen? This happened because divine revelation had been held back for a long time and the kingdom of heaven had fallen into the hands of human reason alone. No one is unaware of the corruption in which the people were involved by following defective reason. Thus, when the rain of revelation did not descend for a period, the water of reason dried up.

So in these oaths God Almighty draws attention to this firm and eternal law of nature and calls for reflection upon it that all the vegetation of the earth depends upon the water of heaven. Thus, for the hidden law that governs divine revelation, the obvious law of nature is a witness. Then try to derive benefit from the testimony of this witness and do not make reason alone your guide, for it is not a water that can continue without heavenly water. As it is a characteristic of heavenly water that it pulls up the water of all the wells, whether it falls directly into a well or not, in the same way, when a recipient of divine revelation appears in the

world then, whether a wise person follows him or not, reason is illumined and clarified to a degree not witnessed before. People begin to search for the truth and their faculty of reflection is stirred up from the unseen. Thus, all this upsurge of reason and of the heart is initiated by the blessed advent of the recipient of divine revelation and the waters of the earth are pulled up by it. So, when you find that everyone has started a search for religion and an upsurge has stirred earthly waters, then rise up and be warned and know for certain that heavy rain has fallen from heaven and that the water of divine revelation has fallen upon a human heart.