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Sorrow (ḥuzn) in the Muslim Tradition: with Special Reference to Said Nursi

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Sorrow (*ḥuzn*) in the Muslim Tradition: with Special Reference to Said Nursi

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Abstract

This study aims to carry out a critical analysis of the work of the contemporary, twentieth century Muslim thinker Said Nursi (1876-1960). The focus of this thesis is on his views on the Quranic understanding of the concept of *ḥuzn*. This is the first academic research which uses Nursi's understanding of *ḥuzn* for a greater insight on this concept.

The study begins by carrying out a contextual of analysis of *ḥuzn* by researching Muslim literature on this concept and comparing it with Said Nursi's Quranic interpretation in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the narrative on *ḥuzn*. It explores the idea that since *ḥuzn* is a universal condition, there must be a reason for its existence. It therefore aims to find out whether *ḥuzn* has a positive role to play.

In order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the narrative on *ḥuzn* the Quran itself is the first point of reference. By examining all the occurrences of the word *ḥuzn* in the Quran it is hoped that a typology can be built for an initial Quranic narrative of this concept. This initial framework is then followed by a thematic analysis of this word in order to obtain a more holistic understanding of this word. Izutsian methodology is also used for a more scientific as opposed to an atomistic or cultural approach to the understanding of this concept.

Quranic exegetes' and Muslim thinkers' understanding of *ḥuzn* from both medieval and modern periods are also compared with Nursi's understanding of this concept in order to throw further light on the reason for the existence of *ḥuzn* and the role it has to play. If indeed it does have a positive role to play then this will impact greatly on how *ḥuzn* should be viewed and treated.

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Transliteation

خ	ح	ج	ث	ت	ب	ا
kha	haa	jiim	thaa	taa	baa	alif
ص	ش	س	ز	ر	ذ	د
saad	shiin	siin	zaay	raa	thaal	daal
ق	ف	غ	ع	ظ	ط	ض
qaaf	faa	ghayn	ayn	thaa	taa	daad
ي	و	ه	ن	م	ل	ك
yaa	waaw	ha	nuun	miim	laam	kaaf

	s	m
ā	sh	n
b	ṣ	h
t	ḍ	w
th	ṭ	y
j	ẓ	
ḥ	'	
kh	gh	
d	f	
dh	q	
r	k	
z	l	

Short vowels		Long vowels		Diphthongs	
a	rabb	ā	raḥmān	ay	khayr
i	sirr	ī	dīn		aw
	qawm				
u	qul	ū	sūra		

Hamza, i.e. as ta'thīr

Chapter One: Introduction

We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, *merely in [idle] sport*[1]

The concept of sadness generally is a vast subject and throughout history there has been little consensus on how it should be defined and consequently how it should be treated. Ancient physicians made a clear distinction between sadness that was associated with loss of loved ones or other painful circumstances and sadness without a cause, and offered different treatments for the two categories.[2] Medieval Muslim thinkers such as Al-Kīndī (800-870) and Balkhī (849-934) also followed their Greek and Roman predecessors and offered behavioural techniques for sadness that arose from environmental causes.[3] However, contemporary psychiatry has been criticised for largely ignoring this distinction by focussing more on symptoms rather than context. According to some critics, classification according to symptoms can lead to the wrong diagnosis since it is possible that both categories of sadness can sometimes display similar symptoms.[4]

As expressed in the above verse from the Quran, nothing is created in futility, and therefore ultimately there must be a purpose for everything that is created. The current study examines this idea further that since sadness is a universal condition and that nothing exists without a reason, then *ḥuzn* must have a purpose too. The aim of this study is therefore to carry out a contextual analysis of *ḥuzn* by researching Muslim literature on this concept and comparing it with Said Nursi's Quranic interpretation[5] in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the narrative on *ḥuzn*, the

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[1] Quran, 44:38. See also Quran, 21:16-17.
[2] See Allan V. Horwitz and Jerome C. Wakefield, *The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 59.
[3] Ya'qub ibnIshaq al-Kīndī's and Abū Zayd al-Balhī's, along with other Muslim thinkers' work, will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.
[4] Horwitz and Wakefield, 9-10.
[5] The reason why Nursi is chosen will be detailed below.

perceived reasons for its existence and why and how, on a practical level, it is believed that it can be obviated.

1.1 Rationale for the study

As early as the ninth century, Muslim thinkers such as Balkhī made a clear distinction between *ḥuzn* ('sadness or depression') that was due to environmental factors and *ḥuzn* due to apparently no known reason. Their differentiation between these two categories bears a remarkable resemblance to modern definitions of reactive depression and endogenous depression.[6] Balkhī's recommendation was that the latter should be treated both physically with medication, and psycho-spiritually, with methods such as "music" and "pleasant conversation", and that the former, attributed to the loss of loved ones or any possessions one values, should not be medicalised, but be dealt with through strategies of behavioural change. Since the medieval Muslim thinkers believed that the actual events in people's lives were not the real cause of reactive depression, but that the problem was down to how they interpreted their particular experiences, they devised strategies and methods for retraining the mind in order to help individuals to distinguish between reality and imagination. Both medieval and modern critics have pointed to the fact that reactive depression should not be classed under the same category as a major depressive disorder.[7] Horwitz and Wakefield criticize the fact that contemporary psychiatry has tended to ignore the distinction that used to be made between the two categories when it is still very much relevant today:

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[6] See Malik Badri, *Abū Zayd al-Balkhī's Sustenance of the Soul: The Cognitive Behaviour Therapy of a Ninth Century Physician* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2013), 21.

[7] See Jerome C. Wakefield, 'The Concept of Mental Disorder: Diagnostic Implications of the Harmful Dysfunction', *World Psychiatry,* 6 (2007), 153; Allen Frances, 'The New Crisis of Confidence in Psychiatric Diagnosis', *Ann Intern Med.* (2013) 159 (3), 221-222 and Horwitz and Wakefield, *The Loss of Sadness*, who have criticised the *DSM-5* Manual for not making a clear distinction between 'depressive disorders' and 'normal sadness'.

Normal sadness, or sadness "with cause," was associated with experiences of loss or other painful circumstances that seemed to be the obvious causes of distress. The response to such normal reactions was to offer support, to help the individual cope and move on despite the loss, and to avoid confusing the person's sadness with illness.

The other kind of condition, traditionally known as *melancholia*, or depression "without cause," was a medical disorder distinguished from normal sadness by the fact that the patient's symptoms occurred despite there being no appropriate reason for them in the patient's circumstances.[8]

According to The World Health Organization's (WHO) estimation, depression is the leading cause of disability for 15-44 year olds and thus a huge cost to the public health budget.[9] Horwitz and Wakefield attribute the increase in depressive disorders to be mainly due to the flawed *DSM Diagnostic Manual*, which fails to make a clear distinction between reactive and endogenous depression. And yet almost all mental health professionals in America in particular, follow the criteria set by this manual.[10]

Research has shown the importance of the role of faith leaders *(Imams)* for support for mental health in Muslim communities and the lack of their awareness about mental health and support services. However, although this research acknowledges the need for cultural and religious input, its emphasis is on raising awareness about the current psychotherapeutic model of practice, which as discussed above, has been questioned by its critics.[11] Although the recommendation of the aforementioned research for

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[8] Ibid., 6.

[9] Christopher J.L. Murray and Alan D. Lopez,' Evidence-Based Health Policy: Lessons from the Global Burden of Disease Study', in *Science*, (New Series), 274, no. 5288, (November, 1996), 740-743.

[10] For a discussion of the *DSM*'s definition of major depression see Horwitz and Wakefield, 8-26.

[11] Wahiba Abu-Ras, Ali Gheith and Francine Cournos, 'The Imam's Role in Mental Health Promotion: A Study at 22 Mosques in New York City's Muslim Community', *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, (2008) 3:2, 155-176.

more information on current mental health services for Muslim religious leaders[12] is helpful, it is not adequate, as it is grounded in the current secular model. Moreover, it does not consider the dearth of current discourse on the esoteric[13] aspect of Islam and the fact that the role of Imams is linked mainly with support regarding the externals of religion.[14] With the increase in the number of Muslim chaplains whose role emphasises the importance of pastoral care,[15] there is arguably a greater need for a deeper understanding of the Muslim perspective on *ḥuzn* and how it should be treated.

As the concept of mental illness is too broad, the aim of this study is to critically examine one aspect of 'mental illness', i.e. 'sadness' *(ḥuzn)*, from a Muslim perspective generally and from Said Nursi's perspective specifically. The study hopes to determine whether sadness has a positive role to play and is therefore considered to be treated as something that is 'normal'. It will also endeavour to understand why sadness is acknowledged as something which is both given to, and taken from individuals by God, but yet is apparently viewed by the Quran as a negative feeling that is to be obviated whenever possible. It will also attempt to discover why, if *ḥuzn* is a negative attribute, believers – prophets in particular – were not exempt from it, particularly given its link to unbelief.[16]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] For a discussion on the meaning of extrinsic and intrinsic religion and the exoteric (external) versus the esoteric (experiential) expressions of religion, see Charles Topper, *Spirituality in Pastoral Counseling and the Community Helping Professionals* (New York: Haworth Press, 2003), 9.

[14] For a discussion on the traditional roles of *Imams* which is mainly centred on the externals of Islam, with the exclusion in the main of psychological and emotional support, see Ahmed Nezar Kobeisy,' Faith-Based Practice: An Introduction', *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, (2006), 57-63.

[15] See Sophie Gilliat-Ray, 'From "Visiting Minister" to "Muslim chaplain": The Growth of Muslim Chaplaincy in Britain, 1970-2007', in Eileen Barker (ed.), *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life: Essays in Honour of James A. Beckford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 145-160.

[16] See Quran 3:153, 35:34, 28:8, 36:76 and 10:65.

To this writer's knowledge, this is the only study which analyses the specific concept of *ḥuzn*, and uses a thematic approach in order to understand the Quranic narrative on this concept, thus enabling the Quran to explain itself (*tafsīr al-quran bīl-quran*) and thus reduce the risk of misinterpretation. It is also unique from the point of view that it compares and contrasts the specific concept of *ḥuzn* as expounded by both Shīa and Sunnī Muslim thinkers, as well as exegetes from medieval and modern periods with Nursi's understanding of this concept. It is also the first study of its kind to use Izutsian methodology for the ontological study of the concept of *ḥuzn* in the Quran. In contrast with philosophical ontology which is concerned mainly with the understanding of metaphysical concepts at an abstract level, the Izutsian methodological and analytical study of this concept allows a more concrete world view to be obtained, thus leaving less potential for bias. In short, the originality of this thesis lies in the fact that no one else has written on the specific concept of *ḥuzn* in relation to the Quran, to scholarly *tafsīr*, to the history of Muslim thinkers, or to Said Nursi.

It is hoped that these perspectives on *ḥuzn* will contribute to greater understanding and research in this area with regard to the discussion of its classification and categorization generally and its contribution to Muslim pastoral care in particular.

This study will not be concerned with endogenous depression, since the Quranic meaning of *ḥuzn* connotes degrees of sadness due to reaction to loss, and is hence linked more with environmental factors. It is hoped that this thesis will encourage greater interest and scholarly research into adapting an approach whose values are based on Islamic principles in the treatment of reactive depression.

1.2. Said Nursi's Interpretation of *ḥuzn*

Although Said Nursi's *Rīsale-ī Nur*[17] is not, strictly speaking, a work of systematic exegesis, it is nevertheless a modern commentary and an interpretation of Quranic concepts. Turner summarises Nursi's work as:

> a sort of hermeneutical prism, catching what its author considers to be the effulgence of divine light from the Quran and refracting it as colours visible to, and understandable by, the eye of the human heart.[18]

The main reason why Said Nursi has been chosen is that he is a twentieth-century Muslim thinker whose work is directly based on the verses in the Quran, which he considers as the only salve for all spiritual illnesses. His work mirrors the major themes in the Quran namely Divine Unity, revelation, prophethood, the hereafter, and the relationship between God and man.

Another reason why Nursi is chosen is that the main aim of this research is to argue that the existence of *ḥuzn* must have a purpose. Sufi literature accords with this idea and portrays the concept of sorrow in a totally positive light, but it offers very little debate or clear explanation as to how one should deal with grief at a practical level. Nursi's work however, although influenced by classical mystical thinkers,[19] is expressed in his own particular didactic and literary style, and by taking the reader along with him through the journey of his personal life experiences, the reader is able to engage more with his analytic discussions on Quranic concepts such as *ḥuzn*.

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[17] The *Rīsale-ī Nūr* collection is Nursi's principal work which consists of a six-thousand-page commentary on the Quran.

[18] Colin Turner, The Qur'an Revealed: *A Critical Analysis of Said Nursi's Epistles of Light* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2013), 4.

[19] For example see Nursi, *The Letters*, trans. Şukran Vahide (Istanbul: Sözler Neşriyat, 1994), 44, where he refers to Jalāl-al-Dīn Rūmī, Sufi poet of thriteenth century, as one of his "masters."

Also what makes Nursi unique is his style of writing, which uses deductive reasoning, persuasive arguments and allegories and a view of the world which always proceeds from the 'self'. He does not provide *a priori* proofs as such but points to a God as being both transcendent and immanent. He points to God's immanence by stressing the point that one is only able to know God through His creation. For Nursi therefore, creation is nothing more than signs pointing to God or mirrors reflecting all of His attributes through their very being. He explains that the wretchedness of human beings and the outcome of all ills in society are due to the wrong reading of the creation, that is through disconnecting the creation from its Maker, and he thus instructs his readers to read the signs in creation in the correct way – as pointing to Him *(ma'nā-i ḥarfī)* rather than pointing to themselves *(ma'nā-i ismī)*.[20] His use of Quranic binary concepts such as light and darkness, belief and unbelief, helps the reader to move beyond the metaphorical to an understanding of transcendence, that is, by taking the reader with him through the journey of creation and pointing to the true nature of created beings as transient, ephemeral and contingent, Nursi is able to conclude that the Creator of all beings must be Absolute. Nursi's work centres on the concept of Divine Unity which ontologically is the central focus of all the concepts in the Quran, including the narrative on *ḥuzn*.

1.3 Sources

Although the general concept of sadness has been discussed by certain philosophers and Muslim thinkers, there is no substantive work dedicated solely to the narrative of *ḥuzn* in the Muslim theological literature; where *ḥuzn* has been discussed, it appears only incidentally.

As discussed earlier, Sufis, in particular the Persian Sufi mystic and poet Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī (1207-1273), known in the West as Rumi, have written much about the general concept of sadness, expressing this

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[20] For a discussion on Nursi's concepts of *ḥarfī* and *ismī* see 6.12.

through music and poetry. Rumi was not simply a poet, nor in the technical sense of the word an exegete of the Quran; his work nevertheless, especially his *Mathnawī*, is considered to be a representation of important themes in the Quran.[21] In Rumi's poetry, sadness generally, which includes the concept of *ḥuzn* as well as *balā* ('Divine tribulation'), is considered to be a positive notion and therefore rather than be obviated, he urges that it should be welcomed.[22]

Echoing the Sufi path, Rouzati's book *Trial and Tribulation in the Qur'an: A Mystical Theology*, published recently on the notion of *bala* ('trial and tribulation') in the Quran, aims to dispel the popular understanding of the notion of *bala* by presenting the positive aspect of Divine tribulation.[23]

Also Abu Hamīd al-Ghazalī's (1058-1111 AD) book *Mīzān al-'Amāl* ('Criterion of Action') contains a short chapter on *Mudāwāt al-Ghamm* ('remedy of sorrow') where he argues that sadness is due to lack of understanding and ability to reason and also due to our strong attachment to the things we have become accustomed to.[24] He explains that an intelligent person would be able to realise the pointlessness of being sad about something that has happened in the past and is no longer relevant, and as for the present, if sadness is due to jealousy such as being envious of other people's wealth and high position in life, then again this shows the person's ignorance of the fact that actually God has favoured them by not putting the heavy burden of the world on their shoulders; and if only they were aware of this, they would be grateful. When he relates sadness to the future, he gives the examples of old age and death, and reiterates that this sadness is due to lack of understanding and trust in God's Divine

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[21] See Sirr Nay, Abd Al-Husayn Zarrinkub, *A Critical Analysis and Commentary of Masnavi* (Tehran: Ettellat, 1388), V1, 340-43.
[22] Rumi, Mathnavī, IV 97-100 translated by William C. Chittick, in *The Sufi Path of Love,* 236-245.
[23] Nasrin Rouzati, *Trial and Tribulation in the Quran: A Mystical Theodicy* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2015).
[24] Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-'Amāl*, trans. by Akbar Kasmāī (Tehran: Soroosh, 1974), 151-153.

decree and Determining.[25] Ghazali's arguments on the futility of sadness generally are based on the idea that this is 'the best of all possible worlds'[26] in which apparent imperfections are necessary:

> If the imperfect is not created, the perfect will not be known. If beasts had not been created, the dignity of human beings would not be evident, for the perfect and the imperfect are manifested in relation to one another. Therefore, Divine generosity and wisdom require that Creation includes both perfect and imperfect.[27]

It is not deemed necessary to provide a separate account on Sufi ideas of this concept, firstly because, as explained earlier, there is very little literature on the specific understanding of *ḥuzn*, and secondly, Nursi's work is inspired by the same classical Sufi ideas such as Ghazali and Rumi and therefore can be described as a Sufi path without the need to follow a spiritual leader. Nursi's work can be described as a modern approach to classical Sufism which offers not only as Nursi opines, a 'safer' route[28] but also a more detailed and practical route, with the *Rīsale* itself, acting as the *murshīd* ('spiritual leader') leading the reader towards gnosis of God.

This study therefore will concentrate mainly on works which have been dedicated specifically to the concept of *ḥuzn*. The problem of defining and categorizing sadness has been mainly due to the lumping together of different degrees, states and kinds of 'sadness' and it is therefore hoped that by narrowing down the general concept of sadness to the specific meaning of *ḥuzn*, a clearer understanding of this concept will be obtained.

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[25] Ibid.

[26] For a discussion on Ghazali's 'best of all possible worlds' see Eric Linn Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: Dispute over Al-Ghazali's "Best of All Possible Worlds"* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Legacy Library,1984).

[27] Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb Al-Tawhīd Wa' L-Tawakkul*, trans. as Faith in Divine Unity and Trust in Divine Providence by David Burrell (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2001), 46.

[28] Nursi believed that the *Rīsale* offered a shorter and safer way to belief by absolving the need for following a *murshīd* ('spiritual guide'), whose blind following ran the risk of divergence from Quranic principles. See Turner, *The Qur'an Revealed*, 349.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

The dissertation comprises seven chapters. The first chapter is the introduction to the whole thesis. Chapter Two is divided into two parts. The first part builds a typology of some of the occurrences of the word *ḥuzn* in the Quran in order to examine the notion of sadness and its cognate concepts from a purely scriptural perspective. The verses which relate directly to the kind of people who will not have *ḥuzn* will be grouped together in order to obtain a picture of the 'type' of people who are able to avoid *ḥuzn*. The rest of the verses which mention the word *ḥuzn* will be classified thematically. A thematic analysis enables a holistic approach rather than a narrow or literal understanding of this concept by considering the meaning of other verses in which the word *ḥuzn* is used, thus allowing the Quran to explain itself (*tafsīr al-Quran bīl-Quran*). The typology and thematic analysis will provide an appropriate background for comparing the notion of *ḥuzn* with the exegetes' and Muslim thinkers' interpretation of this concept.

The second part of Chapter Two will focus on the semantic field of the word *ḥuzn*. Izutsu's methodology[29] will be used in order to look at terms which are closely linked to this concept, in order to obtain a contextual meaning rather than an atomistic one. The Izutsian semantic analysis enables a more scientific approach to the meaning of concepts such as *ḥuzn* in the Quran. Its inductive and analytic method decreases the likelihood of subjective, historical, cultural or political influences tainting its meaning by trying to find out what *ḥuzn* means according to the Quranic *Weltanschauung*. The analysis will be carried out by gathering all the verses where this concept is mentioned together, in order to compare them against each other as well as other synonyms and antonyms of the word, in order to understand this concept beyond its basic meaning. A

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[29] Toshihiko Izutsu (1914-1993) was a Professor at Keio University in Japan and author of many books on Islam and other religions.

detailed description and discussion of the Izutsian methodology and analysis will be given in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three will focus on both Shiite and Sunni works of exegesis from the classical and modern periods in order to explore how scholars have understood the Quranic approach to *ḥuzn*. Some of the verses which relate to the obviation of *ḥuzn* will be grouped together and others will be categorized thematically. Although most exegetes tend to be cautious with regard to the interpretation of the Quran and thus deal mainly with its exoteric dimension, which focuses on a detailed explanation of texts rather than delving too deeply by analysing the esoteric dimension,[30] it is envisaged that their interpretation will serve, to an extent, as supporting information for the study of the concept of *ḥuzn*. As well as original sources, on-line sources and DVD has been used for quick access to the work of above exegetes. The date of access to these has been mentioned only in the first reference in order to avoid repetition.

The focus of Chapter Four will be on Muslim thinkers who have written about the concept of *ḥuzn*. Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b.Isḥāq al-Kīndī will be the main Muslim thinker analysed, and his work, 'On the Device for Dispelling Sorrows' (*Rīsāla Ya'qūb b. Īsḥāq al-Kindī fī al-hīla lī-daf' al-aḥzān*) will be compared with works of a selection of other Muslim thinkers who have specifically written on the subject of *ḥuzn*. Al-Kīndī's notion of *ḥuzn* will then be compared with the Quranic narrative as discussed in the typology in Chapter Two; the exegetes' interpretation of *ḥuzn* in Chapter Three; and later with Said Nursi's definition and understanding of this concept in Chapter Six. This epistle is Kīndī's only existing ethical work. It is written in the form of a letter in response to a friend's request on how to dispel sorrow. The reason Kīndī has been chosen for this study is that he is the

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[30] The exoteric aspect of the Quran is the literal understanding, or the laws which are explained clearly, while the esoteric exegesis attempts to move beyond the apparent in the quest of the inner or hidden meaning. For further discussion on the difference between exoteric and esoteric see Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Quran and Its Interpreters*, 1 (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 21-40.

first Muslim philosopher to write a comprehensive treatise specifically on the subject of *ḥuzn*. In this treatise he defines the meaning of *ḥuzn*, explains why it is totally negative and must be eliminated, and then offers important rules and principles as well as ten devices for its obviation. This epistle is considered to be one of the earliest contributions to psychotherapy as it focuses specifically on the nature of *ḥuzn* defined as:

> "Psychological pain *[alam nafsānī]* [literally meaning sickness of the soul], occurring due to the loss of an object of love or the missing of things desired."[31]

Al-Kīndī's solution for the obviation of *ḥuzn* does not lie in medical treatment; rather he recommends a more practical approach through self-training and change of behaviour.

Chapter Five will serve as bridging chapter to Chapter Six and consists of a brief account of Nursi's life and works. The *Rīsāle-ī Nur,* apart from being an interpretation of the Quran, also serves as a biography in which Nursi reflects on his life experiences, which included periods of *ḥuzn*. It is therefore important to offer a brief historical background to Nursi's life and works in Chapter Five in order to provide a contextual backdrop for Chapter Six, which examines the narrative of Nursi's life and how his own experience of *ḥuzn* may have influenced his writings.

Chapter Six will examine Nursi's methodology and approach in his understanding of *ḥuzn*, followed by the Conclusion of the whole thesis.

In Chapter Six, similar to the Izutsian analysis of *ḥuzn* in the Quran, instances of the use of this word in various parts of the *Rīsāle* will be analysed in order to throw light on Nursi's world-view, with the aim of moving beyond the basic meaning of the word by examining its

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[31] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 'The Epistle of Yaʻquʻb ībn Ishaʻq al-Kīndī: On the Device for Dispelling Sorrows' in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 29, 2 (2002), 121-135.

relationship with other concepts such as happiness. Since the concept of *ḥuzn* is closely related to *balā* ('Divine tribulation') the question of theodicy will also be discussed in this chapter in order to examine how hardships experienced in life are viewed from a Nursian perspective.

Nursi adopts the use of Quranic concept pairs such as belief *(īmān)* and unbelief *(kufr)* in his work. However, although in the Quran the concept of *ḥuzn* is not explicitly defined in binary terms, Nursi starts out by offering two definitions for *ḥuzn* and its opposite 'happiness'. As discussed, the Sufi understanding of *ḥuzn* is expressed only in positive terms and emphasizes that sorrow is a mercy from God and therefore should be welcomed:

> There is an animal called the porcupine that becomes large and fat if you beat it with a stick. The more you beat it, the more it thrives, growing fat on the blows of the stick. The believer's spirit is in truth a porcupine, for the blows of suffering make it large and fat. That is why the suffering and tribulation inflicted upon the prophets is greater than that inflicted upon all the world's creatures.[32]

According to Rumi, therefore, since suffering is inflicted by God, it must be positive and one should not flee from it as it offers the potential for one to abandon the 'self' and find union with God.[33] Nursi, however, offers two definitions of *ḥuzn*, one apparently positive and the other apparently negative:

> And sadness is of two sorts. It is either a dark sorrow arising from the lack of friends, that is, having no friends or owner,[34] which is the sorrow produced by the literature of civilization, which is stained by misguidance, enamoured of nature, tainted by heedlessness…

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[32] Rumi, Mathnavī, in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love,* 237-238.
[33] Ibid., 236-245.
[34] By the term no 'owner' here Nursi means a hopeless feeling of not belonging to anyone. For further discussion on Nursi's description of 'ownerless' see 6.4.1 and 6.4.2.

Or it is the second sorrow. This arises from the separation of friends, that is, the friends exist, but their absence causes a yearning sorrow. This is the guidance-giving, light-scattering sorrow which the Qur'an produces.[35]

Nursi's binary definition of both *ḥuzn* and happiness has a whole series of ramifications which also fit in in with his use of other concept pairs in his writings. This study aims to discover whether Nursi's definition of negative *ḥuzn* is only metaphorical, but deemed necessary for the understanding of this concept.

The final Chapter will summarize the discoveries from the whole thesis on the subject of *ḥuzn* and then suggest how the findings can contribute to a greater understanding of the Muslim perspective of this concept.

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[35] Nursi, *The Words*, 424.

CHAPTER TWO

Part One: Typology of *ḥuzn*
Part Two: Izutsian analysis of *ḥuzn*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the Quran and how it posits the possibility of obviating *ḥuzn* ('sadness'). The Quranic understanding of the word *ḥuzn* will serve as a valuable comparison with Nursi's understanding of the term, which will be explored in Chapter Five.

According to Nursi, the most appropriate cure for the problems of the time is to be found in belief, and the only way to progress, felicity and salvation is to follow the criteria of the Quran.[1] In fact the whole of the *Rīsale-ī Nur* mirrors the five major themes in the Quran, namely, Divine Unity, revelation, Prophethood, the Hereafter, and the relationship between God and man.[2] It is therefore necessary that the focus of the present chapter should be on Nursi's source of inspiration, the Quran, for examining the topic of *ḥuzn* in order to compare it to what he has to say about this topic in Chapter Six.

First of all a typology of some[3] of the occurrences of this word in the Quran will be built with the aim of exploring the notion of 'sadness' and its cognate concepts from a scriptural perspective. The typology will be followed by a thematic categorization of the rest of the verses containing the word *ḥuzn*. More detail of what a thematic categorization entails will be given in this introduction. Therefore initially the Izutsian approach will not be used and reference will only be made to the narrative in the Quran for a general understanding of the term.

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[1] Nursi, *The Letters*, 41.
[2] Nursi's major works will be briefly discussed in Chapter Five.
[3] These constitute of all the verses which point to how *ḥuzn* can be obviated. These verses have been grouped together for a separate discussion and semantic analysis. The rest of the verses which are not directly linked to the obviation of *ḥuzn* have been used for a thematic analysis of this concept. For further explanation see 1.4.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the semantic field of the word. This is where the Izutsian methodology will be used to look at other terms which are closely linked to the word *ḥuzn*, in order to obtain a contextual meaning rather than an atomistic one. A detailed explanation of the Izutsian approach and the reasons why it has been chosen will be given (2.5).

As the aim of this chapter is to obtain insights into a Quranic *Weltanschauung*, the main references will be from the Quran itself. The on-line Quran translations, namely those of Yusuf Ali, Pickthall, Sahih International, Shakir, Muhammed Sarwar and Mohsin Khan will be used for easy reference.[4] While all translations apply the necessary techniques to reach as wide an audience as possible, they cannot convey the full understanding of the Arabic, or to put it more precisely the Quranic meaning. That is because Quranic discourse has its own complex and unique features with regard to syntax, semantics, phonetics and so on, totally distinct from other types of Arabic prose, which cannot be replicated in any language. Therefore, for the purposes of this chapter the Arabic text itself will be the first point of analysis.

There are forty-two verses in the Quran in which the word *ḥuzn* and its derivatives are mentioned. Of these, twenty-six were revealed in Mecca and sixteen in Medina. Any significance as to why some verses were revealed in Mecca and others in Medina will also be explored (2.6.5 and 2.6.5.1).

All of the verses which relate directly to the kind of people who will not have *ḥuzn* ('sadness') have been grouped together in order to obtain a picture of the 'type' of people who are able to avoid *ḥuzn*. A table is also provided for easy reference (2.3.2). The rest of the verses will be grouped

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[4] http://corpus.quran.com/translation.

according to themes. The typology and the Izutsian semantic analysis will be examined in accordance with these two categories. It must be stressed, however, that these verses do not fall neatly into a particular theme, as there is considerable overlap. But a thematic analysis provides another useful tool for a broader understanding of the concept of *ḥuzn.*

2.2 Thematic Analysis

The Quran is the criterion against which all sources have to be judged; consequently any sayings of the Prophet or exegetical findings that go blatantly against the teachings of the Quran cannot be accepted.[5] Thus the main source for obtaining an interpretation of the Quran is the Quran itself. But in order to understand the full meaning of a verse or concept it is important that the verses should not be taken out of context; rather, they are to be studied as part of an integrated and unified whole, due to the fact that certain verses explain other verses, or, to put it in another way, every verse at a microcosmic level is linked to the macrocosm of the whole Quran.

A thematic approach not only enables a verse to be examined but also considers its relationship with other verses sharing similar themes. In other words, the Quran is explained by the Quran itself *(tafsir al-Quran bil-Quran)*. The aim is to try to obtain a Quranic understanding of any issue related to life or the universe by identifying all the verses related to a topic or particular theme in order to capture a fuller picture of the overall meaning. There are many verses in the Quran which when studied in isolation give a totally different meaning, or arguably even apparently contradict one another, if not seen in the light of other verses dealing with the same subject or theme.[6]

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[5] Murtaḍā Mutahhari, Understanding the Uniqueness of the Quran, translated from the Persian by Mahliqa Qara'i, *Al-Tawhid*, 1 (*Muharram – Rajab* 1404 AH), http://www.alseraj.net/maktaba/kotob/english/women/Womenin/al-tawhid/default.htm [accessed 29 October 2013].
[6] For example see verses 2:62 and 5:51. Also, for a greater elaboration on this subject, see Mutahari, *Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an*. See also Ali al-Awsi, *Al-*

The advantage of applying the process of thematic interpretation or, as Wadud terms it, 'a holistic intra-Quranic interpretation', is that the interpreter is required to prioritise 'universals' rather than 'particulars', which is less likely to run the risk of resulting in 'narrow and inflexible laws' as is often found in the methodology of jurisprudence.[7] However, although the advantage of this method is that the aim of the exegete is to understand a particular verse without any preconceived ideas in order to find the answers in the Quran itself, the method may be questioned with regard to whether a totally neutral or passive stance is actually possible.

Apart from the Izutsian approach, a thematic approach has also been used for this chapter as overall it is a useful tool for understanding concepts such as *ḥuzn* in the Quran. This synthetic approach reduces the risk of imposing human experience on the Quran by virtue of synthesising verses and their meanings into a composite view, and in this way aiming to achieve the unification of the human experiential aspect with the Quran.

2.3 Typology of the word *ḥuzn*

In this section a typology of *ḥuzn* will be built in order to obtain a general understanding of this concept. Therefore the Izutsian methodology will not be used as the aim is to uncover the 'story' of *ḥuzn* in accordance to the Quranic narrative. All the verses which explain how *ḥuzn* can be obviated will be classified together and the rest of the verses will be grouped together in accordance to themes.

2.3.1 Criteria for obviation of sadness

According to the Quran, the key to not having *ḥuzn* is acceptance that there is only One God and not associating any partners to Him. The emphasis is on believers who turn only to One Lord and by remaining

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Tabataba'i wa Manhajuhū fi Tafsirih al-Mizan, (Tehran: Mu'awiniyyat al-Riyasa lil 'Alaqat al-Dawliyyah, 1985), 125.
[7] Amina Wadud, 'Towards a Quranic hermeneutics of Social Justice: Race, Class and Gender', *The Journal of Law and Religion* 12, 1 (1995-1996), 37-50.

firmly on that path link all events, whether deemed desirable or undesirable, to the Creator of the Universe. 46:13 stresses the importance of accepting only One Lord *(rabb)* and not deviating from that path, hence indicating that it is the deviation from belief in One God which results in the dependence on other things or people, with the resultant effect of causing *ḥuzn*.

> *Verily those who say, "Our Lord is God," and remain firm (on that path), – on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve [yaḥzanūna].*[8]

The fact that belief in One God is followed also by belief in the Last Day suggests that belief in the Last Day is a necessary corollary of true belief *(īmān)*. 29:64 explains the reality of the worldly life which is in fact a temporary abode and hence only a period for preparation for the next world which is the 'real' home. This indicates that unlike this world which is transient and which is a realm of trials and tests, the next world is everlasting.

> *What is the life of this world but amusement and play? But verily the Home in the Hereafter, that is life indeed, if they but knew.*[9]

But in order not to have *ḥuzn*, it appears that merely belief in One God and the Last Day is not enough. Submission *(īslam),* which is also seen as a necessary corollary of true belief, must follow. This submission means following guidance to carry out one's responsibilities. And the source of this guidance is the signs in creation *(āyāt takwīnī)* as well as the Quran and the Prophets.[10] According to the verse below, submission includes

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[8] Quran, 46:13.
[9] Quran, 29:64.
[10]There are many references in the Quran which invite the reader to look at creation for proof for the Unity of God, hence the creation itself is a form of guidance. But creation by itself is not enough; the book of guidance, namely the Quran for interpreting the creation is also needed. Furthermore, the prerequisite of obtaining guidance is to listen to 'the guide' namely Muhammad who was entrusted with the mission to guide human kind "from every kind of darkness into light…." See Quran: 14:1, 2:2, 31:10-11.

carrying out 'acts of righteousness', 'regular prayers' and 'giving charity'. But just as faith alone is not true faith if it is without righteous deeds, submission without faith is also not acceptable. Therefore belief *(īmān)* and submission *(īslam)* cannot be separated.[11]

> *Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve [yaḥzanūn].*[12]

The emphasis is on fulfilling the above criteria of belief completely and with total sincerity. Therefore not just Muslims, but Christians, Jews and Sabians, indeed, anyone who follows the above criteria will also not have cause for fear or grief:

> *Nay-whoever submits His whole self to God and is a doer of good-He will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve [yaḥzanūn].*[13]
> *Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve [yaḥzanūn].*[14]

Believing in One God also means focusing on the 'Other' rather than the 'self' through total trust and submission. For belief and righteous acts can only be sincere if not carried out for one's own material or worldly benefit but carried out for God and in the name of God. Among those who reach this self-less state and who will not be affected by fear or grief *(ḥuzn)* are: 'the friends *(awlīā)* of God'[15], the companions of the Garden *(ashāb al-*

For examples of verses in the Quran which show the necessary correlation between belief *(īmān)* and submission *(īslam)*, please refer to the following verses: 3:52, 43:69, 5:111, and 3:84.
[12] Quran, 29:64.
[13] Quran, 2:112.
[14] Quran, 2:62.
[15] Quran, 10:62.

janna)[16], God's 'devotees'[17] (*ibād*, meaning servants of God, that is those who only worship One Lord)[18], the 'righteous' (that is those who have *taqwā*), those who are slain in God's way *(qatala fī sabīlīllāh)*[19], and those who spend their substance/wealth *(amwāl)* in the cause of Allah.[20]

In Quran 8:29 it is clarified that without belief it is impossible to judge between right and wrong since if the criterion is not based on God it will be based on one's own desires and fancies which will ultimately lead to one's destruction. Therefore in order to be given a criterion by which to judge between right and wrong, firstly one must have belief and secondly one must have *taqwā* (translated here as having 'fear of God').[21] Therefore belief *(īman)* and being in a state of righteousness – that is, having *taqwā* – comes as a result of following the right criterion, namely the Quran and the Prophet's guidance. This criterion is a gift from God and an opportunity for self-reform, and those who take heed will not experience *ḥuzn*.

> *O ye Children of Adam! Whenever there come to you Apostles from amongst you, rehearsing My signs unto* you – those *who are righteous ['ataqa' – from taqwā] and mend [aslaha] their lives on them shall be no fear [khawf] nor shall they grieve [yaḥzanūn].*[22]
> *We send the apostles only to give good news and to warn: so those who believe [āmana] and mend [aslaḥa] their lives, upon them shall be no fear [khawf], nor shall they grieve [yahzann].*[23]

The criterion for the obviation of sadness is summarized in Table One below.

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[16] Quran, 7:44-49.
[17] Quran, 43:68.
[18] Edward William Lane, *An Arabic English Lexicon*, part six (Beirut: Libraire du Liban, 1968), 1935.
[19] Quran, 3:169-170.
[20] Quran, 2:262 and 2:274.
[21] Quran, 8:29.
[22] Quran, 7:35.
[23] Quran, 6:48.

2.3.2 Table One: People who will not have *ḥuzn*

No.	People who will not have *ḥuzn* ('sadness')	No. of chapter and verse in the Quran	The derivative of *ḥ-z-n*
1	Those who follow guidance	2:38 Med.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve
2	Those who are true in faith	3:139 Med.	***taḥzanū*** – nor fall into despair
3	Those who believe in God, the Last Day and who do acts of righteousness	2:62 Med.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve
4	God's 'devotees'	43:68 Mec.	*lā antum **taḥzanūn*** – nor shall ye grieve
5	Those who believe & do deeds of righteousness & establish regular prayer & regular charity	2:277 & 21:94-103 Med. & Mec.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve and *lā **yaḥzunuhum*** – will bring them no grief
6	The righteous	39:61 Mec.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve
7	Those who are martyred in battle	3:169-170 Med.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor have they (cause to) grieve
8	Muslims, Christians, Jews & Sabeans who are believers and believe in God, the Last Day & do acts of righteousness.	2:62 Med. 5:72 – Mec.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve
9	Those who believe & mend their lives (reform themselves)	6:48 Mec.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve
10	Those who are righteous and mend (their lives)	7:35 Mec.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve
11	The companions of the Garden (heaven)	7:44-49 Mec.	*lā antum **taḥzanūn*** – nor shall ye grieve
12	'Friends' (*awliya*) of God	10:62 Mec.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve
13	Those who say, "Our Lord is God," & remain firmly (on that path)	46:13 and 41:30 Mec.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve *lā **taḥzanū*** – do not grieve
14	Whoever submits His whole self to God & is a doer of good.	2:112 Med.	*lā hum **yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve
15	Those who spend their substance *(amwāl)* in the cause of God	2:262 & 2:274 Med. Med.	*la hum **Yaḥzanūn*** – nor shall they grieve

*'Mec'= revealed in Mecca; 'Med'= revealed in Medina.

Therefore according to the above table, in order not to experience *ḥuzn* one must believe in One God and the hereafter, and one must follow God's guidance and submit one's whole self to God through belief and submission. The question as to whether any human being has the potential to retain this level of belief at all times and whether *ḥuzn* is a totally negative concept which has to be obviated will be discussed in detail in Chapters Six.

2.4   Thematic categorization of the word *ḥuzn* ('sadness')

Other instances where the word *ḥuzn* and its derivatives have been used have been categorized into three groups in accordance with the contextual structure of the Quran:

1. *ḥuzn* as test/trial.
2. *ḥuzn* as reminder as well as comfort and reassurance to Prophets and believers.
3. *ḥuzn* due to separation/loss.

2.4.1 *ḥuzn* as test/trial

In the previous section we saw that being in a state of 'righteousness' *(taqwā)* required following guidance which comes through God's signs *(āyāt)* manifested in creation and elucidated or interpreted by God's Messengers. These 'signs' are posited as the means or the opportunity for all individuals to take heed and mend their lives. In this way they serve as a test for individuals to choose either to ignore the signs and fall to the lowest level *(asfal al-sāfilīn)* [24] or to rise to the highest point in creation *(aḥsani taqwīm)* [25] as vicegerents of God. God states that the whole creation was created for humankind and jinn in order that they serve/worship Him[26] and thus will have the potential to rise to the highest level of manifesting His attributes.

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[24] Quran, 95:5.
[25] Quran, 95:4.
[26] Quran, 51:56.

In 2:153 and 2:155 it is made clear to believers that everyone will be tested in one form or another:

> O ye who believe! [āmanū from the root āmana] seek help with patient perseverance [sabr] and prayer [salāt]: for God is with those who patiently persevere.[27]
>
> Be sure we shall test [balā] you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods, lives and the Fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.[28]

2.4.2 Stress given as a lesson not to grieve

Chapter three, called *Āl-e-'Imrān* ('the family of 'Imrān') and revealed in Medina, tells the story of the Battles of Badr and Uhud. The moral of the narrative is that patience and perseverance will have its own rewards while lack of trust will result not just in physical defeat but also in moral defeat. Verse 153 of this chapter describes the state of confusion among the Muslim fighters against the Quraysh tribe[29] and the series of stresses *(gham)* given one after another as a lesson to not grieve over small mistakes and to have more trust in God:

> Behold! ye were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at any one, and the Apostle in your rear was calling you back. There did God give you one distress [gham] after another by way of requital, to teach you not to grieve [taḥzanū – from root ḥazana] for (the booty) that had escaped you and for (the ill) that had befallen you. For God is well aware of all that ye do.[30]

Distress *(gham)* therefore here had an important role to play and was given as a test. It is followed by the words: 'to teach not to grieve *(ḥuzn)',* thus indicating that distress *(gham)* can be changed by not

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[27] Quran, 2:153
[28] Quran, 2:155
[29] For more information about the Quraysh tribe and the Battle of Badr and Uhud see: Colin Turner, *Islam the Basics*, 2nd ed. (Oxon: Routledge 2011), 20-22.
[30] Quran, 3:153.

grieving *(ḥuzn)* over loss. In this verse, reference is made to the loss of booty and health as an example. There is indication here that grief *(ḥuzn)* can have a positive and guidance-giving outcome if there is submission to apparent loss rather than retaliation or despair. The test is to not to attribute things to causes and to accept God's Divine Determining. In other words, if one totally trusts God and patiently perseveres then one can learn to stop worrying/grieving *(ḥuzn)* over any kind of change or loss.

2.4.3 Stress given as a lesson that one should not 'own' good deeds

Verse 92 of chapter 9 quoted below tells the story of the people who wanted to be part of Prophet Muhammad's army but were turned away, possibly due to lack of armour and other necessary equipment needed for fighting against the enemy. Hence they were filled with *ḥuzn* because they could not find something to spend in the way of God. The emphasis here is the test: it is not what is done but the intention with which it is done. They intended to spend in the way of God and were not able to do so. In the verse below reassurance is given that if barriers are encountered in an attempt to carry out good deeds, they would still be rewarded if there is sincerity and total trust in their Lord.

> *Nor (is there blame) on those who came to thee to be provided with mounts, and when thou sayest, "I can find no mounts for you", they turned back, their eyes streaming with tears of grief [ḥazanan] that they had no resources wherewith to provide the expenses.*[31]

2.4.4 Satan used as a means of test

58:10 suggests that Satan has no real power and that he is merely a means by which believers are tested.[32] His job is to encourage believers to grieve *(ḥuzn)* and to ultimately deviate from the right path, but as long as they have trust in God no harm will come to them unless God wishes it.

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[31] Quran, 9:92.
[32] For more information on Satan's role see Quran: 15:36-42, 7:16-18 and 14:22.

And if God allows it then it would be for the good of the believer, as it would be an opportunity to be tested and reach a higher rank in belief by showing trust *(tawakul)* and submission to God through the non-attribution of power to anything or anyone except their Lord.

> *Secret counsels are only (inspired) by the Evil One, in order that he may cause grief [ḥuzn] to the Believers; but he cannot harm them in the least, except as God permits; and on God let the Believers [Mu'minūn] put their trust [tawakul].*[33]

2.4.5 God gives *ḥuzn* and God takes it away

In 35:34 below again there is the notion of the positive aspect of *ḥuzn*, as believers recognise that it is God who gives it and it is also He who removes it, hence the recognition that they are being guided/tested by God to see beyond apparent causes and that they have been given the opportunity to show total trust in His decree.

> *And they will say: "Praise be to God, Who has removed from us (all) sorrow: for our Lord is indeed Oft-Forgiving Ready to appreciate (service).*[34]

28:8, quoted below, states that the reason why Moses was destined to be with Pharaoh was to cause him and his followers sorrow *(ḥuzn)*. If within the meaning of *ḥuzn* there is the potential for guidance, then it shows that this would be a test for them, and an opportunity to either be guided or to refuse and dwell in a short life of purely material riches. Sorrow *(ḥuzn)* then has the potential to have a positive or negative outcome, depending on whether one chooses to persist in unbelief or take heed of the 'signs' *(āyāt)* of God, which have the potential to save the individual from their own 'self' and their egoistic desires.

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[33] Quran, 58:10.
[34] Quran, 35:34.

Then the people of Pharaoh picked him up (from the river): (It was intended) that (Moses) should be to them an adversary and a cause of sorrow [ḥazanan]: for Pharaoh and Haman and (all) their hosts were men of sin.[35]

2.4.6 Testing of Prophetic judgment

In 33:51, quoted below, Muhammad receives a special dispensation with regard to marital duties which is different to those for other Muslims. This is a test not only for the prophet but also for his wives, giving them the opportunity to have total trust in his judgment.

Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest: and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hadst set aside. This were nigher to the cooling of their eyes, the prevention of their grief [ḥuzn], and their satisfaction – that of all of them – with that which thou hast to give them: and God knows (all) that is in your hearts: and God is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.[36]

2.4.7 Reminder/reassurance/comfort to Prophets and believers not to have *ḥuzn*

2.4.7.1 Reassurance/comforting of Prophets

In 36:76 and 10:65, Muhammad is reminded not to be saddened by what people say as ultimately they have no power. Furthermore he is pained by the people rushing in to unbelief, and he is reminded not to grieve *(ḥuzn)*. Here God is guiding, comforting, and reminding that there is no need to grieve, and that the ultimate responsibility for the fate of unbelievers is with Him.[37] He is the Lord *(rabb)* and unbelievers will not be able to cause any harm without His permission and they will get their just punishment in the hereafter. Again here is the reminder that secondary causes have no

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[35] Quran, 28:8.
[36] Quran, 33:51.
[37] See Quran, 3:176.

effect. The actions of these people are brought into effect not by them, but directly by God and it is due to their bad intentions that they are punished. The apparent creation of bad/evil generally, and in this case the example of people rushing into unbelief, serves as a guide and a test to do one's duty without expectations of results by submitting to the All-knowing and All-powerful Lord of creation.

> *Let not their speech, then, grieve thee. Verily We know what they hide as well as what they disclose.*[38]
> *Let not their speech grieve thee: for all power and honour belong to God: It is He Who heareth and knoweth* (all things).[39]
> *Let not those grieve thee who rush headlong into Unbelief: Not the least harm will they do to God: God's Plan is that He will give them no portion in the Hereafter, but a severe punishment.*[40]

In 5:44 quoted below once again Muhammad is comforted and reminded not to grieve over the loss of people who have chosen unbelief *(kufr)*. *Kufr* comes from the verbal root *kafara* which means: "to cover, deny, hide, renounce, reject, disbelieve, be negligent, expiate, darken".[41] It states clearly in this verse that no one, including Muhammad, can do anything for those for those who intend to cause *fitna*, and thus there is no point in grieving over them. The outcome of their actions will be justly recompensed. *Fitna,* translated below as 'trial', has the underlying meaning of: 'punishment' or a 'test'.[42] In other words God is reminding and comforting the Prophet that he has done his duty and no more is expected of him; if unbelievers choose to deny themselves of the

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[38] Quran, 36:76.
[39] Quran, 10:65.
[40] Quran, 3:176.
[41] 'Abdul Mannān 'Omar, *Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, 3rd ed. (United States & Germany: Noor Foundation 2005), 489.
[42] Abdulkader Tayob, An analytical survey of al-Tabari's exegesis of the cultural symbolic contstruct of *fitna*, in *Approaches to the Qur'an*, ed. by G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A Shareef (NY and London: Routledge, 2013),158-159.

opportunity to repent then it is their choice and God will permit this and no one can do anything for them.

> O Apostle! Let not those grieve thee [ḥuzn], who race each other into unbelief [kufr]: [Whether it be] among those who say, "We believe [āmannā] with their lips but whose hearts have no faith; Or it be among the Jews, men who will listen to any lie, will listen even to others who have never so much as come to thee. They change the words from their [right] times and places: they say, "If ye are given this, take it, but if not, beware!" If any one's trial [fitna] is intended by God, thou hast no authority in the least for him against God. For such – it is not God's will to purify their hearts. For them there is disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter a heavy punishment.[43]

In 6:33 quoted below, Muhammad is being comforted as he may be blaming himself for the apparent failures he is experiencing, and he is being reminded that God knows well what he is going through and it is not him that people are rejecting, but it is the signs *(āyāts)* of God which they refuse to accept for which they will receive their due punishment. In 6:34 Muhammad is reminded that previous messengers were also persecuted and received rejection, which they accepted patiently until God came to their aid.[44] And in verse 35 it states clearly that nothing would convince the believers because they do not want to be convinced. And because they choose to ignore God's signs then God will not guide them.[45] Therefore ultimately they have no power apart from the choice to take heed or to ignore God's signs. It is a reminder that Muhammad should not feel responsible for their choice of action and that God is aware of their actions, which He will deal with justly and in due course.

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[43] Quran: 5:44.
[44] Quran, 6:34.
[45] Quran, 6:35.

> *We know indeed the grief [ḥuzn] which their words do cause thee: It is not thee they reject [kazaba]: it is the signs [āyāt] of God, which the wicked [ẓālimīn] condemn/deny [Jahada].*[46]

In 16:127 Muhammad is again reminded to be patient, as patience is an attribute of God which should always be manifested, especially in difficult times and situations. He is also being reminded not to grieve *(ḥuzn)* if people refuse to believe and not to feel helpless or troubled (*ḍaiqūn* verbal noun of *ḍāqa* meaning 'to become narrow, straitness, troubled')[47] by the schemes and plots of the unbelievers as ultimately God has power over all things.

> *And do thou be patient [sabr], for thy patience is but from God; nor grieve [ḥuzn] over them: And distress [ḍāqa] not thyself because of their plots [makr].*[48]

Many of the verses in chapter fifteen are about reminder, comforting and consolation, including verse ninety-seven where Mohammad is being consoled: "*We do indeed know how thy heart is distressed* (*yaḍiqū*)[49] *at what they say*"[50] and in verse ninety-two he is reassured: "….*We will of a surety, call them to account*". In verse ninety-five further reassurance is given stating that "…*sufficient are We unto thee against those who scoff*", hence again reminding Muhammad that he is not responsible for those who refuse to take heed, and that his responsibility is simply to give the message, as all human beings have their own trial and it is up to them to accept or reject.[51]

In 15:88 below, Muhammad is being consoled and comforted about the unequal distribution of wealth, the consequences of which led to poverty

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[46] Quran, 6:33.
[47] 'Omar, *Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, 336.
[48] Quran, 16:127.
[49] '*yaḍiqū*' is the imperfect third person masculine singular, from verbal root *ḍāqa*, meaning to 'become narrow, straightened, troubled, distressed'.
[50] 'Omar, *Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, 336.
[51] Quran, 15:97, 15:92 and 15:95.

for some and a life of luxury for others. This is a period when he and his companions were undergoing many difficulties and restrictions resulting in unfair treatment and poverty. The Prophet's trading activities had come to an end, his wife's wealth had been used up and the economic boycott by the Quraysh had resulted in the homelessness and poverty of the Companions.[52] It was a difficult time for Muhammad and it pained him to see how his Companions were being persecuted by their opponents and were reduced to poverty while their adversaries enjoyed a life of luxury. At this point Muhammad is reminded that what they have is not really 'true' wealth and for him to reassure the Companions that their so called 'wealth' will not carry real value in this world or the next.[53]

> *Strain not thine eyes (wistfully) at what We have bestowed on certain classes of them, nor grieve [lā taḥzan] over them: but lower thy wing (in gentleness) to the believers.*[54]

Verse 29:33 below demonstrates the concerns of Lot when visited by some handsome young men and his helplessness to protect them against certain sexual predators in their midst. He was not aware that they were messengers sent by God to save him and his following until he was comforted and reassured by them that he need not fear or worry as to what may happen to them in the future; his followers, they reassured him, would be saved and those who had strayed, including his wife, would be recompensed justly for the outcome of their illicit actions.

> *And when Our Messengers came to Lūt, he was grieved on their account, and felt himself powerless (to protect) them: but they said: "Fear thou not, nor grieve: we are (here) to save thee and thy following, except thy wife: she is of those who lag behind.*[55]

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[52] Turner, *Islam the Basics*, 22.
[53] Quran, 652, footnotes 2009-10.
[54] Quran, 15:88.
[55] Quran, 29:33.

2.4.7.2 Reassurance/comforting of the faithful

In 70:27, God is instructing the Prophet to give reassurance to the faithful that those who are guilty of transgression are ultimately powerless; therefore as long as they remain in a 'righteous' state they need not be anxious about the transgressors' plots and schemes. The unbelievers' devious plans *(makr)* will not come to fruition if God so wishes since as stated in 3:54, they may scheme and plot *(makr)* but "God is the best of planners".[56]

> But grieve [ḥuzn] not over them, nor distress [ḍaiq] thyself because of their plots [makr].[57]

Verse 9:40 gives the example of Muhammad comforting and reassuring one of his companions. It tells the story of the time when the two were trapped in a cave with a huge army outside looking for them. At that point Muhammad's companion felt a sense of isolation, fear and *ḥuzn* about their plight. Had Muhammad not reminded him not to have *ḥuzn* and that God is their guardian, his sadness could have easily led to despair. This verse shows that if God wills, even a huge army cannot conquer two people, and also that a feeling of comfort and ease *(sakīna)* can be obtained if there is trust in God rather than attributing power to causes.

> If ye help not (your leader), (it is no matter): for God did indeed help him, when the Unbelievers [those who cover 'kafara'] drove him out: he had no more than one companion: they two were in the cave, and he said to his companion, "Have no fear [ḥuzn], for God is with us": then God sent down His peace [sakīna] upon him, and strengthened him with forces which ye saw not, and humbled to the depths the word of the

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[56] Quran, 3:54.
[57] Quran, 27:70.

> *Unbelievers. But the word of God is exalted to the heights: for God is Exalted in might, Wise.*[58]

In 19:24, Mary, who is about to give birth to Jesus, is told not to be saddened (not to have *ḥuzn*) and she is comforted and reminded that she is not alone as God is watching over her, and she is told to drink from a rivulet beneath her and eat a date from the palm tree in front of her. The water and the date serve as nourishment and comfort and also as a reminder to Mary that God does not need causes to bring things into being. If He can bring water from no source and bring a dead palm tree to life again, He can surely bring a human being to life without apparent secondary causes, to which human beings are normalised. God comforts Mary, who at this critical time of giving birth is frightened of what may happen. The comforting of God is manifested through the provision of water that is provided for her specifically by her Lord *(Rabb)*. This is also a sign that God is the only protector and therefore He is the Only One to whom she needs to turn. He is the One who has willed this to happen and she will need to trust that He will take care of the consequences.

> *But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm tree): "Grieve not! [ḥuzn] For thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee."*[59]

In 20:39, Moses's mother is being inspired by God to put her baby in a basket and to place the basket in the river.[60] Moses's mother knew that she could not hide her baby for very long from Pharaoh's soldiers, who were instructed to kill all new-born males, and so she trusted in God and His promise and reassurance that Moses would be safe and secure and would one day be restored to her. Verse 28:7 below is also linked to the theme of separation.

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[58] Quran, 9:40.
[59] Quran, 19:24.
[60] Quran, 30:39.

*So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: "Suckle (thy child),
but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river, but fear not
nor grieve: [lā taḥzani] For We shall restore him to thee, and We shall
make him one of Our apostles."*[61]

Chapter forty-one of the Quran focuses on the disadvantages of unbelief
and the fruits of belief. Unbelievers are warned about the consequences
of their opposition to the truth and in Verse thirty believers are reassured
and consoled so as not to fear the threats of the unbelievers or be
distressed *(taḥzanū)* by anything, for they have their Lord, Who is their
constant protector in this world as well as the next. They should therefore
bear the temporary deprivations of this transient world as very soon they
will be rewarded with everything they ask for.

*In the case of those who say, "Our Lord is God", and, further, stand
straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them (from time to time):
"Fear ye not!" (they suggest), "Nor grieve! but receive the Glad Tidings of
the Garden (of Bliss), the which ye were promised!* [62]

In chapter thirty-one, Luqmān is advising his son about matters of faith.
In Verse twenty three below, reassurance is given that men of God need
not be distressed about those who obstinately refuse to believe as they
will ultimately be answerable to God. They will be allowed to pursue their
amusement in this worldly life for a short time but in the next world they
will be made accountable for all their deeds.

*But if any reject Faith, let not his rejection grieve [yaḥzunak] thee: to Us
is their return, and We shall tell them the truth of their deeds: for God
knows well all that is in (men's) hearts.*[63]

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[61] Quran, 28:7.
[62] Quran, 41:30.
[63] Quran, 31:23.

2.4.7.3 *Ḥuzn* due to separation/loss

According to the Quran, the only people who are exempt from being in total confusion and loss are those who possess the following four qualities: faith, righteous deeds, inviting one another to the truth and exhorting one another to patience:

> By (the token of) time (through the Ages),
> Verily Man is in loss,
> Except such as have faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the Mutual teaching of Truth, and of patience and constancy.[64]

Therefore whoever does not continually and at all times possess the above qualities will be in a state of loss (*khusr* – from the verbal root *khasīra*, meaning to 'wander from the right path'). The criteria for belief, is to sincerely believe in One God[65] and to be steadfast in this belief.[66] Only by remaining at this level of faith one is able to submit to all God's trials and tests with total trust. The story of Joseph[67] briefly described below shows how even Jacob found God's test of being separated from his son Joseph, not just difficult but almost unbearable.

Jacob had twelve sons from different wives. Ten of these brothers were extremely jealous of what they believed to be excess attention to Joseph by their father and so one day they planned to take Joseph to the hills with them for the usual grazing of the sheep, but with the real intention of getting rid of him. They believed that once Joseph was out of the way then they would have their father's full attention and affection all to themselves. Verse thirteen of this chapter is about the mixed feelings of Jacob. He expresses his feelings openly to his sons saying that he is frightened and sad *(ḥuzn)* that Joseph may be neglected by his brothers,

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[64] Quran, 103:1-3.
[65] Quran, 4:136.
[66] Quran, 46:13.
[67] See Quran, Chapter Twelve.

as a consequence of which, he may be attacked by wolves, and yet he finally gives in and allows the brothers to take Joseph with them. It is a possibility that he suspected that something would happen to Joseph, but was it actually desert wolves that he feared, or the jealousy of Yusuf's brothers, and consequently, what they might do to him? What is sure is that not seeing Joseph again would be a separation and a loss which he would not be able to bear and which would be hard for him to accept, even though he knew that ultimately he should have trust in God.

> (Jacob) said: "Really it saddens me [yaḥzunī] that ye should take him away: I fear [akhāfū] lest the wolf should devour him while ye attend not to him."[68]

In verse eighty-four of the same chapter, we see that what Jacob feared would happen, had happened. After throwing Joseph in an empty well, the brothers came back pretending that a wolf had eaten him. This loss was too much to bear but Jacob bore it in silence. His grief was to such an extent that he lost his faculty of sight, his eyes becoming 'white with sorrow' (ḥuzn).

> And he turned away from them, and said: "How great is my grief for Joseph!" And his eyes became white with sorrow, and he fell into silent melancholy.[69]
> He (Jacob) said: "I only complain of my distraction and anguish to God, and I know from God that which ye know not..."[70]

In verse eighty six of the same chapter, Jacob makes it clear that he is not attributing the loss of Joseph to causes, in this case his sons. He is well aware that ultimately it is God Who has taken him away from him and He is also the only One Who is able to give him the ability to bear the loss of

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[68] Quran, 12:13.
[69] Quran, 12:84.
[70] Quran, 12:86.

Joseph. If sadness *(ḥuzn)* is to be understood as guidance, then this separation is a test for Jacob and an opportunity to question his attachment to Joseph.

28:13 tells the story of Moses being restored to his mother, so that she may be comforted and not grieve *(ḥuzn)* for her loss and so that she may realize that God keeps his promise. Here Moses's mother is rewarded for her trust in God, in just the same way that İbrāhīm had to let go of İsmāīl before he could be returned [71] and Jacob had to let go of Joseph before he could be returned, this trust *(tawakul)* enabled her to have Moses back.

> *Thus did We restore him to his mother, that her eye might be comforted, that she might not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of God is true: but most of them do not understand.*[72]

In 20:40 we are informed about the trials and tests Moses has to undergo. The test of trust begins with his mother who has left the fate of her child in God's hands. In order to decrease her worries *(ḥuzn)*, God ensured that as his wet nurse she would be able to keep close to her son. Moses is saved from *gham* after having slayed a man, hence indicating that *gham* potentially occurs after an action, while the word *ḥuzn* is used for worry or distress about what might happen in the future linked to an incident in the past, such as the anxiety Moses' mother might have had if she was not able to be with her child.

> *"Behold! thy sister goeth forth and saith, 'shall I show you one who will nurse and rear the (child)?' So We brought thee back to thy mother, that her eye might be cooled and she should not grieve (tahzan). Then thou didst slay a man, but We saved thee from trouble (gham), and We tried*

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[71] Quran, 37:99-110.
[72] Quran, 28:13.

thee in various ways. Then didst thou tarry a number of years with the people of Midian. Then didst thou come hither as ordained, O Moses! [73]

The typology and the thematic analysis of *ḥuzn* based on Quranic narratives have yielded a general understanding of this concept, the conclusion of which will be discussed at the end of this chapter (2.7).

In the next section, the Izutsian analytic method will be applied to the *ḥuzn* narrative in the Quran. The semantic structures of the main concepts related to this word will be analysed in order to obtain a contextual understanding rather than, as Izutsu puts it, a word for word interpretation.[74] The analysis of this word will begin with the gathering of the main words, as shown below, which appear to be synonymous or have similar meaning to *ḥuzn*.

2.5 Part Two: Izutsu's Methodology

Izutusu's methodology has been chosen because it is an excellent tool for understanding words and concepts in the Quran. It is an analytic method which enables the Quran to 'interpret its own concepts and speak for itself'.[75] According to Izutsu, translated words tend to give word for word meanings and hence give only a partial understanding which is inadequate and can sometimes even be misleading.[76] He gives the example of the word 'weed' and how in one dictionary this word is defined as 'wild herb springing where it is not wanted' giving the impression that it is an 'undesired' or 'unwanted' herb. But in reality one cannot objectively label any herb as 'undesirable'[77]outside of the context of an individual's needs and purposes. The subjective way of meaning making is also influenced to a large extent by our social surroundings. Izutsu gives the example of a

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[73] Quran, 20:40.
[74] Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico Religious Cocepts in the Quran* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press,2007), 3.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.*,* 4.
[77] Ibid., 9.

round and square table, explaining that for the English native, the word table could be applied to both objects, but according to Benjamin Whorf, in non-Indo-European parts of the world people categorise things in accordance to their form and shape because their view of the world is focused more on shape rather than purpose and hence according to their world view in no way can the round table and square table be categorized in the same group; they are seen to be totally different things and hence must have different names.[78]

These examples can be extended to all the words that are in usage and one therefore has to consider that all words are largely culturally and historically polluted. In other words, what we describe as reality is inextricably permeated with culturally inherited symbols.

2.5.1 Semantic Analysis

In order to move away as much as possible from subjective, historical, cultural or political influences, I will attempt to use Izutsu's methodology which is more scientific as it is an inductive approach and an analytic method for understanding the meaning of concepts such as *ḥuzn* in the Quran. This method of linguistic analysis, that is, describing the semantic categories of a word in accordance with the conditions in which it is used, enables the Quran to speak for itself, hence resulting in a less biased interpretation. Izutsu defines semantics as an:

> analytic study of the key-terms of a language with a view to arriving eventually at a conceptual grasp of the *Weltanschauung* or world-view of the people who use that language as a tool not only of speaking and thinking, but, more important still, of conceptualizing and interpreting the world that surrounds them.[79]

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[78] Ibid*.,* 8.
[79] Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran: Studies of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 11.

In practice then this would mean finding out what *ḥuzn* means from the Quranic *Weltanschauung*. To do this I would firstly have to gather all the verses where the word is mentioned together, compare them and check them against each other as well as with other synonyms and antonyms of the word, in order to hopefully obtain as Izutsu describes, a 'word-thing' interpretation as opposed to a word-to-word interpretation.[80] This is not an easy task. As Izutsu admits himself, it is a process of 'trial and error'[81] and can be quite arduous, but it is absolutely necessary here if we are to attempt to obtain the Quranic 'worldview'. This does not mean that philological work and exegesis of the Quran are not valuable resources – in fact I will be using these in this and following chapter – but these will serve more as secondary resources.

The idea that language conveys a 'worldview' is not new. Izutsu's theory of meaning is largely based on Ferdinand de Saussure's and also Leo Weisgerber's type of semantics called 'sprachliche Weltanschauungslehre', which is the study of the interrelations between cultural as well as linguistic patterns, whose origin in turn can be traced back to Edward Sapir and what would be referred to today as 'ethnolinguistics' . What Izutsu has contributed is the unification of these theories and its application to the Quranic hermeneutics.[82]

2.5.2 Quranic Key terms in history

Izutsu himself talks about Quranic key terms in history, but only to show how concepts can change over time. His reference to *jāhilī* or pre-Islamic vocabulary therefore is to show that although many of the words in the Quran existed before the revelation, the Quranic theocentric *Weltanschauung*, despite its origins, has its own semantic field which means that it requires a totally new system of interpretation. He gives the

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[80] Izutsu, *Ethico Relgious Concepts in the Quran*, 25.
[81] Ibid*.,* 14.
[82] Stephen Ullmann, *Semantics: an Introduction to the Science of Meaning* (NY: Barnes & Noble, 1962) 7. See also Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (NY: Philosophical Library, 1959), and Izutsu, *Ethico-religious concepts in the Qur'ān*, 7.

example of the word *Allāh* which was widely used by the pre-Islamic Arabs, but with the difference that conceptually it had a totally different meaning. All semantic fields in the Quran are directly connected to the concept of *Allāh*, that is ontologically, *Allāh* is the central focus of all the concepts in the Quran, whereas with regard to the pre-Islamic era the concept of *Allāh* was on par with other 'gods'.[83]

Another example of total change in meaning of concepts is the word *karīm*. This word used by the *Jāhīlīyah* ('pre-Islamic Arabs') had the meaning of 'noble birth', carrying the meaning of extravagance in generosity to the point of squandering. However, in the Quranic context the meaning is totally changed and is closely linked to the word '*taqwā*', which means 'God-fearing', hence a total change in how nobility is viewed, that is a noble person is not one who is rich by birth and shows off that wealth by squandering it, but one who uses it in the way of God.[84]

2.5.3 Difference between 'basic' meaning and 'relational' meaning

Izutsu points out that each word in the Quran has its own basic or core meaning even if taken out of the Quranic context, thus:

> while the 'basic' meaning of the word is something inherent in the word itself, which it carries with it wherever it goes, the 'relational' meaning is something connotative that comes to be attached and added to the former by the word's having taken a particular position in a particular field, standing in diverse relations to all other important words in that system.[85]

As an example, he points to the word *kītāb* which at its basic level means book in all contexts. However, this does not limit it to just this meaning. In the Quranic context this word is placed in a new system whereby it

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[83] Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran,* 40-42.
[84] Ibid.*,* 45.
[85] Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran,* 20.

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acquires new semantic elements which have the tendency to change the original meaning. Therefore in the context of the Quran, the word *kītāb,* because of its close connection with the words *Allāh, waḥī* ('revelation'), *tanzīl* ('sending down of Divine words'), *nabī* ('Prophet') and *ahl* ('people'), has to be understood in connection with these words. Izutsu calls this the 'relational' meaning, which is much more important than the 'basic' meaning, as without this semantic structure, the Quranic concept of the word would not be comprehended. As Izutsu reiterates, the basic meaning is purely a methodological concept which is useful for scientific analyses as it always carries its 'conceptual core' in all contexts. Therefore although it is useful to use as a 'working hypothesis', one should bear in mind that in fact all words are tainted by the cultural milieu of which they are structured.[86] As *ḥuzn* is the central term for analysis for this study, the main concepts which have a strong relation with the word *ḥuzn* will be identified in order to explore why people become sad and what is its cure from the perspective of the Quranic *Weltanschauung*; a world-view in which the whole of Nursi's work is based on.

2.5.4 Primary and Secondary level ethical terms

Izutsu makes a distinction between primary and secondary level ethical terms even though all words originate at the primary level, that is, from a purely descriptive aspect. Therefore secondary level words such as 'good' still have a descriptive aspect with an evaluative charge which belongs to the ethical metalanguage.[87] For example, the sentence 'Cecil never forgets my birthday and is therefore a good friend', belongs to the ethical metalanguage as it has both a descriptive as well as having an evaluative aspect.

Primary-level ethical terms are therefore descriptive words that are charged with an evaluative force, while secondary-level terms have more a

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[86]Ibid., 25.
[87] Izutsu, *Ethico Religious concepts in the Quran*, 20-21.

classificatory function used to classify descriptive properties such as 'humility' or 'generosity' into a category of moral values. The Quran itself consists mainly of primary ethical terms. The classificatory terms, such as the five categories of acts below, referred to as the *aḥkām* ('rulings') are more representative of secondary ethical terms related to jurisprudence:[88]

1. *Wajib* – obligatory duties
2. *Mandūb* – recommended but not obligatory
3. *Jaīz/Mubāḥ* – may or may not be done/permissible
4. *Makrūḥ* – discouraged
5. *Ḥarām* – forbidden

The above are classic secondary level terms which as Izutsu describes are 'an elaborate system of metalanguage'[89] whereby all deeds are classified in accordance with the above classifications. The moral values in the Quran however, belong in the main to the primary ethical structure which while adopting many of the pre-Islamic *(Jāhilīya)* words; the concepts became totally different in meaning. For example, the word 'humility' in the pre-Islamic discourse was looked down upon by people and its opposite 'haughtiness' was a sign of noble character, while in their monotheistic context they adopted the exact opposite meaning.[90]

2.5.5 Limitation of Izutsian methodology

According to Montgomery Watt, Izutsu's analyses are based on logic to the neglect of the consideration of the politico-religious context. He opines that the verses in the Quran were revealed over a period of more than twenty years and those verses revealed earlier on may have different meanings from the later verses; hence the historical context is not taken

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[88] For more information on the five values/rulings in Islam see Kemal Faruki, Al-Aḥkām al-Khamsah: the Five Values, *Islamic Studies*, 5(1), March 1966, 43-98.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., 22.

into account.[91] Fazlur Rahman is also in agreement with Watt with regard to the importance of the historical context. His criticism is that while Izutsu's methodology is not just a mechanical analysis of the terms in the Quran in islolation, but takes the Quranic context into account, it lacks a historical approach which is necessary for a better understanding of the evolution of concepts.[92] According to Norman Calder, there are verses in the Quran which without reference to their historical context, or what is referred to as *sha'n-ī nuzūl*, cannot be fully comprehended. He goes as far as saying that to look at a text in isolation of its *sha'n-ī nuzūl* is not only unproblematic, 'it is meaningless'.[93]

Rahman also opines that Izutsu makes no distinction between the Meccan social order and those of the Bedouin Arabs. He argues that a semantic analysis is not adequate to fully understand the historical distinction between the Meccan socio-economic situation and the Bedouin Arabs. He points to Izutsu's contradictory claim that his analytical methodology is centred on a scientific study which means excluding all preconceptions, when in fact he refers to a specific time when the Meccan Arabs received warning of the doctrines of heaven and hell. But Rahman points out that in fact, when seen in its correct historical context, these doctrines came much later, only after the rich Meccans had rejected the reasoning for God's Existence and were too proud to deny the fact that they were not 'self-sufficient' or had 'natural rights'.[94]

Izutsu also talks about 'key terms' in the Quran such as *īslām*, *īmān* ('belief'), *kufr* ('unbelief'), *nabī* ('prophethood').[95] Although in principle there would be little disagreement with regard to the importance of these

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[91] Montgomery Watt, 'Review of God and Man in the Koran and the Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology', in *Journal of Semitic Studies,* 12, 1 (Spring 1967), 155-57.
Fazlur Rahman, 'Review of Izutsu's Book: God and Man in the Koran', in *Islamic Studies* (June 1966) 5, 2, 221-224.
Norman Calder, "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir", in *Approaches to the Quran*, ed. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (London: Routledge, 1993), 105.
[94] Fazlur Rahman, 'Review of Izutsu's Book', 221-224.
[95] Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran*, 25-26.

concepts, one may question why or how Izutsu came to the conclusion that these are key concepts, and whether in fact he relies on the kind of pre-set understanding which he himself warns against.

Although with the Izutsian methodology there is a lack of reliance on secondary sources, which may have the disadvantage of not adequately capturing the socio-political and historic context, nevertheless it is considered to be a relatively good method to use for this study as its 'scientific' or non-biased approach seeks to reduce the influence of any pre-set understanding such as those of jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, and so on.

2.5.6 Application of Izutsian methodology

The application of Izutsian methodology will begin with gathering, comparing and putting in relation to each other all the terms which correspond, resemble as well as oppose the word *ḥuzn* and its derivatives in the Quran. That is, a semantic analysis will be conducted by looking at the semantic category of each word that relates to 'neighbouring words belonging to the same meaning field'[96] in order to obtain a contextual rather than a basic meaning. However, as stated earlier, this process is not only an extremely 'arduous task', as Izutsu himself admits,[97] but can easily lead to volumes of work. Therefore, for the purposes of this chapter an analysis of semantic categories of only a few key words will be carried out.

As Izutsu suggests, verses which give little value in terms of semantic analysis can be left out.[98] He proposes seven cases in which passages become useful for semantic analysis:[99]

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[96] Izutusu, *Ethico Relgious concepts in the Quran*, 26.
[97] Ibid., 14.
[98] Ibid., 37.
[99] Ibid., 37-41.

1. When the meaning of a word is explained in its context by means of verbal description.

2. When a synonym is used in the same passage, it can be very useful to investigate the semantic category of the synonym as well.

3. The semantic structure of terms may be elucidated by their opposite meaning, especially in the case where there is more than one word which conveys the same meaning, such as the words *ḥasanah* and *khayr* which both mean 'good' in Arabic. Therefore by examining the antonyms of these words, such as *sharr*, which is the opposite of *khayr,* and *sayyiʾah* which is the opposite of *ḥasanah,* this will help considerably in shedding more light on the meaning of these two concepts.

4. The semantic structure of an obscure word can often be cleared up through its negative form. That is, a negative description, that is, what is considered 'not good' can be a useful way of determining the semantic category of that word.

5. Words which have a patterned semantic relationship, such as the English words 'wind' and 'to blow'. Although these are two different words, they are related together in meaning.

6. Rhetorical parallelism is also another useful device for revealing the existence of a semantic relationship between two or more words. Izutsu gives verse 26:46-49 as an example:

> *And none denies Our signs save the kāfir.*
> *And none denies Our signs save the ẓālim.*

The example above demonstrates that *kāfir* and *ẓālim* are semantically related due to their connection with regard to refusal to believe in Divine signs.

7. Use of 'secular' words in the Quran, that is, when used in a non-religious context, can be helpful in understanding the structure of the word. For example, when Pharaoh accuses Moses of being one of the *kāfirīn* ('ungrateful'). In this context it becomes evident that *kāfirīn* means 'the ungrateful' rather than the usual translation of 'unbeliever'.

2.6 The concept of *ḥuzn* ('sadness') in the Quran

As mentioned earlier there are forty-two verses in the Quran in which the word *ḥuzn* and its derivatives are mentioned. Twenty six were revealed in Mecca and sixteen in Medina. I will give a brief outline of the difference between Meccan and Medinan verses before moving on to give the lexical meaning of *ḥuzn* and its derivatives. The aim of looking at the differences is to understand later on in the chapter whether, if at all, the place of revelation has any significance with regard to the word *ḥuzn.*

2.6.1 Difference between Meccan and Medinan verses

Against the background of polytheism, the main message of Islam was focused on the concept of Unity of God. At Mecca, therefore, Islam was mainly concerned with the propagation of fundamental principles related to the concept of the absoluteness of God. However, after Muhammad's migration to Medina, where Muslims from all over Arabia had also gathered to form a community, and where a small 'Islamic' community had been set up, although the focus was still on the Unity of God, the Quran had to turn its attention to practical issues as well by including the social, economic, political and legal problems for the harmonious working of the

community. This is generally the difference between the themes of the verses revealed at Mecca and those at Medina.[100]

It must be stressed however, that Muhammad did not make a distinction himself between Meccan or Medinan verses and this categorisation was made by his companions. It should also be added that the distinction between Meccan and Medinan verses is not clear cut and some ambiguities exist.[101] For some the distinction is purely temporal rather than spatial. For others, categorisation is based on early, middle and late revelations.[102] Another way of making differentiation between the two has been linked to the content. The Meccan verses are shorter and there is a tendency to address Muhammad or 'men' generally, whereas the Medinan verses tend to be longer and address 'Believers'. There is however, a general agreement that the verses that came after the migration of Prophet Muhammad to Medina are Medinan and are mainly legislative in nature and the verses before his migration are Meccan and are more prophetic.[103]

Since theologians and grammarians have distinguished a difference between not only the circumstance of Muslims at the time of revelation and the language used but also style and themes between the Medinan and Meccan verses,[104] this study hopes to identify whether this distinction is of any relevance to the topic of *ḥuzn.*

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[100] Colin Turner, *Islam: The Basics*, 51.
[101] Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Quran, A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (London: SCM Press, 2003), 62.
[102] Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *The Cambridge Companion to the Quran* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32-33.
[103] Turner, *Islam: The Basics,* 49-50.
[104] See Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Quran.*

Medinan

2:38 *(yaḥzanūn)*; 2:62 *(Yaḥzanūn);* 2:112 *(yaḥzanūn);* 2:262 *(yaḥzanūn)*; 2:274 *(yaḥzanūn);* 2:277 *(yaḥzanūn);* 3:170 *(yaḥzanūn);* 5:69 *(yaḥzanūn);* 3:139 *(taḥzanū);* 3:153 *(taḥzanū);* 3:176 *(yaḥzūnka);* 5:41 *(yaḥzūnka);* 9:40 *(taḥzan);* 9:92 *(ḥazanan);* 33:51 *(yaḥzanna);* 58:10 *(yaḥzun).*

Meccan

6:33 (*yaḥzunuka*); 10:65 *(yaḥzunka);* 31:23*(yaḥzunka);* 36:76*(yaḥzunka);* 6:48 (*yaḥzanūn*); 7:35 (*yaḥzanūn);* 10:62 *(yaḥzanūn);* 39:61 *(yaḥzanūn);* 46:13 *(yaḥzanūn);* 7:49 *(taḥzanūn);* 43:68 *(taḥzanūn);* 12:13 *(yaḥzununī);* 12:84 *(al-ḥuzn);* 12:86 *(ḥuznī);* 15:88 *(taḥzan);* 16:127 *(taḥzan);* 19:24 *(taḥzanī);* 28:7 *(taḥzanī);* 20:40 *(taḥzana);* 28:13 *(taḥzana);* 21:103 *(yaḥzunuhumu);* 27:70 *(taḥzan);* 29:33 *(taḥzan);* 28:8 *(ḥazanan);* 35:34 *(al-ḥazan);* 41:30*(taḥzanū).*

2.6.2 Lexical meaning of *ḥuzn*

The trilateral root of the word *ḥuzn (ḥā zāy nūn)* occurs fourty-two times in the Quran, in three derived forms: thirty-seven times as the form I verb *yaḥzun*, twice as the noun *ḥuzn* and three times as the noun *ḥazan*. The basic meaning of *ḥuzn* is: grief, mourning, lamentation, sorrow, sadness and unhappiness. *Ḥuzn*, a simple substantive, is used when the nominative or genitive case is employed and *ḥazan*, an infinitive noun, is used when the accusative is employed.

2.6.3 Derivatives of *ḥuzn* in the Quran

As discussed in 2.6.2, in order to obtain a clearer meaning of *ḥuzn,* its derived forms will be given below:

ḥuzn (masculine noun, gen.) – grief

ḥuznī – my grief (masc. noun, nominative) The attached possessive pronoun (ī) is first person singular.

Al-ḥazana – the sorrow (masc. noun, accusative).

ḥazanan – grief (indefinite masc. noun, accusative).

li-yaḥzuna – that he may grieve. (imperfect verb, third masc. singl. subjunctive mood). Divided into two morphological segments. Li (particle of purpose) and verb.

yaḥzanūna – they grieve. (imperfect verb third masc. pl. indicative mood).

yaḥzanna – they grieve. (imperfect verb third fem. Pl. subjunctive mood). The suffix (al-nūn) is an attached subject pronoun.

la-yaḥzununī – it surely saddens me. (imperfect verb third masc. singl. indicative mood). Divided into three morphological segments: an emphatic prefix (*la*), verb and object pronoun (first singl.).

taḥzanūna – you will grieve. (imperfect verb second masc. pl. indicative mood). Divided into 2 morphological segments. A verb and a subject pronoun (wav).

taḥzana – she may grieve. (third fem. singl., subjunctive)

taḥzan – he was or became affected with *ḥuzn*. (imperfect verb third fem. singl., jussive).

taḥzanī – grieve. (second fem. singl. jussive mood).

yaḥzunuka – (used with *lī*) grieves thee (third masc. sing, jussive). The attached object pronoun (*ka*) is second masc. sing.

yaḥzunuhumu – will grieve them. Is divided into two morphological segments. A verb and an object pronoun (third masc. pl.).

lā yaḥzunka – (let) not grieve thee (the imperfect verb is third masc. singl. jussive mood). It is divided into two morphological segments: A verb and an object pronoun (second masc. singl.).

lā taḥzan – thou grieve not. (imperfect verb, third f.s. jussive mood).

lā taḥzana – she should not grieve/acquire *ḥuzn*. (imperfect verb. third f.s. subjunctive).

lā taḥzanū – you grieve not. (The imperfect verb is second masc. pl. jussive mood). Two morphological segments: A verb and a subject pronoun.

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2.6.4 Words which appear to be synonymous with the word *ḥuzn:* Their basic and relational meaning

There are a number of words in the Quran which have been translated into English as 'sadness/distress/grief/wretchedness'. Sometimes one can find a number of these different words for sadness/grief in the same verse. It is important to explore how they differ in meaning from *ḥuzn* and in what context they are used. In this section therefore I will be looking at the semantic fields of some of these words in order to be able to differentiate their 'basic meaning' from the 'real meaning' as used in the Quranic context.

shaqīya ('to be miserable/unhappy')
ḍanaka ('wretched/straitened')
sīa ('distress, grief')
ḍaqa ('to become distressed/narrow or tight')
'asībūn ('distressful')
ghamm ('distress/anguish')
hamm ('worry/anxiety')
asaf ('grief/sorrow')
bakha'a ('worry/grieve to death')
kaẓama ('to restrain one's grief and anger')

The generic verb for describing general misery and suffering is *shaqīya*. The dictionary translation is: to be miserable; be wretched in distress; to

be unhappy.[105] The Quranic meaning for this word and its various derivatives refers to those who turn away from God and reject His guidance. For example, in verses 11:105 and 20:2 we read:

"*The day it arrives, no soul shall speak, except by his leave: Of those [gathered] some will be wretched [shaqī] and some will be blessed.*" "*We have not sent down the Quran to thee to be [an occasion] for thy distress [tashqī]. But as an admonition from those who fear [yakhshā] [Allah]*".

Although other terms form a constituent element of *shaqiya*, they are more specific in relation to the context in which they are applied. These include the word *ḥuzn* itself as well as the following words: *ḍanaka*, from which we get the idea of 'narrowness' or 'straitened and wretched'. It occurs only once in the Quran as the adjective *ḍankan*.

Sī'a meaning He was distressed/grieved. The trilateral root *sīn wāw hamza* occurs 167 times in the Quran in 12 derived forms. Its main meaning verb (form 1) is to be evil except for verses 3:120, 5:101, 9:50, 11:77, 17:7, 29:33 and 67:27 translated as grief, distress and sadden. Its meaning is linked to anything that makes a person sad or sorrowful.

The basic meaning of *ḍaqa* is: 'to become narrow or tight', 'to become distressed'. In the Quranic context, it is used in the sense of being powerless under certain circumstances. The use of this word in the verse below demonstrates Lot's powerlessness in the face of the impending evil that he thought to be imminent.

The trilateral root of the word *'a ṣa ba* occurs five times in the Quran in two derived forms: four times as noun *uṣ'bat* meaning 'group' or

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[105] 'Omar, *Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, 296.

'company' and once as the adjective *'aṣību̅n* (cited below) meaning 'distressful' in the sense of difficult to deal with.

The difference in meaning between the words *ḥuzn, ḍayqi̅n, si̅'a,* and *ḍankan* is exemplified in the verses below. In the first and third verse *ḥuzn* is used in the sense of comforting linked to a sense of loss, giving hope, guiding and reminding not to be anxious about the future. *Ḍayqi̅n* is used in all verses in connection with a state of hopelessness brought about by difficult circumstances. The word *si̅'a* in the second verse is linked to Prophet Lot's anguish with regard to the evil that he thought was bound to come about as a result of the presence of the handsome young men who had come to visit him. Unaware that they were messengers of God, Lot felt powerless to protect them against the practices of sodomy of the time. In the fourth verse the word *ḍankan* clarifies that a world that does not encompass remembrance of God is a dark world of unhappiness and wretchedness.

> *"And be patient, (O Mohammad), and your patience is not but through Allah. And do not grieve [lā taḥzan] over them and do not be in distress [ḍayqi̅n] Over what they conspire."*[106]

> *"And when Our messengers (the angels), came to Lot, he was anguished for them [si̅a] and felt for them great discomfort [ḍāqa] and said, 'this is a trying day' ['āṣību̅n]."*[107]

> *"And when Our messenger came to Lot, he was distressed [si̅a] for them and felt for them great discomfort [ḍaqa]. They said, 'Fear not, [lā takhaf] nor grieve [lā taḥzan]. Indeed we will save you and your family….."*[108]

> *And whoever turns away from My remembrance, indeed, he will have a*

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[106] Quran, 16:127.
[107] Quran, 11:77.
[108] Quran, 29:33.

> Depressed [ḍankan] life, and We will gather him on the day of resurrection blind.[109]

The trilateral root of the word *ghamm* is *ghayn mīm mīm*. It occurs eleven times in the Quran in three derived forms: Once as the noun *ghummat* meaning 'any doubt', four times as the noun *ghamām* meaning 'with the clouds' and six times as the noun *ghamm* meaning distress or anguish. The verse below makes it clear that *ghamm* is given by God purposefully with the potential that individuals may come to the realization that everyone's fate is in accordance with Divine Destiny and Decree and with this realization there is the potential for believers to avoid *ḥuzn*/sadness and fear (*khawf*).

> (Remember) when you (fled and) climbed (the mountain) without looking aside at anyone while the Messenger was calling you from behind. So Allah repaid you with distress [ghamman] upon distress [ghammīn] so you would not grieve [lā taḥzanū] for that which had escaped you (of victory and spoils of war) or (for) that which had befallen you (of injury and death). And Allah is (fully) acquainted with what you do.[110]

The *gham* or distress that is given may come in the form of *balā*, which connotes test, trial and a kind of temporary suffering imposed on believers as a test of faith. It is usually linked to objects of attachment such as goods, health, power, wealth, and so on.

> Be sure we shall test [balā] you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere. Who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return". [111]

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[109] Quran, 20:124.
[110] Quran, 3:153.
[111] Quran, 2:155-156.

The word *hamm* occurs nine times in the Quran in two derived forms: eight times as the form I verb *hamma* meaning inclined, determined, resolved, planned, plotted or desired, and once as the form IV verb *'ahammat* meaning to worry or being in an anxious state due to impending harm. The word *ḥamm* is therefore linked to anxiety about what one is expecting to happen, while *ghamm* is linked to what has already happened. In the verse below *hamm* is associated with a negative kind of anxiety stemming from one's own imagination.

> After (the excitement) of the distress [gham], He sent down calm on a band of you overcome with slumber, while another band was stirred to anxiety [ahammathum] by their own feelings, Moved by wrong suspicions of Allah – suspicions due to ignorance. They said: "What affair is this of ours?" Say thou: "Indeed, this affair is wholly Allah's." They hide in their minds what they dare not reveal to thee. They say (to themselves): "If we had had anything to do with this affair, we should not have been in the slaughter here." Say: "Even if you had remained in your homes, those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death"; but (all this was) that Allah might test [lī-yabtalīa – from balā] what is in your breasts and purge what is in your hearts. For Allah knoweth well the secrets of your hearts.[112]

The word *asaf* occurs five times in the Quran, in three derived forms. It appears once as the form IV verb *āsafu* meaning angered, and four times as the nouns *asīf* and *asaf* with the basic meaning of grief or sorrow. However, again as is demonstrated in the verse below, the relational meaning of *asaf* is linked to anger, disappointment and hurt at what has actually taken place rather than what might happen in the future.

> When Moses came back to his people, angry [ghaḍbāna] and grieved ['asīfan], he said: "Evil it is that ye have done in my place in my absence: did ye make haste to bring on the judgment of your Lord?" He put down

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[112] Quran, 3:154.

the tablets, seized his brother by (the hair of) his head, and dragged him to him. Aaron said: "Son of my mother! The people did indeed reckon me as naught, and went near to slaying me! Make not the enemies rejoice over my misfortune, nor count thou me amongst the people of sin.[113]

The basic meaning of the word *bakh'a* means to slaughter. The verb is used 'to denote anything to a great extent....'[114] The trilateral root *bā khā 'ayn* occurs twice in the Quran as the active participle: *bākhī'un* meaning 'the one who kills'[115] and 'would kill'[116] However, in the Quranic context, used with the word *nafs*/self it is translated as: 'to worry or grieve to death'.[117]

Thou wouldst only, perchance, fret thyself to death [bākhī'un], following after them, in grief ['asafan], if they believe not in this Message.[118]

It may be thou frettest thy soul with grief [bākhī'un] that they do not become Believers.[119]

Compared to verse 16:127 where the word *ḥuzn* is used to comfort and, gently remind Prophet Muhammad not to be anxious about the unbelievers' plots, the use of the word *bakh'a* with *nafs* shows the extremity of his sadness for not being able to achieve his aim of changing people's attitudes. This extent of sadness shows the human side of Prophet Muhammad; the high expectation he had of himself and the need for him to be reminded to do his duty without expecting results.

The verb *kaẓama* means to shut, stop, abstract, choke, suppress or restrain one's anger.[120] The trilateral root occurs six times in the Quran in three derived forms. It appears three times as the noun *kaẓīm* ('a

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[113] Quran, 7:150.
[114] Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 158.
[115] Quran, 18:6.
[116] Quran, 26:3.
[117] See also translations of the Quran for this verse by Pickthall, Shakir, Muhammad Sarwar and Mohsin Khan at: http://corpus.quran.com/translation.
[118] Quran, 18:6.
[119] Quran, 26:3.
[120] 'Omar, *Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, 487.

suppressor of grief'), twice as the active participle *kaẓīmīn* ('those who restrain') and once as the passive participle *makẓūm* ('was distressed').[121] Verse 12:84 below manifests three psychological states linked with sadness, *asaf* which has been already discussed meaning sorrow, and in this verse linked with the great sorrow Jacob felt as a result of the loss of Joseph and his anxiety and worry/*ḥuzn* was to such an extent that he lost his eye sight. However, he did not show his grief and this advanced state of suppressed grief (*kaẓīmūn)* was a cause for concern by his family.[122]

> And he turned away from them, and said: "How great is my grief [*asafā*] for Joseph!" And his eyes became white with sorrow [*ḥuzn*], and he fell into silent melancholy [*kaẓīmun*].

> They (Jacob's sons) said: "By Allah! [never] wilt thou cease to remember Joseph until thou reach the last extremity of illness [*ḥaraḍan*], or until thou die [*hālikīn*]

2.6.5 The relational meaning of *khawf* with *ḥuzn*

The word *ḥuzn* is immediately followed by the word *khawf* seventeen times in the Quran, thus indicating that it has a strong relational meaning with *ḥuzn*. In order to get closer to the meaning of *ḥuzn* it will be useful to analyse the word *khawf* as well as other words which are similar or appear to have the same meaning as *khawf*.

2.6.5.1 Words which appear to be synonymous with *khawf*

Rahība ('to fear, dread, awe')

ḥadhīra ('to fear, be for-warned')

Taqwā ('fear, piety, to protect')

khashīya ('awe with reverence and fear')

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[121] Quran, 12:84, 16:58, 43:17, 3:134, 40:18, 68:48.
[122] Quran, 12:85.

The trilateral root *khā wāw fā* occurs 124 times in the Quran, in seven derived forms: eighty-three times as the form I verb *khāfa* meaning to fear/be afraid; four times as the form II verb *yukhawwīfu* meaning to frighten or to threaten; twenty six times as the noun *khawf* meaning fear; six times as the noun *khīfat* meaning in fear or a fear; six times as the active participle *khāīf* meaning fearful/fearing; once as the form II verbal noun *takhwīf*, meaning a warning; and once as the form V verbal noun *takhawwuf* meaning 'a gradual wasting'.[123]

The word *khawf* and its derivatives occurs at least seventeen times with the word *ḥuzn* and its derivatives. In verses 2:38, 2:62, 2:112, 2:262, 2:74, 2:77, 3:170, 5:69, 6:48, 7:35, 7:49, 10:62, 43:68 and 46:13 as noun *khawfun* meaning fear and in verses 28:7 (*khīfʿtī*) and 29:33 (*takhaf*) and 41:30 (*takhāfū*) meaning (your) fear as form I verbs.

Eight of these verses were revealed in Medina and nine were revealed in Mecca. As was discussed earlier, the Meccan verses mainly deal with the principles of Islam, such as monotheism, revelation and the hereafter. The audience targeted are believers, inclusive of Christians, Jews, Sabeans and all others who believe in One God and the Hereafter. The Medinan verses go further and include the jurisprudential rules of Islam.

On analysing these seventeen verses, (verses where the words *ḥuzn* and *Khawf* come together) I have identified a clear difference between the Meccan and Medinan verses. The nine verses revealed in Mecca (46:13, 43:68, 41:30, 29:33, 6:48, 7:35, 7:49, 10:62, and 28:7) are mainly linked to belief such as 'those who say Our Lord is God and remain firm on that path' (46:13) and 'Those who say our Lord is God' (41:30) they will not have cause for *khawf* or *ḥuzn*. The Medinan verses (2:38, 2:62, 2:112, 2:262, 2:274, 2:77, 3:170 and 5:69) however, are linked to belief and submission, clarifying that in order not to have *khawf* or *ḥuzn* it is

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[123] http://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=xwf

necessary to move to the next stage, that is, not just belief in God but also submission, such as carrying out regular prayers, doing righteous deeds and spending of one's substance in the cause of God.

There are other words in the Quran which approximate to 'fear' such as *rahība*, *khashīya*, *hadhīra*. These words take on different meanings depending on the context. It is outside the scope of this study to examine all the words which have a semantic link with the word *khawf*. However, a brief reference to some of these words will demonstrate the importance of grammar and syntax and how the words can have a totally different meaning depending on the form. For example, *rahība* as form I means fear, dread, awe, but as form IV and form X it means 'to terrify'. And also although as nouns *rahb* and *rahab* they mean fear, the noun *ruh'bān* however, means monks and *rahbānīyyatan* means monasticism.[124] The form I verb meaning 'fear' is closely connected with the word *taqwa* as it is used mainly in the context of not fearing or taking guidance from anyone except God, such as 16:51 below:

> *And Allah said, 'Do not take for your selves two deities. He is but One God, so fear only Me'.*

The verb *ḥadhīra*, as it appears in verses 2:235, 5:41, 9:64 and 2:19 also means to fear, in the sense of being aware, taking precaution, being fore-warned. Another key word usually translated as fear is *taqwā*. The word *taqwā* comes from the verb *waqaya* which has the basic meaning: to protect, save, preserve, ward off, guard against evil and calamity, be secure and take a shield.[125] In the Quranic context it takes the meaning of being dutiful and guarding against sin. However, this concept does not lend itself easily to a word-for-word translation as it is strongly linked to the attribute of a believer and eschatologically connected with the fear of

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[124] http://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=rhb#.
[125] 'Omar, *Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, 618.

the hereafter. For example, in the following verse there are slightly different translations of the same word *'attaqā*. Variations of translation include: 'whosoever refraineth from evil', 'those who are righteous', 'whoever fears Allah', 'whoever shall guard [against evil]', 'those who choose piety', 'whosoever becomes pious and righteous' and 'whosoever is god-fearing'.[126]

> *O children of Adam, if there come to you messengers from among you relating to you My verses, then whoever fears [attaqā] Allah and reforms – there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.*[127]

A person who has *taqwā* attains a state of righteousness, by worshipping only One Lord *('rab')*.[128] Moreover, it also requires a state of submission to the One God. The verse below describes the characteristics of the 'righteous' or *al-mutaqūn*:

> *Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah , the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfil their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.*[129]

Therefore, some of the key words in the semantic category of *taqwā* are true 'belief', or 'righteousness' which means not only belief in God, the hereafter, the angels, following God's guidance through revelation and the prophets but also submitting actively through prayer, giving in charity, and manifesting God's attribute of patience through difficult times. In this sense, the word *taqwā* is also strongly linked to the heart and the concept

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[126] See various translations of the Quran, on-line version at:
http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=7&verse=35.
[127] Quran, 7:35.
[128] Quran, 2:21.
[129] Quran, 2:177.

of justice,[130] and reaching a level where one fears nothing and no-one except God.[131] This state of *taqwā* is posited as being the ultimate goal to aim for, where total submission will result in the obviation of *ḥuzn* and *khawf*.

The word *khashīya* means awe, awe with reverence and fear and is closely associated with the word *taqwa*. Again the meaning of this word is linked with not being frightened, in the sense of not being accountable to anyone else except God.

> [It is in the practice of those] who preach the messages of Allah, and fear Him, and fear none but Allah. And enough is Allah to call [men] to account.[132]

Although the basic meaning of *khawf* is 'fear', used together with *ḥuzn*, it becomes almost synonymous with it, acquiring a new meaning of 'fear and apprehension' related to anxiety in relation to the future or to the unknown. As Table One demonstrates (2.3.2), the key to obviation of this anxiety linked to loss is the promise of the hereafter, a place of eternal happiness for those who have belief *(imān)* and demonstrate their belief through sincere submission *(īslām)*.

Another example of people who will not have *ḥuzn*, are those who follow guidance *(hudā)*.[133] The word guidance then has a close relationship with the word *khawf* and *ḥuzn* through its opposite meaning, in the sense that the ones who follow God's guidance will not experience sadness or fear. It is therefore useful to analyse the semantic category of guidance in order to explore the nature of guidance and the essential quality of those who follow God's guidance.

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[130] See verses: 23:32 and 5:8.
[131] See Quran: 2:194; 2:112; 5:2; and 58:9.
[132] Quran, 33:39. See also verses: 9:13, 9:18, 20:44, 21:49, 24:52, 31:33 and 33:37.
[133] See Quran, 2:38.

2.6.6 Those who follow guidance *(hudā):*

In 2:2-5 it is made clear that guidance should be sought in the Book *(al-kītāb)*. It is a mercy from God and the only route to prosperity *(falaḥ)*. The means to attain guidance is through belief in the revelation, the hereafter and the world of the unseen and submission to God through prayer, giving charity and spending of what God has provided.[134] In other words it will only be a source of guidance for those who follow and fear God/have *taqwā.*[135]

There is much emphasis on the Unity of God and no one – not even the Prophets – can give guidance, as it can only originate from God. Therefore, God is the only One who guides and He shares no partners in this task. And there is no one and nothing in the world able to shield or protect anyone against God as He is the only Protector/*walī* and helper/*naṣīr.*[136] The Prophets' role is essentially to direct and support people towards understanding and submitting to the message/guidance of God.[137] God usually speaks of Himself in the first person plural form 'We', but although the verse below starts with the plural form it changes to the singular 'Me' to emphasise that guidance is solely from Him.[138]

> 'We said: "Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance/hudā from Me, whosoever follows My guidance [hudāya], on them shall be no fear [khawf], nor shall they grieve [yaḥzanūna].'[139]

2:97 clarifies the role of the Angel Gabriel as the carrier of guidance/revelation for believers/those who have belief *(īmān).* However, for those who reject the manifest signs *(kāfirīn)*, that is, those who do not

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[134] Quran, 2:3; 2:4; and 2:5.
[135] Quran, 3:200.
[136] Quran, 2:120.
[137] Quran, 2:272.
[138] Quran: 2:272.
[139] Quran, 2:38.

believe in God, His apostles and His angels, they will not be guided as they are of the perverse kind *(fāsīqūn)*.[140]

Therefore God as the only Protector *(walī)* and helper *(naṣīr)* guides only those who are believers *(mu'mīn)*. And true believers are: those who believe in the Book *(kītāb)*, the Unseen *(ghayb)* and in the Hereafter *(ākhīra)* and are righteous *(mutaqīn)*; that is, the ones who are steadfast in prayer *(salāt)* and carry out good actions *(khayr)* purely for the sake of God (literally seeking the 'face'/*wajh* of Allah)[141] and not for expectations of favours in return. They also spend (*īnfāq*), (which could mean both financially and spiritually), and do good (*khayr*) for the sake of God.[142] This is the state of total sincerity which in fact is the ideal or innate state for human beings to be in; a state which ensures true prosperity *(muflīḥūn)*.[143] These actions of believers would not only be justly rewarded but would also benefit their own soul *(nafs)*.[144]

The word *kāfirīn* ('those who reject faith'), comes in direct opposition to those who believe *(mu'mīnīn)*. The *kāfirīn* are people who do not have faith in God, His messengers and His angels and are referred to as 'the perverse kind' *(fāsīqūn)*[145] as opposed to the believers *(mu'mīnūn)* who are referred to as the *motaqīn* ('the righteous').[146] Therefore the key to obviation of sadness is through following guidance in order to reach the state of *taqwā* in belief as opposed to unbelief which is the state of the perverse *(fāsīqūn)*.

The two important concepts of belief and unbelief will be discussed below and a table will be provided (2.6.8) for easy reference to show some of the words which are in the semantic category of the concepts belief and unbelief.

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[140] Quran, 2:98 and 2:99.
[141] Quran, 2:272.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Quran, 2:2-5.
[144] Quran, 2:272.
[145] Quran, 2:98 and 2:99.
[146] Quran, 3:200.

2.6.7 Those who are true in faith/*mu'minīn*:

'So lose not heart [tahīnū], nor fall into despair [taḥzanū]: For ye must gain mastery if ye are true in Faith [mu'minīn].'[147]

The above verse implies that there is no reason for those who have true faith *(īmān),* to have *ḥuzn*, as long as they believe in the truth *(haq)*, that is following God's guidance through revelation, and trust and fear *(taqwā)* their Lord *(rab)* by submitting to Him through engagement in good works *(aḥsana)* and carrying out acts of righteousness *('amīlū-s-sālīḥāt).* Through belief, trust, submission and perseverance in patience *(sabr)*, they will be able to avoid anxiety about the future as they will be guided towards the right path and are promised a permanent life in paradise.[148]

However, there are those who choose not to believe *(kāfīr)*, and stubbornly refuse to heed the Messenger's warnings. These people are referred to as the *fasīqīn,* and are 'led astray' because they have chosen to block guidance and forsake the path.[149] As the verses below demonstrate, the words *fāsīqūn* ('those who rebel') and *ẓālīmūn* ('wrong-doers') have a very strong relation with the semantic field of *kāfīrūn* ('unbelievers') as they all describe those who do not judge by what God has revealed, in other words, those who refuse to follow guidance.

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is those who are the disbelievers [kāfīrūn].[150]

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is those who are the wrongdoers [ẓālīmūn].[151]

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is those who are the defiantly disobedient [fāsīqūn].[152]

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[147] Quran, 3:139.
[148] Quran, 2:25 and 2:26 and 3:200 and 6:154.
[149] Quran, 2:26.
[150] Quran, 5:44.
[151] Quran, 5:45.

The analysis of the words 'are led astray'[153] is very important here, for one may question as to why The All-Compassionate and The All-Merciful God would want to misguide people. The answer lies in the fact, that everything in the Quran points to God's Unity and the refutation of polytheism, in the sense that no one has the power to do anything. But although there is nothing else in creation which can have any influence and it is solely God Himself Who guides the believers and misleads those who reject faith, there is in fact no compulsion; the choice lies with the individual as to whether they want to be guided or not.

It also becomes clear that 'not believing' is not actually an action but is in fact 'a denial' or 'a covering of the truth'. In the Quran the analogy of light and darkness is used for belief and unbelief.[154] The state of denial therefore is like darkness, which does not have an external existence, since it is in fact merely a lack of light. The key to salvation from this 'darkness' then – or one might say this state of pretention – into 'light', is belief. Whereas the choice of unbelief means, remaining in darkness, or in other words in a state of total loss.

According to Izutsu, the basic meaning of the word *kafara* is 'to be ungrateful' or 'to show ingratitude' as opposed to *shakara* which means 'to be thankful'. But, when contrasted with belief in the Quranic context it underwent a 'semantic transformation', and acquired a new meaning of 'unbelief'. That is, *kafara* became the antonym of *āmana* ('to believe') rather than *shakara* ('to be grateful').[155] However, although the main meaning of *kufr* is unbelief, as it is devoid of all the qualities of belief, one may argue that it still retains its original meaning of ingratitude, that is, ingratitude to God in the Quranic context. The reason is that, as explained below, *shakara* ('to be thankful') is itself almost synonymous with the word *āmana* ('to believe'). Therefore, as shown in the following verses it

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[152] Quran, 5:47.
[153] Quran, 2:26.
[154] Quran, 33:43 and 103-1-3.
[155] Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran*, 22.

appears that *kafar*a as well as being the antonym of *āmana* is also inevitably the antonym of *shakara.* Therefore it has not undergone a total transformation as such but has acquired, in the Quranic context, a much broader meaning within the semantic field of belief.

> And remember! Your Lord caused to be declared {publicly}: "If you are grateful [shakartum], I will add more {favours} unto you; but if you show ingratitude [kafartum], truly my punishment is terrible indeed."[156]

> This is from the favour of my Lord to test me [bala] whether I will be grateful [ashkuru] or ungrateful [akfuru].[157]

> And We had certainly given Luqman wisdom {and said} "Be grateful to Allah." And whoever is grateful [yashkuru] is grateful for {the benefit of} himself. And whoever denies {His favour} [kafara] – then indeed, Allah is free of need and praiseworthy.[158]

> If you disbelieve [takfuru] – indeed, Allah is free from need of you. And He does not approve for His servants disbelief [kufr]. And if you are grateful [tashkuru], He approves it for you.[159]

The following verses show that thankfulness is a necessary corollary of belief. In fact as Izutsu himself opines, in the Quranic context, some verses show that "*shakara* becomes almost synonymous with *āmana*".[160]

In the last verse the analogy of darkness and light is used which as discussed previously describes the state of belief and unbelief.[161] This verse links bringing people out of darkness into light with being grateful (*shakūr*).

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[156] Quran, 14:7.
[157] Quran, 27:40.
[158] Quran, 31:12.
[159] Quran, 39:7.
[160] Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran*, 22.
[161] See 2.6.7.

Rather, worship {only} Allah and be among the grateful.[162]

What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful [shakartum] and believe [amantum]? And ever is Allah Appreciative and Knowing.[163]

And We certainly sent Moses with Our signs, {saying}, "Bring out your people from darkness into the light and remind them of the days of Allah." Indeed in that are signs for everyone patient and grateful [shakūr].[164]

The semantic structures of belief and unbelief can be found in Table Two below where some of the key concepts and characteristics and qualities of a believer, as opposed to the qualities of those who choose to reject faith, are summarized.

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[162] Quran, 39:66.
[163] Quran, 4:147.
[164] Quran, 14:5.

2.6.8 Table Two - Semantic categories of Belief & Unbelief

Qualities of a Believer (*āmana*)	Qualities of those who reject faith (*kafara*)
Will not have sadness or fear 2:38	Will be at a loss 103:1-3
Shows gratitude 39:66	Ingratitude 14:7 and 31:12
Follows guidance 2:38	Does not judge by what God has revealed 5:44
Work righteousness (*amīlū sālihāt*) 103:2 and 2:25	Perverse (*fāsiq*) 2:26
Will be guided to the right path (*huda*) 6:154 and 2:26	Strays from the right path (*dhīla*) and (*fāsiq*) 2:26
Spends (*yunfiqūna*) of what God has provided for them 2:3, 2:254	Stinginess (*bukhl*) 4:37
Believes in the Unseen (*ghayb*) 2:3	Rejects the manifest signs (*āyāt*) 2:99
Will have patience (*sabr*) 3:200	
Will fear God/be righteous (*taqwa*) 3:200	The worst of creatures 98:6
Will worship God alone and not associate partners with Him (*shirk*) 12:38	Association of partners with God (3:151)
Will do good (*ahsana*) 6:154	
Carries out good actions (*khayr*) 2:272	Allured to the life of this world (*al-hayāt-ad-Dunyā*) 2:212
Will receive God's Mercy (*rahma*) 33:43	
Join together mutual teachings of truth (*haq*) 103:3 and 2:26	
Believes in The Book/Revelation (*al-kītab*) 6:154	Will not believe (*la yu'mīnūna*) 2:98
Submits to God (*Islam*) 10:84; 4:59; 8:1; 33:36; 4:103	Wrongdoing themselves (*zālimī 'anfusīhīm*) 16:28
Belief linked to light (*nūr*) 33:43	Unbelief linked to darkness (*dhulumāt*) 33:43
Steadfast in prayer (*salāt*) 2:3	
Believes in the hereafter (*ākhīra*) 2:8 and 2:4	Denies the hereafter 41:7
Will prosper (*muflīhūna*) 2:5	Will be in a wretched state (*bi'sa*) 3:151
Will not be dealt with unjustly (*lā tuzlamūna*) 2:272	Wrong-doers (*dhālimūn*) 5:45
Their portion is Gardens (*jannat*) 2:25	Their abode is the fire 24:57
Will be in a state of security and peace (*amīn*) 6:82	Will be at a loss (*khusr*) 103:1
Seek God as their only Protector (*walī*) and helper (*nasīr*) 2:120	Allah is an enemy (*'aduww*) to those who reject faith 2:98

*It should be noted that the second column (Qualities of those who reject faith) is a separate list, therefore the meanings are not necessarily a direct opposite to the first column (Qualities of a Believer).

2.6.9 Semantic structure of terms opposite to *ḥuzn*

Antonyms of *ḥuzn*

As Izutsu recommends, in order to go beyond the basic meaning and get closer to the 'real meaning' of a word, it may be helpful to look at the opposite of the concept in question. In this case the opposite of *ḥuzn* would be happy or happiness. Some of the words which convey the meaning of happiness as opposed to sadness will be briefly studied.

Faraḥa ('to be glad, happy')

sa'ada ('to be prosperous, happy')

Sarra ('to be glad, rejoice')

The basic meaning of the verb *faraḥa* is: to be glad, happy, delighted, rejoice, cheerful, pleased and exult.[165] The trilateral root occurs twenty-two times in the Quran, in two derived forms, sixteen times as the form I verb *fariḥa* and six times as the noun *fariḥ*, meaning to rejoice. Within the Quranic context, most of the verses point to human beings' being immersed in the rejoicing of the worldly life and forgetting the source of bounties given to them.[166]

> It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a good wind and they rejoice therein, there comes a storm wind and the waves come upon them from everywhere and they assume that they are surrounded, supplicating Allah, sincere to Him in religion, "If You should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful."[167]
>
> But when He saves them, at once they commit injustice upon the earth without right. O mankind, your injustice is only against yourselves, [being

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[165] 'Omar, *Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, 420.
[166] See Quran: 3:120, 3:188, 6:44, 9:81 and 13:26.
[167] Quran, 10:22.

merely] the enjoyment of worldly life. Then to Us is your return, and We will inform you of what you used to do.[168]

In the first verse above the word thankful *(shukr)* is used. As discussed previously,[169] being thankful is a characteristic of a believer, as opposed to ingratitude, which is a characteristic of an unbeliever, that is, someone who covers the truth. It is interesting here that while sailing along happily God is forgotten, resulting in ingratitude, and it is only when confronted with a storm that the promise of being thankful is given. The second verse goes on to explain that neglecting to give thanks is an injustice, particularly to one's own soul. Therefore there is a link here between the concepts of belief, gratitude, balance and equilibrium with ever-lasting happiness, as opposed to the link between unbelief with injustice, imbalance and the transient enjoyment of worldly life.

The basic meaning of the verb *sa'ada*, means: to be prosperous, blessed, happy, auspicious and thrive.[170] The trilateral root occurs twice in the Quran, in two derived forms: Once as the form I verb *su'idu* meaning 'were glad' and once as the noun *sa'id* meaning 'the glad', translated below as 'prosperous'.

> *The Day it comes no soul will speak except by His permission. And among them will be the wretched [shaqi] and the prosperous [sa'id]. (11:105)*
>
> *As for those who were [destined to be] wretched, they will be in the Fire. For them therein is [violent] exhaling and inhaling. (11:106)*
>
> *And as for those who were [destined to be] prosperous [su'idu], they will be in Paradise, abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except what your Lord should will – a bestowal uninterrupted.* (11:108)

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168 Quran, 10:23.
169 See 2.6.7.
170 'Omar, *Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, 258.

As discussed previously[171] the Quranic meaning of *shaqīya* is linked to 'those who turn away from God and reject His guidance'. Hence the wretched are the unbelievers whose abode is the fire as opposed to believers who will be in a happy state dwelling in paradise. Therefore *shaqīya* forms a semantic link with unbelief as opposed to *suʿdu* which has a strong semantic link with belief.

The basic meaning of the verb *sarra* is: to make glad, rejoice, be glad.[172] The trilateral root occurs fourty-four times in the Quran, in nine derived forms: once as the form I verb *tasurru* meaning pleasing, eighteen times as the form IV verb *asarra* meaning to conceal, eleven times as the noun *sīrr* meaning secretly, once as the noun *sarāīr* meaning the secrets, twice as the noun *sarrā* meaning the ease, six times as the noun *surur* meaning thrones, once as the noun *surūr* meaning happiness, twice as the passive participle *masrūr* meaning happy and twice as the form IV verbal noun *as'rār* meaning secrets.[173]

> *When the sky is rent asunder, And hearkens to (the Command of) its Lord, and it must needs (do so); - And when the earth is flattened out, And casts forth what is within it and becomes (clean) empty, And hearkens to (the Command of) its Lord, - and it must needs (do so);- (then will come Home the full reality). O thou man! Verily thou art ever toiling on towards thy Lord – painfully toiling – but thou thou shalt meet Him. Then he who is given his Record in his right hand, soon will his account be taken by an easy reckoning, and he will turn to his people, rejoicing! [masrūran] But he who is given his Record behind his back, - Soon will he cry for perdition, And he will enter a Blazing Fire. Truly, did he go about among his people, rejoicing! [masrūran]Truly, did he think that he would not have to return (to Us)! Nay, nay! for his Lord was*

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[171] See 2.6.4.

[172] ʿOmar, *Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, 255.

[173] Although there is a relationship between derived forms of Arabic verbal roots, in certain cases derived forms may have totally different meanings. See Ziadeh, Farhat J and Winder R. Bayly, *An Introduction to Modern Arabic* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), 21.

(ever) watchful of him! What then is the matter with them, that they believe not? - And when the Qur'an is read to them, they fall not prostrate, but on the contrary the Unbelievers reject (it). But Allah has full knowledge of what they secrete (in their breasts). So announce to them a Penalty Grievous, except to those who believe and work righteous deeds: For them is a Reward that will never fail.

Chapter eighty-four of the Quran above concerns, among other things, the link between happiness *(surūr)* and belief. It states, that true happiness in the hereafter only awaits those who heed God's guidance, as opposed to the unbelievers who reject the Quran and amuse themselves in the worldly life; their reward will be a blazing fire. Therefore it becomes clear that the concepts of belief and guidance have a strong relational connection with the concept of happiness as opposed to the concept of unbelief which has a strong semantic link with ultimate perdition in the hereafter.

2.7 Conclusion

The forty-two verses in the Quran which contain the word *ḥuzn* were selected and of these those which were related to the obviation of *ḥuzn* were grouped together in order to obtain a picture of the type of people who would be able to avoid *ḥuzn*. The rest of the words were grouped according to themes. The typology and the thematic analysis showed that there are many words in the Quran which have similar meaning as *ḥuzn* and although often translated as exactly the same, these concepts when examined in its Quranic context have different nuances in meaning. The concept of *ḥuzn* itself appears to mean grief as a result of 'loss', for example the loss of a loved one such as experienced by Moses' mother (28:13) or Abraham having to let go of his son Ismail (37:99-110) and Jacob's attachment to Joseph (12:84). *Ḥuzn* is a feeling that is given to us by God, therefore its existence is necessary as it has a positive side of guidance.

But prohibited sadness is the extreme kind of sadness which is non-accepting, that is, a refusal to accept Divine Determining and Destiny. The kind of *ḥuzn* experienced by the Prophets appear to fall mainly in the first category since it appears to serve as a means of guidance. *Ḥuzn* as discussed in the typology appears to demonstrate the human aspect of the Prophets. For example, the case of Jacob and his reluctance to send Joseph with the brothers because he feared that some harm may come to him, but even so in the end he accepted, possibly due to the realization that ultimately Joseph's safety was in God's hands. Hence as a Prophet he did not want to attribute power to causes. But when the brothers came back without Joseph, because of his extreme compassion for Joseph, it was too much pain to bear, resulting in unbearable grief *(asaf)*, to the extent that Jacob lost his sight and fell into a silent melancholy (*kaẓīmūn*).

kaẓīmūn is the psychological state of suppressed grief, which may have possibly led to the extreme case of Jacob's loss of eye sight and the consequent concerns that his sons had for him with regard to his health. Jacob's sons begged him to let go of his attachment to Joseph as it was causing him to be extremely ill *(haraḍan)* and possibly even die of grief *(hālīkīn)*. But Jacob knew that ultimately his unbearable situation was part of Divine Determination *(qadar)*, hence his response that he kept his sorrow *(ḥuzn)* to himself while admitting his weakness directly to his Lord. It seems that this is an admission of weakness on the part of Jacob, but at the same time the recognition that God had given him this sadness and only He through His Grace and Mercy would be able to take it away. For Jacob then, *ḥuzn* even though at times it became excessive, it served as a test and a form of guidance.

In the case of Muhammad, as discussed previously, his deep pain, due to lack of people's attention to his warnings, was to such an extent that verses were revealed warning him to stop blaming himself for others

choice of action[174] and reminding and guiding him, as messengers were guided before him, that ultimately everything that was taking place would be in accordance to Divine Destiny and Decree. Therefore, there should be no sadness or regret/*hasrat* about the past, nor any sadness or worry/*ḥuzn* with regard to effect of loss or non-attainment of goals. This non-attribution to causes is akin to being in a state of total submission '*tawakul*'.

The Izutsian methodology and the analysis of the concept of *ḥuzn* began by comparing and contrasting some of the terms which were similar as well as opposite to *ḥuzn* in order to obtain a contextual meaning of this concept, rather than an atomistic one. Two of the words which had a strong semantic relation with the word *ḥuzn* were belief and its opposite unbelief. The Izutsian analysis showed that the key to the obviation of *ḥuzn* is to have belief. It showed that sincere belief translated into: belief in only One God, which in turn means fearing and trusting Him only by not ascribing partners to Him; following the guidance as laid down in the criteria of the Quran; carrying out acts of righteousness purely for His sake; and showing patience and perseverance at the time of hardship. As shown in Table Two of this Chapter[175], the meaning of belief is also linked to the state of being grateful, as opposed to unbelief which is linked to the state of ungratefulness.

The Izutsian analysis shows that sincere believers are the ones who are able to avoid *ḥuzn* by submitting totally to God whereas the *Kāfīr* and the *fāsīq* are the ones who cover and rebel against the truth and in this way become the *zālīmūn* ('wrong-doers'), since through their own choice and their attachment to the transient world, they remain in darkness by blocking out the light of belief.

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[174] See Quran, 35:8.
[175] See 2.6.8.

It was identified that the word *khawf* also has a strong relational meaning with *ḥuzn*, as they occur seventeen times together in the Quran. The analysis of the word *khawf* showed that with belief, this negative concept can be changed to *taqwā*, which also means fear but in a positive sense, as it also means trust and submission to One God. The analysis of the word *khawf* with *ḥuzn* identified that the state of non-attribution of effects to causes, fearing only God, and the belief in the hereafter is the key to obviation of both sorrow due to loss and fear of calamities and death in the future.

The analysis of these seventeen verses also identified that nine of these verses which were revealed in Mecca were mainly linked to the principles of belief, such as monotheism, revelation and the hereafter, whereas the Medinan verses were linked to both belief and submission, hence clarifying that for obviation of *ḥuzn* and *khawf*, the next stage, submission as well as belief is necessary.

The next chapter will look at textual sources for the understanding of the concept of *ḥuzn* by exegetes from classical and modern periods.

The Concept of *ḥuzn* in Quranic Exegesis

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will begin with a general discussion about the interpretation of the Quran, followed by historical background on Quranic exegesis, and then an introduction of a number of exegetes ranging from the classical to the contemporary period. The concept of *ḥuzn* will be examined in accordance with the interpretation of the selected exegetes.

The interpretation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an is the highest source of exegesis.[1] The tenets of faith are formulated in the Quran itself which provide the base for moral training in one's social as well as personal life. In short, as is narrated in the Quran itself, the Quran is the criterion upon which everything should be based.[2] Although the Quran invites all individuals to use their intellect to understand the purpose of their existence, it states that only God has knowledge of its true meaning:

> It is He who has sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book; in it are verses [that are] precise – they are the foundation of the Book – and others unspecific. As for those in whose hearts is deviation [from truth], they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation [suitable to them]. And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allah. But those firm in knowledge say, "We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord. "And no one will be reminded except those of understanding.[3]

Also moral guidance is only one dimension of the Quran – this is the exoteric or the *zāhīr* dimension – but the majority of the verses are more ethico-theologically oriented, and have an esoteric dimension or *batin* which is timeless and not limited to a specific historical period or event.[4]

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[1] Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Quran and its interpreters*, 2 vols. (State University of New York Press, Albany 1984), I, 22.
[2] See Quran, 2:185.
[3] See Quran, 3:7.
[4] Ayoub, *The Quran and its interpreters*, 18.

There are also verses in the Quran which are described as being clear in meaning, referred to as *muḥkam* verses, as opposed to verses which are more ambiguous or allegorical, referred to as *mutashabīh*. Any disagreement in interpretation is generally linked to the *mutashabīh* verses.[5] The principle of *naskh*, meaning the abrogation of one verse by another, for example, the superseding of a legal precept by a later one, further complicates matters; this is a particular concern in those verses where the text is abrogated but not the precept itself. While some scholars link the abrogating verses with the *muḥkam* verses and the abrogated verses with the *mutashabīh* verses, there is no general agreement among the exegetes, as to which verses abrogate other verses.[6]

Also possibly because of the warning indicated in the above verse[7] with regard to distracting from the real message of the Quran, most traditional exegetes, in particular, those from the classical period have been very cautious in their interpretation of the Quran. The tradition-oriented exegetes believed that personal opinion should not be used and the criteria for acceptance of any interpretation should be the use of verses in the Quran itself for supporting evidence, or traditions attributed to Muhammad or to the first and second generations of Muslims.[8]

Therefore most exegesis deals with the exoteric dimension and a more detailed explanation of the texts rather than delving too deeply into analysis of the esoteric dimension. However, it is envisaged that the exegeses used in this chapter will serve, to an extent, as sources of

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[5] For further discussion on *muḥkam* and *mutashabīh* verses see Abū Ja'far Muhammad ībn Jarīr al-Tabarī, *Jāmī al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Quran* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1986), 3:115-6; al-Ḥusayn ībn Mas'ūd al-Farrā al-Baghawī, *ma'alīm al-tanzīl*, ed. Khālīd 'Abd al-Raḥmān al'Akk and Marwān Suwār (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rīfa, 1986), 1:279; Muḥammad ībn al-Ḥassan al-Tūsī,*al-Tībyān fī tafsīr al-Qurān*, ed. Aḥmad Shawqī al-Amīn and Aḥmad Ḥabīb Qasīr (Najaf: Maktabat al-Amīn, 1957), 2:395.
[6] Ayoub, *The Quran and its interpreters,* 20.
[7] Quran, 3: 7.
[8] McAuliffe, *The Cambridge Companion to the Quran,* 196-197.

supporting information for the study of the concept of *ḥuzn*. It must also be added that the omission of comments by some of the exegetes on some of the verses is because not all the exegetes comment on every verse in the Quran. Furthermore, Tustarī's exegesis, for example, is only a partial commentary, covering around one sixth of the total verses in the Quran.[9]

Before exploring what the exegetes have to say about the concept of *ḥuzn* in the Quran, a brief historical background and the characteristic of the selected sources will be provided.

3.2 Quranic exegesis (*tafsīr*)

The word *tafsīr* occurs only once in the Quran.[10] It is derived from the root *fasara* meaning 'explanation' or 'commentary'.[11] *Tafsīr* was initially based mainly on Prophetic traditions *(ḥadīth)*, that is, Quranic texts which have been interpreted in accordance with the traditions narrated by Muhammad and his companions. However, the *tafsīr* ascribed to Muhammad and his companions are few in number and generally linked to answers to questions asked about the Quranic text. Up to the time of the Companions of the Prophet, these interpretations were passed orally. It was with creation of different schools of thought such as Meccan and Medinan that written *tafsīr* came into existence. In these early stages when *tafsīr* reports were mainly in the domain of *ḥadīth* scholars, *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* were not easily distinguishable, and the explanation offered focused mainly on the ambiguous words or phrases of the Quran.[12] However, these brief explanations were not enough to satisfy the new

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[9] Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī, Great Commentaries on the Holy Quran*, trans. by Annabel Keeler and Ali Keeler (Jordan: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2011).
[10] See Quran, 25:33.
[11] ʿOmar, *Dictionary of the Holy Quran*, 427.
[12] For further information on the early developments of *tafsīr* (exegesis) see Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Quran, towards a contemporary approach* (New York: Routledge, 2006)1; *The Koran, Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, ed. by Colin Turner, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2004), IV.

problems of the growing community who looked to the Quran for answers. These developments gave rise to the emergence of independent exegetes.

This chapter will focus on the work of a selection of both Shiite and Sunni exegetes from the classical and modern periods for the Quranic understanding of the word *ḥuzn*.

3.3 Exegetes from the classical period

The first selected exegesis from the classical period is *Jamī'al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Ay al-Qurān* by Muhammad İbn Jarir al-Tabarī (840-923). Tabarī was born in Amol, the Māzandarān region of modern Iran. He was well versed in most Sunni legal schools and although initially followed the Shafi'ite school, he later formed his own independent school named Jarīrīya which eventually became extinct. The exegetes he quotes from are mainly from among the companions of the Prophet, in particular Ibn 'Abbās, traditionally known as the Founder of the Meccan school of *tafsīr*.[13]

Tabarī used the term *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* interchangeably unlike the Shi'ites who made a marked distinction between these two approaches to interpretation. According to Shi'ites, *ta'wīl* could only be performed by the Imams whereas *tafsīr* could be carried out by any qualified person in the field of exegesis, as it only concerns the outward *(zāhīr)* meaning of the Quran. But *ta'wīl* could only be accomplished exclusively by the Imams from the family of the Prophet as they were endowed with the ability to interpret the inward meaning or the ambiguous parts *(bātīn)* of the Quran. Therefore these interpretations from the Imams were transmitted in the form of narrations through the first generation of Shi'ites, in the same way as the narrations were transmitted from Ibn 'Abbās and other companions of the Prophet for the Sunnīs.

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[13] Abū Ja'far Muhammad B. Jarīr Al-Tabarī, *The Commentary on the Quran*, abridged English trans. by John Cooper (Oxford University Press, 1989) xiii.

Tabarī's interpretation falls in the category of tradition, known as '*tafsīr* by tradition', heavily based on narrations *(ḥadīth)* and linguistic approaches for interpretion of the Quran. It is as Saeed argues a textualist rather than a contextualist approach.[14] Tabari describes his own work thus:

> It is a book containing all that people needs {that is, concerning the interpretation of the Quran}. It is so comprehensive that with it there is no need to have recourse to other books. We shall relate in it arguments wherein agreement was achieved and where disagreement persisted. We shall present the reasons for every school of thought or opinion and elucidate what we consider to be the right view with utmost brevity.[15]

The reason that Tabarī's interpretation of the Quran is chosen is because firstly his commentary is a major work in the development of exegesis which has been widely used by other commentators[16] and secondly because it will provide a good contrast with the modern exegetes such as Tabātabāī who are more analytical in their approach.

The second exegete from the classical period is Isma'il 'Imad al-Din Abu al-Fida' ibn Kathīr (1300-1373). Ibn Kathīr was a famous Sunni jurist from the Shaf'i school of law. He was a historian and a compiler of narrations whose work concentrated on traditions *(ḥadīth)*. As a supporter and follower of Ibn Taymiyyah, he is considered to have a more conservative approach to works of exegesis.[17] Although he has been criticised as being dogmatic in his approach and having little respect for the intellectual tradition,[18] his interpretation of the Quran is chosen as he is still considered to be a prominent figure within modern Muslim intellectual life,

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[14] For more discussion on textualist and contextualist approach see Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Quran.*
[15] Quoted in Ayoub, *Quran and its interpreters*, 4.
[16] Ibid.*,* 4.
[17] Ibid., 4.
[18] See Norman Calder,'Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Description of a Genre, Illustrated with Reference to the Story of Abraham', in G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader, A. Shareef eds, *Approaches to the Quran* (London: Routledge, 1993), 124.

especially for his work *The Interpretation of the Mighty Quran (Tafsīr al-Quran al-ʿaẓīm)*.[19]

The third exegete chosen from the classical period is Sahl al-Tustarī (818-896).[20] Tustarī was originally from Tustar in Khūzīstān province of Persia, but eventually moved to Iraq. Among his disciples were: Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (796-859); ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Sālīm al-Baṣrī (d. 279/909) and al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922). Tustarī is known for his spiritual and ascetic practices which shaped his intellectual development and attracted many people to his teachings and practices. As none of the works ascribed to Tustarī is extant, he is not considered to be primarily a scholar. However, there are collections of his work composed by his followers which convey his teachings. Among these is Al-Tustarī's partial commentary on the Quran. It is a partial commentary as it only covers one sixth of the verses in the Quran.[21] The reason that Tustarī is chosen is due to his prominence as an important figure from a subgenre of Quranic exegetes as he represents a more 'mystical' rather than narration-based *(ḥadīth)* interpretation of the Quran. His work has also had considerable influence on the development of *Sūfī* thought and practices.[22]

3.4   Contemporary exegesis

The first Quranic exegesis selected from the modern period is *Tafhīm al-Quran* by Sayyīd Abdul Aʿla Mawdūdī (1903-1979). He was born in Aurangabad (now Maharashhra) and traces his lineage back to the great Chīshtī Sūfī saints. However, having served as the Founder of the Islamic Movement of the Jamāʿat-ī-Islāmī in India, his interpretation of the Quran

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[19] Al-Qurayshī al-Dimishqī ʿImad al-Dīn Abī al-Fidā Ismāʿīl Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-ʿaẓīm*, 7 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1970) on-line English version [accessed 1 May 2015 – 22 July 2015]
http://www.quranwebsite.com/tafsir%20ibn%20kathir/tafsir_ibn_kathir.html
[20] Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī, Great Commentaries on the Holy Quran,* tans. by Annabel Keeler and Ali Keeler (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought: Fons Vitae, 2011).
[21] Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *The Cambridge Companion to the Quran* (Cambridge University Press: 2006), 194.
[22] Gerhard Bowering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Quranic Hermeneutics of the Sūfī Sahl at-Tustarī* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010).

is grounded more in revivalist and revolutionary ideas. Although he endeavours to interpret the Quran in a holistic way he relies heavily on narrations *(aḥādīth)* to express the importance of practice as carried out by Muhammad and his followers. Mawdūdī is selected as a representative of modern Sunnite exegesis whose clear interpretation of the Quran is accessible not only to the educated classes but also the wider audience.[23]

The second Quranic exegesis representing the modern period chosen for this study is *al-Mīzān fī al-tafsīr al-Quran* by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabātabāī (1904-1981).[24] Ṭabātabāī was born in Tabrīz, a city in the north-west area of Iran but spent much of his life studying in the holy cities of Najaf and Qumm. The language used by Ṭabātabāī in his interpretation is both descriptive and analytical. As well as the usual standard topics such as lexicography and grammar he attempts to carry out a thematic interpretation of the Quran. Ṭabātabāī's rational and philosophical approach has gained him recognition as one of the greatest religious scholars of the past century representing the Shi'ite tradition.[25]

3.5 Selected Quranic narratives

In this Chapter I will examine the aforementioned exegetical works and discuss their perspective with regard to the concept of *ḥuzn*. As discussed previously the Quranic view of the concept of *ḥuzn* is illustrated through fourty-two narratives. As before, they have been grouped in to two different categories: verses which relate directly to the kind of people who will not have sadness and fear (3.6); and verses grouped together in accordance to different themes of test/trial (3.7); separation/loss (3.7.2); and reminder/comfort and reassurance of Prophets and the faithful (3.7.3). For an in-depth understanding of the concept of *ḥuzn* twenty five

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[23] See Sayyid Abul A'lā Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān: Abridged Version of Tafhīm al-Quran*, trans. by Zafar Ishaq Ansarī (Leicester: Islamic Foundation,1988); Encyclopedia of the Quran, 6 vols, ed. by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, (Boston: Brill, 2002) II.
[24] Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān fī l-tafsīr al-Quran*, 20 vols (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī lil-Maṭbū'āt, 1974), trans. by Noor Foundation into Persian [on DVD].
[25] See Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *The Cambridge Companion to the Quran*, 39.

of these verses have been selected as space precludes me from considering all the narratives. The verses selected, adequately represent their group in a broader context without avoiding too much repetition of the same themes.

3.6 Characteristics demonstrated by those who will not experience sadness (*ḥuzn*) and fear (*khawf*)

3.6.1 Those who follow God's guidance:

> We said, "Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance – there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.[26]

According to Ibn Kathīr guidance in this verse refers to: "the prophets, Messengers, the clear signs and plain explanation." And the sentence 'whoever follows My Guidance', therefore refers to those who accept what is contained in God's Books and what is sent with the Messengers. Ibn Kathīr interprets "*there shall be no fear on them*" as related to the hereafter, meaning that they will have no worries or concerns with regard to the hereafter. He links the sentence "*nor shall they grieve*", to this world, similarly meaning that they shall have no sadness with regard to this world. Therefore those who follow God's guidance '*will not be misguided in this life or miserable in the hereafter*'.[27]

Tabarī also concurs with Ibn Kathīr, stating that guidance is through the prophets, the messengers and the clear discourse. He points out that '*go down…*' was not just addressed to Adam and his offspring and İblīs ('Satan'), but also to all of human kind, and that those who have fallen have the opportunity to repent. But one can only receive guidance if repentance is followed by acceptance of the 'clear exposition' which is conveyed through the 'tongue of His Messenger, Muhammad'. And those

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[26] Quran, 2:38.
[27] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-'aẓīm,*
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=395#1

who follow this guidance need not fear God's punishment or the terrors of resurrection, nor will they grieve for what they have left behind in this world. Therefore according to Tabarī also, the word fear *(khawf)* in this verse is related to the fears of the future linked to the hereafter and sadness (*ḥuzn)* to loss, that is, what has been left behind in this world.[28]

Ṭabātabāī relates this verse to the covenant made by Adam, that is, the promise of total submission to his Lord. But as Adam forgot about the covenant and tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree, it resulted in the fall into a world full of test and trials. However, just as he was saved by repenting to God, all humankind also has the potential of being saved. The key according to Ṭabātabāī is to accept "the Mastership of Allah" and one's own servitude.[29]

Ṭabātabāī goes on to explain that accepting God's Mastership means that one owns nothing and has no authority over anything including one's own life. With the knowledge that everything belongs to God, that is, one has no ownership over anything and that nothing can sustain itself independently from Him, and that because everything emanates from Him therefore everything is ultimately good, then the one submitted to this truth is open to guidance and thus will neither dislike or fear anything apart from those things disapproved by his/her Creator. As Ṭabātabāī states, with the knowledge that everything belongs to God, "why should he worry how the Master manages His own property?" He adds that:

> This submission to Allah creates a perfect tranquillity, a truly happy life, untarnished by unhappiness; a light without darkness, a joy without

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[28] Abu Jafar Muhammad B. Jarir Al-Tabari, *The Commentary on the Qur'an,* introduction and notes by J. Cooper, ed. by W.F. Madelung and A. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 262-268.

[29] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* English translation accessed on 1 May 2015: http://www.almizan.org/.

sorrow, a benefit without harm, and a richness without want. It all
happens because he believes in Allah and His Mastership.[30]

In contrast, the unbeliever, cut off from the Master, imagines that he/she
is independent and owns his/her own power. Ṭabātabāī describes this as
a self-destructive position where one is in constant fear of what may
happen and sad about loss of opportunities and loved ones in the past.
When lured by the attraction of this world and one's own reliance on
obtaining them, this leads to a state of despair when obstacles get in the
way of attaining them.[31]

3.6.2 Those who believe

In verse 2:62 those who will not experience fear and grief is defined as
those who believe, including, Christians, Jews, Sabians and whoever else
believes in God, the Last Day, and does good deeds. Ibn Kathīr refers to
3:85 below, and also to Alī bīn Abī Talhah who narrated from Ibn Abbās,
for arguing that 'Allah does not accept any deed or work from anyone
unless it conforms to the law of Mohammad'.[32] And that this verse only
applied to the Jews, Christians and Sabians who followed the guidance of
their own Prophets before the appearance of Prophet Muhammad. Thus,
it seems that Ibn Kathīr, even though he does not use the word *naskh*
('abrogated'), may be implying that verse 2:62 is no longer applicable to
people today. In other words, this verse is abrogated by verse 3:85
quoted below.

> *And whoever desires other than Islam as religion – never will it be
> accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.*[33]

However, Ṭabātabāī in *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, does not mention that this verse is
no longer applicable to the Jews or Christians of today. His emphasis is on

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm.*
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=371
[33] Quran, 3:85.

the phrase 'whoever believes in God…', hence pointing to the importance of sincere belief in God, resurrection and righteous deeds, which applies to all human beings regardless of their title or their rank.[34]

As far as abrogation is concerned there is no general agreement among Muslim scholars as to which verses abrogate other verses or indeed the acceptance of the concept of abrogation itself.[35] Most of the discussions about abrogation in the Quran are related to legal issues, with emphasis that although a few general rulings are amended, the objective of those rulings can never be abrogated.[36]

Mawdūdī's interpretation of this verse is also similar to Ṭabātabāī's, stressing that there is no special religious group which God favours over others, and that salvation depends on the extent of one's belief and good deeds rather than connection with a particular group.[37]

Tabarī also has similar view to Ṭabātabāī. He states that there is no distinction being made here between the religions mentioned as he states that the words *'whoever believes in Allah and the last day'* applies equally to all those people mentioned at the beginning of the verse. He also links fear with 'the terrors of the Resurrection' and sorrow with the loss of what has been left behind in this world.[38]

3.6.3 Through total submission and being a 'doer of good'

The criteria for no sadness or fear in verse 2:112 which is quoted below, is total submission and being a 'doer of good'. Ibn Kathīr interprets this

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[34] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* English translation, [accessed 1 May 2015]: http://www.almizan.org/

[35] Ayoub, *Quran and its interpreters*, 20.

[36] For further discussion on the concept of abrogation see 'On the Abrogation of the Bequest Verses', David S. Powers, *Arabica* (BRILL, 1982), 246-295 URL:http://www.jstor.org/stable/4056186, accessed: 14 September 2013; Also see *The Quran: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 2006), 2.

[37] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran,* on line version [accessed 1 May 2015 – 22 July 2015] http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/2/index.html#sdfootnote80sym

[38] Tabarī, *The Commentary on the Qur'an,* 356.

verse as 'whoever performs deeds in sincerity, for Allah alone without partners:

> *Yes [on the contrary], whoever submits his face in Islam to Allah while being a doer of good will have his reward with his Lord. And no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.*[39]

He refers to Saʿīd bīn Jubayr as saying that: *'whoever submits'* is linked to sincerity, *'his face'* means in 'his religion' and *'he is muḥsīn'* ('doer of good'), means follows the Messenger. Ibn Kathīr refers to the sayings of the Prophet *(ḥadīth)* as recorded by Muslim, to back up his argument that for deeds to be accepted, two conditions must be adhered to, firstly the deeds must be solely for God's sake and secondly the deeds must be in conformity with jurisprudence. He therefore concludes that the good deeds of Christian priests and rabbis will not be accepted even if they have been carried out in total sincerity and for the sake of God alone, because they were not in accordance with the method of Muhammad or with laws of jurisprudence.[40]

Tustarī does not discuss this verse in detail, but he also emphasises the importance of complete submission to God and total sincerity. He interprets 'face' as 'purpose', and appears to be somewhat in agreement with Ibn Kathīr. For although he does not spell out that the good deeds of Christians and Jews are not accepted, he does however, say that the one who submits his purpose to God is one "who dedicates his religion purely to God" which is inclusive of "Islam and its laws".[41]

Ṭabātabāī however, stresses that spiritual felicity does not depend on what name one calls oneself. He states that the requirement in this verse is total submission and doing good *(al-iḥsān)*, which he interprets as being synonymous with good deeds.

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[39] Quran, 2:112.
[40] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- ʿaẓīm.*
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=325
[41] Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī,* 22.

3.6.4 Through spending of wealth for the sake of God

Verse 2:262 below is about carrying out deeds for the sake of God, therefore giving charity should also be solely for the sake of God.

> *Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah and then do not follow up what they have spent with reminders [of it] or [other] injury will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.*[42]

Ibn Kathīr states that the words *'or with injury'* means harming or hurting anyone while giving charity, which will only result in the cancellation of the charitable act. Also one should not remind people of their charity or have any expectations, as it is God Himself who rewards those who carry out this righteous action. As before, Ibn Kathīr relates the words *'on them shall be no fear'* to the hereafter and *'nor shall they grieve'* to loved ones and worldly possessions left behind in this world. Thus he is alluding to the fact that those who give in charity with total sincerity and purely for the sake of God will obtain their reward from God and consequently they will neither have fear of punishment in the hereafter, not will they be sad about leaving the life of this world.[43]

Ṭabātabāī explains some of the words and phrases used in verse 2:262 as follows: The phrase *'the way of Allah'* relates to 'anything which leads to the pleasure of Allah'; the word *al-ītbā* as well as meaning 'to follow' also means 'to attach one thing to other'. It appears that Ṭabātabāī is putting forward this second meaning possibly because it connotes a disconnection of any causal relationship hence reinforcing the importance of spending of wealth in total sincerity and purely for the sake of God. He further explains that the root meaning of *al-mann/mannan* ('with reminders of generosity') is 'to cut'; *al-adha* as 'immediate injury'; *khawf* ('fear') the expectation of harm linked to the future; and *ḥuzn* ('grief/sadness') as 'the

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[42] Quran, 2:262.
[43] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=132#1

sorrow which greatly disturbs the soul, and which is caused by real or almost real misfortune'. He goes on to explain the importance and wisdom of spending purely for the pleasure of God:

> When that spending is done in the way of Allah, seeking His pleasure, the increase is sure to occur without fail. If wealth is spent, but not for the pleasure of Allah, then it is done for selfish aims – the rich man spends on a poor man to avert his evils from himself. Or he thinks that if the poor man becomes self-supporting, the whole society will become a better place to live in, and in this way the benefactor will live in it more happily. This type of spending is a sort of subjugation of the poor who is exploited by the rich for selfish purposes. Such a charity creates bad effects in the poor. Sometimes these hard feelings accumulate and then burst out in riots and revolutions. But the spending which is done only for the pleasure of Allah is free from these defects; it creates only good, and only bliss and blessings result from it.[44]

3.6.5 For those who believe, do righteous deeds and give charity

Ibn Kathīr does not give detailed interpretation of the verse 2:277 below but adds briefly that believers who are thankful and appreciative and obey God's commands through submission will be safe from repercussions when the Day of Resurrection arrives.[45]

> *Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds and establish prayer and give zakah will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.*[46]

According to Ṭabātabāī the law against usury was forbidden in Judaism and this law was not abrogated and that there are verses in the Quran which forbade usury even before these seven verses (verses 275-281) were revealed. He states that these verses of interest (usury) are linked to previous verses about 'spending in the way of Allah', and he points to

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[44] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* http://www.almizan.org/
[45] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- ʿazīm,*
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=122#1
[46] Quran, 2:277.

the contrast between interest and charity: "interest is taking without giving anything in exchange; charity is giving without taking anything in exchange". He adds that interest has been harshly condemned by God in these verses stressing that interest along with another vice, namely 'befriending the enemies of religion' are worse than sins such as gambling, fornication or even murder, since these crimes are in the main confined to the individual whereas usury affects the social order in society, dividing humankind into two different unequal groups:

> The wealthy who enjoy all the blessings of life, and the poor who find it difficult to meet their barest necessities.[47]

Ṭabātabāī explains that while trade has been allowed (2:275) interest has been forbidden, as it is a deviation from the straight path, not in conformity with belief in God, and also an injustice. Therefore those believers who refrain from taking interest and give in charity will be on the straight path and will therefore *'shall have no fear nor shall they grieve'*.[48]

3.6.6 Those who are killed 'in the cause' of God

Verse 3:170 quoted below is linked to the subject of previous verse 3:169, namely *'those who have been killed in the cause of Allah'*, stating clearly that they are not dead, but very much alive and enjoying the provisions of God.

> *Rejoicing in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His bounty, and they receive good tidings about those [to be martyred] after them who have not yet joined them – that there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.*[49]

Ibn Kathīr once again links fear *(khawf)* in this verse to the future, and sorrow *(ḥuzn)* to the past, that is, what has been left behind in this world. Therefore indicating that by living for the present, the martyrs do not have

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[47] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* http://www.almizan.org/
[48] Ibid.
[49] Quran, 3:170.

any fears regarding the future or any grief because of what they have left behind.[50]

Ṭabātabāī clarifies (verse 3:170) that those killed in the way of God are not cut off from this world but continue to receive news about believers still in this world. The good news being that these believers *'shall have no fear or grief'*. He explains that rejoicing *al-faraḥ* is opposite of sorrow *(ḥuzn)* and that it is a comprehensive rejoicing, covering not just their own joy but the joy for other believers as well. He states that the intention of the verse is to describe the reward of the believers which consists of their sustenance which is a favour and grace from their Lord. He gives further explanation of the meaning of fear and sadness of this verse:

> The thing that comes before the eyes is that the fear and sorrow are removed from the martyrs. Fear takes shape when there is possibility of something occurring which would nullify an existing happiness of man; sorrow appears when that thing has already happened. Misfortune – or any undesirable phenomenon – is feared as long as it has not befallen; but once it has begun, the fear gives way to sorrow. There is no fear after a misfortune has taken shape, and no sorrow before that.
>
> Fear, with all its aspects, may be removed from man only when there is no chance of deterioration or extinction for any bounty that he enjoys and possesses. Sorrow, with all its aspects, may be removed from him only when he is not deprived of any such bounty to begin with, nor has he lost it after finding it. When the Qur'an says that Allah has removed general fear and general sorrow from a man, it means that He has given him all possible bounties and favors for his enjoyment; and those bounties and favors will never deteriorate or be taken away from him. In other words, man will remain alive forever enjoying the everlasting happiness.[51]

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[50] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm*, http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=477&Itemid=46#2

[51] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mīzān,* http://www.almizan.org/

The above interpretation supports the notion that fear is linked to something which has not yet happened, namely concerns about something happening in the future, whereas sorrow occurs when that unhappy event has already taken place. Therefore there is no cause for fear or sorrow within the concept of 'everlasting happiness' as God's bounties will not be removed.

Mawdūdī's explanation of verse 3:170 is totally different to Ṭabātabāī's interpretation. While Ṭabātabāī explains the link between the concept of 'everlasting happiness' promised to a true believer and obviation of fear and sadness, Mawdūdī explains that those believers who are blessed by God for their good deeds in this world, will be in such a cheerful state that they will never wish to return to this world. However, he states that the case of martyrs is different as they do wish to be sent back to this world to enjoy the pleasures they missed here.[52]

This interpretation begs the question as to why such pious people who had devoted their life for the way of God, and have been promised everlasting happiness should want to return to a world full of trials and tribulations.

3.6.7 Those who believe in God, the Last Day and carry out righteous deeds

Verse 5:69 below is very similar to verse 2:62:

> *Indeed, those who have believed [in Prophet Muhammad] and those [before Him] who were Jews or Sabeans or Christians – those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness – no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.[53]*

Ibn Kathīr as mentioned previously in verse 2:62 reiterates that belief in God and the hereafter and performance of good deeds is not adequate. Each of these groups must also conform to Muhammad's law in order not

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[52] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran,*
http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/3/index.html#sdfootnote122sym
[53] The words in brackets are added by Ṭabātabāī.

to have fear of what will happen in the future or be sad by what has been lost in this world.[54]

Ṭabātabāī also repeats the explanation he had given for verse 2:62, emphasizing that the only quality needed for obviation of fear and sadness is belief in God, the Last Day and carrying out good deeds:

> A group is called believers, another is named Jews, a third is labeled Sabaeans, and a fourth is branded Christians. But none of the titles will be of any benefit before Allah; the only quality needed is the belief in Allah, the Last Day and good deeds.[55]

3.6.8 Those who believe and reform

In verse 6:48 below the words *'does righteous good deeds'* is the translation for the word *aṣlaḥa*.[56] The verb *ṣalaḥa* (form I) does mean 'righteous' but the form IV verb which is used in this verse actually means 'to reform' or 'to correct oneself'.[57] However, Ibn Kathīr also interprets *aṣlaḥa* as 'righteous good deeds' and states that 'whoever believes and does righteous deeds', means those who believe sincerely (with their heart) in the message of the prophets and carry out works of righteousness by emulating them. These people will not have any fear or be anxious about the future, nor will they grieve about what they have lost in this world, as God will be the protector of all that they have left behind. Once again Ibn Kathīr stresses the importance of belief in all Messengers and emulation of their way of life for the obviation of fear of the future and sadness of what has been lost in the past.[58]

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[54] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=755&Itemid=60#1
[55] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* http://www.almizan.org/
[56] See Moshin Khan's on-line translation of the Quran. Other versions of the translation of the Quran such as Yusuf Ali and Sahih International and Arberry do translate this word as 'amend' or 'reforms'. http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=68&verse=48
[57] http://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=SlH
[58] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1009&Itemid=61#1

> *And We send not the Messengers but as givers of glad tidings and as warners. So whosoever believes and does righteous good deeds, upon such shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve.*[59]

Ṭabātabāī explains that the above verse is addressed to Muhammad, who is being told that the Prophets' duty is merely to bring glad tidings and act as warners. Prophets cannot make believers follow the truth, as it is up to them which tribe they choose to follow. They have the choice to follow believers who carry out good deeds or the deniers of the truth who transgress all bounds.[60]

3.6.9 Those who fear God and reform

Another condition for the obviation of fear and sadness is *taqwā*,[61] translated in verse 7:35 as *'whoever fears Allah'*.[62]

> *O children of Adam, if there come to you messengers from among you relating to you My verses, then whoever fears Allah and reforms – there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.*

Ibn Kathīr explains the word *taqwā* in terms of 'abandoning prohibitions and performing acts of obedience'. Hence he is again stressing the importance of total submission for the obviation of fear and sadness.[63]

3.6.10 Those who are 'the friends of Allah'

Verse 10:62 quoted below states that 'the friends of Allah' will also have no cause to experience fear or grief:

> *Behold! verily on the friends of Allah there is no fear, nor shall they grieve;* [64]

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[59] Quran, 6:48.
[60] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān.*
[61] For explanation of how the Quran itself defines the word *taqwā* please refer to 2.6.5.1.
[62] See also verse 39:61.
[63] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1252&Itemid=62 #1
[64] Quran, 10:62.

Ibn Kathīr relates the meaning of 'the friends of God' with the word *taqwā*.[65] These pious and God-fearing people will not have cause to fear any punishment in the hereafter nor will they be grieved about what they have left behind in this world. He refers to the sayings of the Prophet as recorded by Abu Jarīr that the friends of God are those:

> who loved one another for the sake of Allah without any other interest like money or kinship. Their faces will be light, upon platforms of light. They shall have no fear (on that Day) when fear shall come upon people. Nor shall they grieve when others grieve.[66]

Tustarī describes 'the friends of God' as:[67]

> those who strive in God's cause, who outstrip others in their [journeying] towards Him, and whose actions are constantly in conformity [*muwāfaqa*].[68]

According to Ṭabātabāī the emphasis of this verse is on belief in the Unity of God. He states that a 'friend' *(walī)* of God is one who has reached a high station of belief to the extent that he/she no longer sees any partners in God's works and sees everything emanating from Him. Thus with this state of belief the *walī* has no cause to fear death or be sad about the loss of his/her life.

He explains that fear and sadness are the outcome of ownership, but for the *walī* who does not associate any partners with God and believes that everything, including his own life belong to God, there is no reason to have fear or sadness. Ṭabātabāī states that this position or station of the *walī* is not just linked to the hereafter as some exegetes believe, but it is also linked to this world. That is, the 'friends of Allah', because of their

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2611&Itemid=65
[67] Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī,* 89.
[68] Meaning: those in conformity with God's Will.

submission and trust *(taqwā)* in God, do not have any fear or sadness in this world as well as the next.[69]

Ṭabātabāī also disagrees with the exegetes who state that to have fear and sadness is a normal condition for everyone including all believers, as fear and sadness is part of a believer's education and perfection, and the tests and difficulties given by God serve as a means to strengthen their patience and belief. Ṭabātabāī states however, that a differentiation should be made here between those who have reached a high spiritual station *(maqāmāt maʿnawī)* and ordinary people. The *walī* are *muwaḥīd*, that is, they attribute all causes to God and thus have reached the station of *taqwā*, hence for them there is no cause to fear or be sad about anything except those things God wants them to avoid or be sad about.[70]

It is not clear here as to whether Ṭabātabāī understands the concept of *walī* as a state that may not be permanent, that is, it is the ideal position to reach but can fluctuate, or that this is a permanent state for the *walī*, and this is why they never have cause for fear or sadness. The argument for the latter case is difficult to square with the verses in the Quran where even Prophets are told not to be sad.[71]

3.6.11 Those who recognise God as their Lord and remain on the straight path

Verse 41:30 below shows that the obviation of fear and sadness necessitates belief in God as the only Lord and the need to remain on that straight path:

> *Indeed, those who have said, "Our Lord is Allah" and then remained on a right course – the angels will descend upon them, [saying], "Do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised.*

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[69] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* 10, 130.
[70] Ibid.
[71] See for example verses: 3:176; 5:44; 6:33; 10:65; 15:88; 16:127 and 29:33.

Ibn Kathīr interprets this verse as doing good deeds with sincerity and purely for the sake of God. He refers to *ḥadīth* traced back to Abu Bakr[72] that those who say 'Our Lord is Allah, and then stand firm' means 'those who do not associate anything with Allah' and also 'shun sin'. These people will not have any fears with regard to the hereafter or sadness with regard to what they have left behind in the life of this world.[73]

Tustarī also interprets those who say *'Our Lord is Allah'* in the above verse as those who do not associate any partners with God. These people will be greeted by angels and reassured that they will have no cause to fear for their souls or any cause to grieve with regard to the Day of Judgement.[74]

Mawdūdī states that this verse addresses the believers with sincere belief in God, namely those who practise their belief in accordance to 'the doctrine of *Tawhīd* ('God's Unity'). He adds that the descending of angels is not limited to the time of death and resurrection but also applies to this world, where believers are reassured by angels during difficult times. Therefore the angels are a source of comfort and reminder to the believers that there is no cause for them to be afraid with regard to the future or grieve because of the hardships and falsities they have had to confront in this world as they will be justly rewarded in the next world.[75]

3.6.12 For 'God's devotees'

Verse 43:68 quoted below refers to the Day of Resurrection, and that God's 'devotees' or 'servants' *'ibād'* shall not have any cause to be fearful or grieve.

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[72] Abu Bakr a-Siddīq (Abdullah ibn Abi Quhafa) also known as Abu Bakr (d. 13/634) was a companion and the father-in-law of Muhammad. He became the first Muslim *Calīph* ('ruler') after the death of Muhammad. For further information on Abu Bakr and the Muslim Caliphate see Encyclopedia of the Quran,1, ed. by Jane Dammen McAuliffe.

[73] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
file:///G:/Quran%20Surah%20(Sura)%20Fussilat%20(Ha%20Mim%20Sajda)%20Tafsir%20Ibn%20Kathir.htm#إنّ

[74] Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī,* 89.

[75] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran,*
http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/9/index.html#sdfootnote94anc

My devotees! no fear shall be on you that Day, nor shall ye grieve

Ibn Kathīr explains that on the Day of Resurrection everyone will be filled with terror except those who believed in God's *āyāt* ('signs') and were Muslims.[76]

Tustarī refers to God's devotees *(ībād)* as 'friends of God', that is, those who fully comprehend God's Oneness *(tawḥīd)* and are totally submitted to Him.[77]

Ṭabāṭabāī explains that God's servants *(ībād)* are differentiated from others by the phrase 'those who believe in Our Signs' in verse 43:69. That is, the believers who confirm the Prophets and their miracles and have submitted to God with total sincerity and humility.[78]

3.6.13 Those who have confirmed their belief in God and remained on that path

In verse 46:13 quoted below, those who will not have cause to fear or grieve, are those who have confirmed their belief in God and have not swerved away from the straight path.

> *Indeed, those who have said, "Our Lord is Allah," and then remained on a right course – there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.*

For the interpretation of this verse, Ibn Kathīr refers to his explanation given for verse 41:30 where he stated that *'those who say Our Lord is Allah, and then they stand firm'* as those who do not associate partners with God and avoid sin. He states that the phrases in this verse: *'on them shall be no fear'* relates to fear concerning the future and *'nor shall they*

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[76] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-'aẓīm,*
file:///G:/Quran%20Surah%20(Sura)%20Zukhruf%20Tafsir%20Ibn%20Kathir.htm#هَلْ
[77] Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī,* 184.
[78] Ṭabāṭabāī, *al-Mizān,* 18, 183.

grieve' relates to sadness over what is left behind in this world.[79]

Ṭabātabaī states that in this verse *'those who have no fear or sadness'* refers to those who: believe in One God; confirm verbally the belief in their Prophet; and admit that their Creator is One and do not associate any partners with Him.[80]

In this section the selected exegetes' interpretation of the verses which relate directly to the kind of people who will not have sadness and fear has been discussed, the conclusion of which will be provided together with the conclusion of the thematic analysis, in section 3.8.

3.7 Thematic categorization of the concept of *ḥuzn*

In this section the selected exegetes' interpretation of the remaining verses which do not directly refer to obviation of sadness and fear have been grouped in accordance with the following themes:

Fear and sadness given as a test

Fear and sadness due to loss and separation

Comforting/consoling/reassurance of the Prophets and the faithful in time of *ḥuzn*

3.7.1 Fear and sadness given as a test:

Verse 3:153 quoted below follows on from verses about the battle of Uhud[81]:

> [Remember] when you [fled and] climbed [the mountain] without looking
> aside at anyone while the Messenger was calling you from behind. So
> Allah repaid you with distress upon distress so you would not grieve for

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[79] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm*, http://www.alim.org/library/quran/AlQuran-tafsir/TIK/46/10

[80] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* 18, 299.

[81] For more information about the battle of Uhud see: Colin Turner, *Islam the Basics,* 21; Shabbir Akhtar, *The Quran and the Secular Mind, A Philosophy of Islam* (New York: Routledge,2008), 20; Fred M. Donner, *The Cambridge Companion to the Quran*, ed. by Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 28.

that which had escaped you [of victory and spoils of war] or [for] that which had befallen you [of injury and death]. And Allah is [fully] acquainted with what you do.

Ibn Kathīr offers different versions of the nature of *'grief after grief'* given by God. One of the versions which he relates to Ibn Abbās is that the first grief was due to the rumour that Muhammad was dead and the defeat of the battle of Uhud and the second grief due to the idolators presence on the mount. Another version related to Abdur-Rahmān bīn Awf is that the first grief was due to losing the battle and the second grief due to the rumour that Muhammad was killed. Ibn Kathīr interprets *'so you would not grieve for that which had escaped you'* as a return or compensation from God for those who fled from the enemy which consequently led to the loss of the battle and war booty.[82]

Ṭabātabāī links the loss of battle to having transgressed the limits God had set for them. He explains that the Prophet's followers were disputing amongst themselves. While some of them stayed fighting alongside of the Prophet, others, dazzled by the booty, left their positions and ran up the mount to pick up the war booty that was left behind, which consequently led to the loss of the battle. Ṭabātabāī states that this was a test from God, where the distinction between hypocrites and believers and between believers who were steadfast and those who were not so firm in belief became apparent. He examines the grammatical structure of the sentence *'so Allah repaid you with distress upon distress so you would not grieve'* and offers different suggestions with regard to their meaning. One of the suggestions includes the possibility that the first sorrow is the remorse and guilt the companions felt for having fled from the scene and the second sorrow being the loss of victory. Ṭabātabāī explains that the second sorrow was in fact a grace and bounty from God because it served as a diversion from the first sorrow. Ṭabātabāī's interpretation tends to

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[82] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
http://www.quran4u.com/Tafsir%20Ibn%20Kathir/003%20Imran.htm#عِنَ

suggest that this second sorrow was ultimately a test and a form of guidance for those who had repented and were sorry for their actions. Thus the second sorrow serving as a distraction from the first sorrow which could have led to despair. He concludes that the words *'what had escaped you'* in the above verse refers to victory and war booty and *'what befell you'* to their slaughter and injuries.[83]

Mawdūdī offers only a general and brief interpretation for this verse. He relates the story that while some of the soldiers fled from their positions, the Prophet and his few companions stood firm in the face of the enemy. He does not offer alternative meanings for the words *'sorrow after sorrow'* but gives a general picture that grief was the outcome of all that which took place, namely: the fleeing of some of the fighters; the rumour that the Prophet had been killed; injuries and loss of life of the companions who had stayed to fight; and the ultimate loss of the battle itself.[84]

Verse 9:92 quoted below is about the volunteers of war who were turned away due to lack of mounts:

> *Nor [is there blame] upon those who, when they came to you that you might give them mounts, you said, "I can find nothing for you to ride upon." They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend [for the cause of Allah].*

Mawdūdī and Tabarī both stress the importance of sincerity with regard to the above verse. Tabarī opines that if they were unable to join the battle through no fault of their own, then they will be forgiven.[85] Mawdūdī adds that although these people who offered to join the battle were not accepted due to lack of mounts, they were, because of their determination

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[83] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* 4, 69.
[84] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran,*
http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/3/index.html#sdfootnote112sym
[85] Tabarī, *Jam ʻal-Bayān,* 3, 649.

and sincerity, still part of the troop as although they were not able to be there physically, their spirit would be with those who went to battle.[86]

Ṭabātabāī does not pass much comment on this verse but interprets *ḥuzn* in the context of this verse as "pain in the heart which arises due to not benefitting from an opportunity".[87] This then can be seen as a test or a form of guidance. For either they can remain sorrowful for not being able to accompany the Prophet or they can see their situation as a trial or test by accepting God's Decree and Destiny.

35:34 is linked to the previous verses 32 and 33 quoted below, where belief is classified into three different categories:

> *Then we caused to inherit the Book those We have chosen of Our servants; and among them is he who wrongs himself, and among them is he who is moderate, and among them is he who is foremost in good deeds by permission of Allah. That [inheritance] is what is the great bounty.*[88]

> *[For them are] gardens of perpetual residence which they will enter. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearls, and their garments therein will be silk.*[89]

> *And they will say, "Praise to Allah, who has removed from us [all] sorrow. Indeed, our Lord is Forgiving and Appreciative.*[90]

Mawdūdī opines that the first category, namely those 'who wrong themselves' is mentioned first because they account for most of the Muslims. These people are differentiated from the hypocrites and those who are 'unbelieving' at heart' since they do believe in The Book but are weak in practice and hence liable to carry out sinful actions. As for the

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[86] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran,*
http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/9/index.html#sdfootnote93sym
[87] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* 9, 490.
[88] Quran, 35:32.
[89] Quran, 35:33.
[90] Quran, 35:34.

second category, who follow the middle course, although they are less in number than the first category they are more numerous than the third category, and this is why they are mentioned second. These people are described as the ones who fulfil their obligations but not fully, having not completely submitted 'themselves' *(nafs)* to God, and hence are liable to succumb to the occasional sin. The third category, those 'foremost in good deeds', are the fewest in number and are the ones who fulfil their obligations. They would not commit a sin knowingly and would rigidly follow the Book and the way of the Prophet.

Mawdūdī explains that exegetes have different views as to who will enter 'the gardens of perpetual residence'. He states that according to Zamakhsharī and Imām Rāzī[91] only the people who are 'foremost in good deeds' that is, the third category will enter paradise. And the reason for not including the other two categories is to make them anxious about their present state of belief so that they have the opportunity for its amelioration. Mawdūdī however, states that the majority of commentators disagree with Zamakhsharī and Rāzī, believing that eventually all these three categories of believers will enter paradise as they are all believers of The Book.

He adds that for those who are in the 'gardens of perpetual residence', for them there will be no concept of sorrow *(ḥuzn)* since they will no longer be afflicted by it as they used to be in the 'worldly life'.[92]

Tustarī refers to tradition narrated by 'Umar b. Wāṣil that the one who has 'wronged himself' *(ẓālīm)* is the one who is ignorant *(jāhīl)* and is preoccupied only with this world. The one who is 'in the middle position' *(muqtaṣīd)* is the one who is learning *(muta'allīm)* and who is preoccupied both with the life of this world and the Hereafter. The one who is

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[91] For more information on Zamakhsharī and Fakh al-Dīn al-Rāzī see Ayoub, *The Quran and Its Interpreters.*

[92] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran,* http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/35/index.html#sdfootnote56sym

foremost *(sābiq)* is the one who is learned and is only preoccupied with the Hereafter.

Tustarī also quotes Ḥasan al-Baṣrī as saying that the good deeds of 'the foremost' outweigh their misdeeds; the good deeds and the misdeeds of those in the middle position balance each other; and the misdeeds of the wrong doers outweigh their good deeds.

Tustarī interprets sorrow in verse 35:34 *praise be to God, who has removed from us {all} sorrow….* as being cut off *(ḥuzn al-qaṭī'a)* from God.[93]

Ibn Kathīr explains the first category of believers 'those who wrong themselves' as believers who through negligence omit some obligatory duties and occasionally commit actions which are forbidden. And those who follow 'the middle course' are those who carry out their obligations fully and avoid things which are forbidden, but may occasionally carry out actions which are disliked or neglect some opportunities to carry out good deeds. And the last category described as those who are 'foremost in good deeds', are those who do carry out obligatory duties as well as those good deeds which are encouraged and avoid unlawful and dislikeable actions.

Ibn Kathīr refers to Ibn Abbas's comment on this verse that "'those who wrong themselves' will be forgiven; 'those who follow a middle course' will have an easy accounting; and 'those who are foremost in good deeds' will enter paradise without being brought into account."

Ibn Kathīr disagrees with exegetes who opine that 'those who wrong themselves' are not among the *Ummah* (those whom God has chosen/those who inherited the Book), and stresses that this category of believers, even though they manifest some imperfections in their actions, they are still included among the *Ummah*. He adds that the believers who

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[93] Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī,* 162.

have entered the Gardens of Paradise are relieved of all anxiety they used to experience in the worldly life, for now their test has come to an end and all obligations been taken away from them, leaving them to take eternal repose in Paradise.[94]

Ṭabātabāī also states that there are differences of opinion with regard to the three categories of belief. He opines that those who 'wrong their own soul' are those who have committed sin, and this can include any Muslim who follows the Quran, since as followers of the book they are also one of the chosen. And the word 'moderate' means the middle way. And by those who are 'foremost in good deeds', means those people who are closer to God than the first two categories.

Ṭabātabāī states that some exegetes describe the 'sorrow' in verse 35:34, as the praising of God by those in paradise for having been saved from the sorrows of the worldly life. While others describe it as a sorrow that encapsulates them after departure from the world and before entering paradise; the source of which is fear of sins. He concludes that this verse relates to the first category of believers or the first and second category, since the third category, that is, 'those foremost in good deeds' do not have any sins in their book of deeds to be concerned about.[95]

3.7.2 Fear and sadness due to loss and separation

Verses 12:84-86 quoted below concerns the news received by Jacob that his sons, Benjamin and Rubīn, were left behind in Egypt and the consequent loss of Jacob's eye sight.

> And he turned away from them and said, "Oh, my sorrow over Joseph," and his eyes became white from grief, for he was [of that] a suppressor.[96]

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[94] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
http://www.quran4u.com/Tafsir%20Ibn%20Kathir/035%20Fatir.htm#أوٌرْ
[95] Tabātabāī, *al-Mizān*, 17, 67.
[96] 12:84.

They said, "By Allah, you will not cease remembering Joseph until you become fatally ill or become of those who perish."[97]

He said, "I only complain of my suffering and my grief to Allah, and I know from Allah that which you do not know.[98]

Tabarī's explanation of above verses is very brief. He states that when Jacob heard that Benjamin had been left behind in Egypt, his sorrow had doubled and he lost his sight. But in his sleep he saw the angel of death who told him not to be sad as Joseph was alive and would be returned to him.[99]

Ibn Kathīr states that the news that Benjamīn and Rubīl did not return with the brothers renewed Jacob's sadness which he had silently kept to himself. And it was this suppression of his sadness and refusal to complain to anyone except God that caused his loss of sight.[100] He adds that Jacob's sons were concerned about their father's health and warned him that if Jacob continues like this he may die of grief.[101] Jacob's response to them was that he only complains of his grief to God alone and that he has knowledge from God which they do not have.[102] Ibn Kathīr opines that this last statement is related to Jacob's inspiration received from God that Joseph is alive and will accomplish his mission as a Prophet.[103]

Tustarī's explanation of Jacob's anxiety *(hamm)* and sorrow *(ḥuzn)*[104] is that it was not Joseph himself that he missed; what he could not bear was the separation from the perfect way in which he manifested God's attributes, thus it was not Joseph per se that he missed, but rather the

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[97] 12:85.
[98] 12:86.
[99] Tabarī, *Jam 'al-Bayān,* 3, 99.
[100] See verse 12:84.
[101] See verse 12:85.
[102] See verse 12:86.
[103] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
http://www.quran4u.com/Tafsir%20Ibn%20Kathir/012%20Yusuf.htm#حزن
[104] See verse 12:86.

mirror of his being which reflected God's names and attributes. And this is why he kept his anguish to himself and only complained of this separation to God. He goes on to explain that the word *harad* ('severe sickness in the heart') as described by Jacob's sons who were worried that he would end up killing himself because of this intense sadness, was not on account of the loss of Joseph himself, but the potential loss of his religion. Therefore, if he knew for certain that Joseph had not lost his faith then he would have been happy because he would be united with him in the hereafter. But it was this uncertainty that caused him so much grief.[105]

Tustarī brings little evidence to justify that Jacob's grief was due to fear of loss of Joseph's religion rather than loss of Joseph himself. Hence it can be questioned as to whether Tustarī is taking an apologetic stance in order to justify Jacob's intense grief. Mystics such as Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz, Abū Saʿīd al Qorsī and Ebn ʿAtā were not so reluctant or cautious as Tustarī to point to Jacob's shortcomings, and they went so far as to blame Jacob's loss of sight on his grieving for one other than God.[106]

Ṭabātabāī explains that when Jacob lost his sight because of his sadness for Joseph, he did not take his anger out of his sons or anyone else but kept his anger to himself. He states that the word used for anger is *'asaf'* which means sadness together with anger; described as 'the gushing of blood from the heart and extreme wish for revenge'. Therefore if this happened to anyone with weaker belief it would translate to anger, but for Jacob *'asaf'* resulted in melancholy and sadness. He interprets the word *kazm* as the 'coming out of ego' *(nafs)*, therefore keeping his *kazm* meant that Jacob kept silent and did not allow his ego *(nafs)* to manifest.[107]As regards the word *bath* [108] he states that it means a kind of sadness that cannot be denied or hidden and is thus diffused, and 'what is diffused is *bath'*. He also adds that Jacob knew that complaining to anyone except

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[105] Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī,* 97-98.
[106] See Annabel Keeler, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, XV. Fasc.1, 34-41.
[107] See verse 12:84.
[108] See verse 12:86.

God would be pointless as ultimately it was only God who would not tire of his pleas and address his grief *(ḥuzn)*.[109]

Verses 28:8; 28:10 and 28:13 quoted below are about the discovery of Moses in the river by Pharoah's wife and her wish to adopt him; the intensity of stress experienced by Moses's mother due to separation from him; and their reunion.

> *And the family of Pharaoh picked him up [out of the river] so that he would become to them an enemy and a [cause of] grief. Indeed, Pharaoh and Haman and their soldiers were deliberate sinners.*[110]

> *But there came to be a void in the heart of the mother of Moses: She was going almost to disclose his (case), had We not strengthened her heart (with faith), so that she might remain a (firm) believer.*[111]

> *So We restored him to his mother that she might be content and not grieve and that she would know that the promise of Allah is true. But most of the people do not know.*[112]

Ibn Kathīr gives mainly a literal explanation for verse 28:8 and adds that Pharoah himself had no wish to keep baby Moses but his wife managed to convince him by saying that he will be 'a comfort for the eye for me and for you…'. However, Ibn Kathīr explains that Moses only turned out to be a comfort and a source of guidance for Pharoah's wife, and not for Pharoah himself, as he turned his back on Moses which led to his ultimate destruction.

His explanation for verse 28:10 is that when Moses's mother cast her child in the river, her heart became empty, meaning that she could not focus on anything except the loss of Moses. And had it not been for God who filled

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[109] Ṭabāṭabāī, *al-Mizān,* 11, 317.
[110] 28:8.
[111] 28:10.
[112] 28:13.

that void in her heart with strength and patience she would have disclosed her secret to others which would have endangered Moses' life.

And as stated in verse 28:13, Moses was restored to his mother so that she would be reassured that God always keeps His promise. His promise was that he would one day be returned to her and he would be a Messenger of God. And Ibn Kathīr explains the phrase 'but most of them know not' as the lack of trust in God's wisdom. For on the surface, as the story of Moses exemplifies, things that happen may not appear good or of beneficial gain, but ultimately, if decreed by God then they are for the best.[113]

Tustarī opines that although Moses was adopted and raised to bring joy and happiness to the household, little did they know that in fact, as decreed by God, he would actually become an enemy and a source of grief for Pharaoh and his followers. He adds that God filled the void in Moses' mother's heart in order to strengthen her belief and trust in God that her son would be returned to her.[114]

Mawdūdī concurs with Tustarī and explains that Moses' mother was inspired by God to save her child and it was because of her total trust and submission to God's promise that her child would be safe she cast him in the river. And although nurtured in Pharoah's household Moses became the very means for his destruction.[115]

Ṭabātabāī explains that Moses' mother kept her pregnancy and the birth of her baby a secret. And when she was inspired by God to continue to feed her baby until she sensed danger, then that would be the time for her to put her baby in a basket and cast it in the river Nile. She should not fear that he will be killed and not be sad due to his separation from her as God

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[113] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-ʿaẓīm*, http://www.alim.org/library/quran/AlQuran-tafsir/TIK/28/7
[114] Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, 147.
[115] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran*, http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/28/index.html#sdfootnote11sym

will keep his promise that he will be returned to her and he will one day have the status of Prophet. He also points to the irony of Moses becoming a means of sadness and the enemy for the very people who found him in the sea and nurtured him in their household.

With regard to the void or emptiness in Moses's mother's heart (see verse 28:10), Ṭabātabāī explains that the void was due to fear and sadness of separation from Moses to the point that she was on the verge of sharing her anxiety with others, and this would have put Moses's life in danger. Thus this void was filled by the promise of God through inspiration, that her son would be safe and would one day be returned to her. Hence her heart was strengthened in order that she would be among those who have trust in God.

Ṭabātabāī explains that the word 'to know' in verse 28:13 means that when Moses' mother sees her son with her own eyes, she will be reassured that God's promise is true. And by the phrase that '*most people do not know/understand'* it is meant that most people tend to doubt God's promise because they are not totally convinced with their heart. In the case of Moses's mother, when she saw Moses with her own eyes, alive and healthy, she became convinced of God's unconditional promise.[116]

3.7.3 Comforting/consoling/reassurance of the Prophets and the faithful in time of *ḥuzn*

> *So let not their speech grieve you. Indeed, We know what they conceal and what they declare.*[117]

Ibn Kathīr expands on the verse 36:76 quoted above stating that God is commanding the Prophet not to be grieved by those who refuse to believe in God and his Prophet. And he is consoled by stating that God is well

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[116] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān*, 16, 13.
[117] Quran: 36:76

aware of what they conceal and they will be punished for their false claims.[118]

Ṭabātabāī interprets this verse as God commanding the Prophet not to be sad because of the polytheism surrounding him, as God is well aware of what they do and in no way will they be able to escape His punishment.[119]

Mawdūdī explains that this was a deliberate plot by the unbelievers to create suspicion against the Prophet, by branding him as a madman, a poet, magician or a sorcerer, in order to frustrate his mission. Therefore Muhammad is being reassured by God not to be sad by their plot as ultimately God is aware of what they are planning and will ensure that they fail in this world and receive punishment for their evil deeds in the hereafter.[120]

> Let not their speech grieve thee: for all power and honour belong to Allah: It is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things).

Verse 10:65 quoted above is very similar to the previous verse (36:76). Again Ibn Kathīr gives a very literal interpretation of this verse stating that Prophet Muhammad is being asked not to grieve because of the remarks of the idolaters, but to trust in God as ultimately all power and honour belong to Him.[121]

Ṭabātabāī explains that the above verse is a sympathetic chastisement of Muhammad to not to be affected by the cursing and mocking of his religion by the polytheists. He is at the same time being consoled by being reminded that their ugly words do not affect God in any way and urged not to take any notice of their false pride. And that there is no

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[118] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
file:///G:/Quran%20Surah%20(Sura)%20Yasin%20(Yaseen)%20Tafsir%20Ibn%20Kathir.
htm#اتَّخَذُوٓا۟ۦ
[119] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān*, 17,165.
[120] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran,*
http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/36/index.html#sdfootnote63sym
[121] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
http://www.quran4u.com/Tafsir%20Ibn%20Kathir/010%20Yunus.htm#وَلَا

reason why he should be sad as God is aware of all their actions and will punish them if he so wishes.[122]

> "O Messenger, let them not grieve you who hasten into disbelief of those who say,"We believe" with their mouths, but their hearts believe not...."[123]

Ibn Kathīr interprets the above verse (5:41) as Muhammad once again being commanded not to grieve over those people who rush into unbelief and the hypocrites who utter that they believe with words but not with their hearts.[124]

Ṭabātabāī states that this verse was sent to the Prophet in the form of consolation because of what he had to endure with the hypocrites who pretended to believe in God when in fact they strived in unbelief. He is being reminded not to grieve by these people as they are not true believers.[125]

Mawdūdī also expresses that the above verse consoles the Prophet not to grieve because of those who scheme against him in order to defeat his mission. Muhammad therefore is being reminded not to be disheartened and to continue patiently with his task.[126]

> We know indeed the grief which their words cause you (O Muhammad SAW): it is not you that they deny, but it is the Verses (the Quran) of Allah that the Zalimun ('polytheists and wrongdoers') deny.[127]

Ibn Kathīr states that verse 6:33 above clarifies that it is not Muhammad that people accuse of being a liar, but it is the verses of God that they deny because they do not want to accept the truth. In the verse (6.34)

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[122] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān*, 10, 137.
[123] Quran, 5:41.
[124] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm*, file:///G:/Quran%20Surah%20(Sura)%20Maida%20(Ma'ida)%20%20Ch%205%20Tafsir%20Ibn%20Kathirwnload.htm#ول
[125] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* 5, 554.
[126] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran*, http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/5/index.html#sdfootnote63sym
[127] Quran, 6:33.

following this verse it goes on to remind Muhammad that Prophets before him were also denied, but they bore it with patience until help came to them.[128]

Ṭabātabāī states that the above verse points to the fact that God does not force people to believe as belief or unbelief is a matter of individual choice. He explains that Muhammad is being told not to be upset because in fact people are not denying him, as he is only a Prophet and a Messenger and not the message. Therefore he is only a means of God's guidance. Consequently their denial is not targeted at him but at God's signs. And because their denial stems from their oppression and not their ignorance they will soon be answerable to their Lord.[129]

Mawdūdī explains that before Muhammad had begun to recite the revelation of God to the people, he was well respected as a truthful and honest person. And even after he began to deliver the message of God he was such a righteous person that everyone, including his bitterest enemies could not accuse him of lying with regard to the concerns of the world. Their rejection therefore concerned his prophethood and not him. He states that in the above verse God is comforting and reminding Muhammad that it is not he who is being rejected by people, but what is actually being denied is God's message.[130]

> But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): "Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee.[131]

Ibn Kathīr explains that in verse 19:24 quoted above there is a difference of opinion between exegetes as to who called Mary. Some exegetes state that it was baby Jesus others say that it was Angel Gabriel as Jesus did not speak until she brought him to her people. He also points to the

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[128] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm*, file:///G:/Ibn%20Kathir%20- %20Chapter%20Six.htm#عَن

[129] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān*, 7, 87.

[130] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran*, http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/6/index.html#sdfootnote21sym

[131] Quran, 19:24.

difference of opinion with regard to the Arabic word *sarīyyan* ('stream'), with some stating that it means river while others opine that the word refers to Jesus. According to Ibn Kathīr the first view is the most likely as in the next verse[132] Mary is asked to shake the Palm tree for dates, thus God providing her both with drink and food.[133]

Ṭabātabāī points to the active pronoun *nādahā* in the above verse stating that it refers to Jesus and not Angel Gabriel. Therefore it was Jesus who said to his mother 'grieve not'. He adds that the sentence *'grieve not'* was a consolation by God to Mary through Jesus to comfort his mother during a time that she was experiencing extreme sadness. He explains that Mary was a chaste and pure woman from an honourable family and the thought of dishonouring her family grieved her. And it was Jesus himself who instructed her mother not to speak as he himself spoke for her in her defence.[134]

Tabarī's comments quoted below are also agreement with Ṭabātabāī that it was Jesus who comforted Mary by saying *'don't be sad'* and it was he who also spoke out in defence of his mother:

> When Mary became pregnant and in pain with contractions, she did not know what to do, so she decided to leave the city and sat under a dry palm tree – the pain was so much that she cried out loud wishing she was dead. It was then that Jesus became separated from her and said to her: don't be sad, God has provided a stream beneath you, shake the tree to obtain dates. And when she shook the tree it turned green and dates dropped from it so that Mary would eat from it and gain strength. Mary said: O lord, I am the Mary whom you provided summer fruit for in winter. People blamed Zakaria for Mary's condition. Zakaria stated that no man has touched Mary. They said, well where is this child from? Zakaria stated that you should ask her. Therefore all the tribe went to

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[132] Quran, 19:25.
[133] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al- 'aẓīm,*
file:///G:/Quran,%20Tafsir%20Ibn%20Kathir%20Sura%20Maryam.htm#فَنَ
[134] Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* 14, 55.

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Mary and asked: Where did you get this child from? But Mary did not respond as she had promised God not to speak to anyone. She pointed to baby Jesus who said that he was a servant of God chosen as a Prophet. On hearing Jesus, the people around him split into three groups: one group believing that Jesus was the son of God, one group saying that Jesus was God and the other group saying that this was witchcraft carried out by Mary.[135]

Mawdūdī does not get into the discussion with regard to the source of the voice but focuses on the painful situation Mary found herself. He states that if she had been married and had given birth there would have been no need for her to observe the common Jewish custom of carrying out 'a fast of silence'. Therefore she was comforted by being told that she will not have the responsibility to give any explanation as God would take care of it.[136]

If ye help not (your leader), (it is no matter): for Allah did indeed help him, when the Unbelievers drove him out: he had no more than one companion; they two were in the cave, and he said to his companion, "Have no fear, for Allah is with us": then Allah sent down His peace upon him, and strengthened him with forces which ye saw not, and humbled to the depths the word of the Unbelievers. But the word of Allah is exalted to the heights: for Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.[137]

In verse 9:40 quoted above it is Muhammad himself who is reassuring his companion not to have fear. Ibn Kathīr sets the historical context as the year of migration from Mecca to Medina. He states that during this time the idolaters saw Muhammad as their enemy and were in his pursuit in order to kill him. Having become aware of this, Muhammad together with his companion Abu Bakr escaped and hid in the cave of Thaur. They stayed in the cave for three days in the hope that the pagans would give

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[135] Tabarī, *Jam 'al-Bayān,* 4, 980.
[136] Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Quran,*
http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/19/index.html#sdfootnote18sym
[137] Quran: 9:40.

up searching for them and return to Medina. While in the cave his companion Abu Bakr feared that that they would soon be caught as the enemy lingered just outside the cave. It is at this time that the Prophet reassures his companion by telling him not to be sad as they have God on their side. Ibn Kathīr interprets the rest of the verse stating that God then comforted them by sending them aid. The forces that could not be seen were angels sent by God to come to their assistance. He also points to the contrast between the word of the unbelievers being the lowermost and linked with polytheism, while the word of God as the exalted or highest linked to God's Unity.[138]

Tabarī does not make any comment on the actual verse, only stating that Tabuk was a place near Medina where many people were killed hence referred to as the place of death *(mutah)*.[139] This possibly adds to the reason why the Prophet's companion should be sad and fearful.

Ṭabātabāī explains the word *ḥuzn* in the above verse as stemming from fear. He states that Muhammad reassures his companion not to be sad because of fears of being alone and without anyone else there to help them and the huge army of the enemy who have followed them and are lurking close behind. Prophet Muhammad's assurance comes in the form of stressing the importance that they have God who is *subḥān* ('glorious/exalted') on their side. He adds that because God sent *sakīnah* ('peace and tranquillity') to Muhammad he was able to be protected from the enemy.[140]

Mawdūdī also explains the context of the verse. He states that this is the time when the unbelievers had decided to kill Muhammad and on hearing about this, Muhammad and his companion Abu Bakr left Makkah on a journey to Medina where most of the Muslims had already migrated. But

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138 Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurān al-'aẓīm,*
file:///G:/Quran,%20Surah%20Tawbah,%20Tafsir%20Ibn%20Kathir.htm#تَن
139 Tabarī, *Jam 'al-Bayān,* 3, 648.
140 Ṭabātabāī, *al-Mizān,* 9, 374.

noticing that the enemy were in pursuit, they decided to go southwards in order to hide in the cave called *Thaur* for a few days. However, the enemies were looking for them everywhere when eventually they were just outside the entrance of the cave where they were hiding. Mawdūdī explains that it is at this time, when seeing the huge army so close to them that Muhammad's companion Abu Bakr felt alarmed that they may enter the cave and find them and Muhammad reassured his companion not to be sad as the important thing was that they had God on their side.[141]

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief historical background on Quranic exegesis and background information on selected exegetes, followed by their interpretation of the verses from the Quran which were connected to obviation of *ḥuzn* (section 3.6) and also verses grouped together in accordance to themes (section 3.7). It will conclude by identifying and discussing the similarities and differences between the exegetes' understanding of *ḥuzn* linked to the verses under discussion.

The opinion of the exegetes covered here is very similar with regard to the meaning of the words sadness *(ḥuzn)* and fear *(khawf)*. They all concur that the concept of fear generally relates to the future and in particular to the hereafter. There is also conformity of opinion with regard to sadness, which is interpreted in terms of loss of possessions, including loved ones in the life of this world. Where they do differ in opinion is in their emphasis in particular verses.

Ibn Kathīr interprets the obviation of fear and sadness by following guidance through the means of the prophets, the messengers and the clear discourse[142] and therefore interprets 'those who follow God's

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[141] Mawdūdī, Tafhīm al-Quran,
http://www.englishtafsir.com/Quran/9/index.html#sdfootnote43sym
[142] See Quran, 2:38.

guidance' as those who follow what is contained in revelations which have been sent by all the Messengers.

Tabarī adds that the expulsion of Adam from heaven also applies to all humankind, in the sense that because Adam repented he was given the opportunity to receive guidance. And therefore humankind also has the potential to receive guidance if there is sincere repentance and acceptance of the 'clear exposition' as conveyed by His messenger, Muhammad.

Ṭabātabāī gives a deeper analysis of verse 2:38 and relates the breaking of the covenant made by Adam as the cause of his fall from heaven. However, all was not lost as guidance now depended on repentance. He opines that just like Adam all humans also have the potential to be guided and hence saved. He stresses that the key to this guidance is the acceptance of God's Mastership and one's own servitude. This means not only understanding but submitting to the fact that God owns and controls everything in creation. Therefore the pious believer who is submitted to God's commands will have no cause to fear about the future nor will he be sad about his losses in this world owing to the fact that he realised that he did not own them in the first place. He explains that in contrast, the unbelievers' belief that they were their own masters places them in a position whereby they are in constant fear of what may happen in the future and in which they are sad about loss of possessions, loved ones and opportunities.

The next criterion for the obviation of sadness and fear mentioned in verses 2:62, 5:69 and 6:48 consists of belief in God, The Last Day, and the performance of acts of righteousness. This verse was addressed to everyone, including the Christians, the Jews and the Sabians. However, Ibn Kathīr interprets this verse differently to the other exegetes by adding that God does not accept deeds from anyone, even if it is done with complete sincerity, unless those deeds conform to the law of Muhammad,

and therefore he explains that this verse is applicable only to the Jews, Christians and Sabians before the time of Muhammad. Mawdūdī, Tabarī and Ṭabātabāī do not make this differentiation and stress that the emphasis in this verse is sincere belief in God, resurrection and the carrying out of righteous deeds rather than names or connection to a particular group.[143]

The next criterion for obviation of sadness or fear relates to submitting one's 'face' and being a 'doer of good' and remaining on the straight path.[144] Ibn Kathīr, Mawdūdī, Tustarī and Ṭabātabāī opine that this means performance of deeds with total sincerity, that is, purely for the sake of God and in accordance with the doctrine of *tawḥīd* ('God's Unity') and the laws of jurisprudence.

Another condition for the obviation of *ḥuzn* is to spend one's wealth 'in the way of Allah'.[145] Ibn Kathīr and Ṭabātabāī's interpretation of this verse is that charity must be given with sincerity, meaning without any expectations of return of favour. Ṭabātabāī elaborates that total sincerity is when there is a disconnection of the causal relationship – in other words, meaning in this context, without any expectation of worldly benefit and purely for the sake of God. Consequently this will not only result in spiritual harmony for the one who gives but will also contribute to a more equal and civilized society at large.

Ibn Kathīr links obeying and submitting to God's commands to being thankful and appreciative. And he states that it is this state of obedience which will result in the obviation of fear with regard to punishment on the Day of Resurrection. Ṭabātabāī's emphasis is on the evils of usury which stands in opposition to belief, equality and justice. Therefore those who believe and submit to God, and who give alms, while refraining from taking interest when trading, are behaving in a just way and will therefore

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[143] See 3.6.2.
[144] See Quran 41:30, 46:13 and 2:112.
[145] See Quran, 2:262.

have no cause for fear or sadness as they are not responsible for upsetting the equilibrium in creation.

Ṭabātabāī explains that fear is the outcome of believing that the bounties enjoyed will eventually come to an end, while sorrow is experienced when misfortune has already occurred. However, in the case of those 'killed in the cause of Allah' who are enjoying everlasting happiness,[146] the bounties given to them by God will never diminish, and so there is no cause for fear or sadness.[147] Mawdūdī's interpretation of the martyrs' wish to be sent back to this world to enjoy the pleasures they missed goes against Ṭabātabāī's explanation of everlasting happiness.[148] It also gives the impression that the transient pleasures of this world are considered by the martyrs to be somehow superior to the everlasting happiness that they are experiencing.[149]

For Ibn Kathīr, the 'friends of God' are on par with those who fear God (have *taqwā*).[150] For these pious and God-fearing people there will be no cause to fear punishment in the hereafter; nor will they be sad by what they have left behind in this world.[151]

Tustarī also links the words *taqwā* with 'the friends of God', explaining that these are people who constantly strive in the cause of God.[152]

Ṭabātabāī elaborates on Tustarī's understanding of *taqwā* as 'striving purely for the sake of God' by reiterating that 'the friends of God' are those who do not attribute anything to causes and who see everything emanating directly from God. Thus when there are no causes to blame and no concept of ownership, the friends of God will have no cause to fear

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[146] Quran, 3:170.
[147] See 3.6.6.
[148] Ibid.
[149] See discussion in 3.6.6.
[150] See Quran, 7:35.
[151] See 3.6.10.
[152] Ibid.

anything or be sad about any loss.[153] Ṭabātabāī states that this station of belief – the state of total submission *(taqwā)* – can be reached in this world. He also adds that some exegetes opine that the state of fear and sadness is a normal condition, but that this is not the case for the 'friends of God', since they have reached such a high station of submission.[154]

It is not clear whether Ṭabātabāī interprets this state of belief as an ideal position liable to fluctuation or whether it is a permanent position for 'the friends of God'. The latter position would appear to contradict the verses discussed in this chapter in which even Prophets were advised not to be sad. This does not mean that sadness has to be seen in a negative light; rather, it also has also the positive side of consolation, reminder and guidance.

Ibn Kathīr links the verse which says that God's devotees will not experience fear or sadness[155] to the day of resurrection, when everyone will be filled with terror apart from those who believed in God's 'signs' and were fully submitted to God (*muslim*).

Tustarī links God's devotees to 'the friends of God' and gives a similar explanation, stating that the 'devotees' are those who fully understand God's Oneness and submit to Him in accordance with their belief.

Ṭabātabāī, however, states that the phrase 'those who believe in Our signs' differentiates God's devotees from others explaining that these are believers who have sincerely submitted to God, his Prophets and their miracles. It appears that Ṭabātabāī may not see the 'devotees of God' as being on par with 'God's friends', as he does not mention that the position of 'God's devotees' is also immune from fear or sadness.[156]

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[153] Ibid*.*
[154] Ibid.
[155] Quran, 43:68.
[156] See 3.6.12.

The exegetes' interpretation of the rest of verses on the concept of *ḥuzn*, were categorized in accordance with the same themes of test, loss and separation, and reassurance of the Prophets and the faithful.

Mawdūdī, Ṭabātabāī and Ibn Kathīr all agree that the grief given by God serves as a test, punishment or guidance. Therefore for those who fled from the Battle of Uhud, the loss of the battle can be seen as an opportunity to learn from mistakes.[157] In fact Ṭabātabāī interprets the 'grief after grief' (3:153) in a positive light, expressing how the second sorrow served to lighten the first one.[158] Another example of God's test which can also be seen as a form of guidance is the verse about the people who wished to volunteer to fight alongside Muhammad but were turned away as they did not have enough mounts (9:92). All the exegetes who commented on this verse agree that it is the sincere intention that is important. Consequently those who were unable to join the battle physically would still be rewarded for their good intention.[159]

As for the three categories of belief,[160] Mawdūdī, Ibn Kathīr, Ṭabātabāī and Tustarī concur that they cover all believers of the Book (Quran) but the categories are differentiated in accordance with their different degrees of understanding and submission. However, Ṭabātabāī adds that the removal of sorrow applies only to the first two categories of believers, namely 'those who wrong themselves' and 'those who follow a middle course', because the third category – 'those foremost in good deeds' – did not have any sins in their book of deeds to be anxious about.[161]

The question which arises here is whether in this world, which is full of trials and tribulations, it is possible, even for those who have reached the highest level of belief, not to experience any sadness? As was discussed

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[157] See 3.7.1.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] First category: "he who wrongs himself", second category: "he who is moderate" and the third category: "He who is foremost in good deeds by permission of Allah". See Quran, 35:32, 35:33 and 35:34.
[161] See 3.7.1.

previously,[162] the Quran points to the fact that even prophets experienced sadness at times in their lives and even those who fall into the third category of belief are still tested. However, this test is a source of hope, comfort and guidance from God. One must therefore question why Ṭabātabāī is inclined not to include the third category of believers with the first two categories, who will be relieved of their duties and difficulties once they depart from this world.

With regard to sadness owing to loss and separation, Tabarī only elaborates on the Quranic verses (12:84-86) and does not really explain why Jacob was so saddened by Joseph's loss.[163] Ibn Kathīr also does not explain why a Prophet should be so saddened by the loss of his son. He does however state that his loss of sight was due to his suppression of sadness and his refusal to share this sadness with anyone except God. Ibn Kathīr adds that when he informed his sons that he had knowledge from God that 'they do not possess',[164] he was implying that he had received inspiration from God that Joseph was alive and that he would achieve his mission as a Prophet.[165] But if this is the case, one may ask why his sadness did not cease; in fact it had reached such an extent that his sons were worried that he would die of grief.[166]

Tustarī does give a reason why Jacob was so sad with regard to his separation from Joseph.[167] His explanation is that firstly it was not Joseph himself that Jacob missed but, rather, the attributes of God manifested in him. Secondly, Jacob's great distress and anxiety were not on account of the loss of Joseph himself but rather the fear that Joseph might lose his faith.[168] This explanation does not really address the fact that Jacob knew that ultimately it was God's Divine Decree that this separation should take

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[162] See 2.7.
[163] See 3.7.2.
[164] See Quran, 12:86.
[165] See 3.7.2.
[166] See Quran, 12:88.
[167] See Quran, 12:84-86.
[168] See 3.7.2.

place and that this is why he admitted that he only complained to God and no one else, as he believed that ultimately God created these series of events. Therefore, since he knew for certain that it was God who ultimately caused this separation, which is why he attributed everything to Him, including his own sadness, it is highly unlikely that he would fail to attribute the protection of Joseph's faith to God.

Ṭabātabaī also stresses the non-attribution of effects to causes by Jacob.[169] He explains that Jacob did not allow his anger and sadness to spill out, but kept it to himself – and therefore did not allow his ego to manifest. Although Ṭabatabāī does not give any further explanation, he does imply here that Jacob was aware of his own weakness, but kept it to himself, as he knew that ultimately this loss was a test of patience for him from God. Therefore it would be pointless for him to complain to anyone else except his Lord.[170]

With regard to verses 28:8, 28:10 and 28:13, all the exegetes above concur that the consequence of the separation of Moses from his mother was a good one and a lesson that there are many wisdoms behind God's Decree.[171] Therefore what appears to be unfavourable is in fact good. In this case the good outcome was evident; Moses was prevented from being killed, and he achieved his mission as Prophet and stood up against Pharaoh's oppression. Another important point that Ṭabātabaī alludes to in his explanation is that the source of belief and guidance is God. This becomes clear through the example of Moses's mother – whose heart felt empty because of her separation from Moses; she was on the verge of disclosing her happiness when God filled her heart with the promise that he would be safe. This implies that at that point she still had doubts and it was not until she actually saw her son alive and healthy that she reached the level of complete trust in God. This implies that the loss and

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[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.

separation of Moses also had a good outcome for Moses's mother for it provided the opportunity for her heart to be strengthened.[172]

All the above exegetes concur that in verses 36:76, 5:41 and 10:65 God is commanding Muhammad not to be sad. They also agree that His order is also a form of consolation, reminder and reassurance that God is aware of the actions of the unbelievers and that they will have to account for their deeds.[173] They also agree that in 6:33 God is again consoling and reminding Muhammad that it is not he whom they are denying, as he is only the Messenger. Rather, what these people refuse to believe, because it does not serve their immediate worldly interests, is the actual message or the signs of God.[174] Ṭabātabāī links their denial to oppression, implying that unbelief is on par with oppression.[175]

While there is agreement by all the exegetes that the call to Mary *'grieve not'* (verse 19:24) is a source of comfort, consolation and reassurance for her, not all exegetes agree on the source of this voice. Tabarī and Ṭabātabāī contend that the source was Jesus himself, comforting his mother, since he also later asks her to observe a vow of silence, telling her that he would take the responsibility off her by being answerable to the people and vouching for her purity.[176]

In 9:40 it is Muhammad who is comforting and reassuring his companion not to be sad. Ṭabātabāī links the word *ḥuzn* to fear and – in this case Abu Bakr's fear of being caught by the enemy. He concurs with Ibn Kathīr and Mawdūdī that the emphasis here is that they have God on their side; it is God's war, Ibn Kathīr states, that is the highest, in contrast to that of the unbelievers, which is the lowest. Although they are not explicit, the exegetes, and in particular Ibn Kathīr and Ṭabātabāī imply that what Muhammad is actually saying is that the huge numbers of the enemy will

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[172] Ibid.
[173] See 3.7.3.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.

not be a threat if God does not wish it to be. And since God is on their side, by having total trust in Him there will be no cause for them to be sad.[177]

With regard to the interpretation of the word *ḥuzn*, Ṭabātabāī as discussed previously has explained that sorrow is experienced when misfortune has already occurred.[178] In 9:40 the misfortune was the difficult situation Muhammad and his companion found themselves. However, what his companion Abu Bakr dreaded – namely, the fear of being caught and killed had not yet occurred. Bearing in mind Ṭabātabāī's understanding of the concept of *ḥuzn*, when Muhammad said to his companion 'not to grieve' as they have God on their side, this reassurance may also imply that Muhammad is reminding his companion about the pointlessness of being sad about a dreaded event which has not yet occurred.[179]

In short, the exegetes concur that the concept of *ḥuzn* is related to loss of possessions, including loss of loved ones, and that *khawf* which occurs frequently with *ḥuzn* generally relates to the future, in particular to the hereafter.[180]

All the exegetes also concur that *ḥuzn* can be avoided only through seeking guidance, and everyone has the potential to receive guidance if they are sincere in belief. Ṭabātabāī explains this state of sincerity in terms of acceptance of God's Mastership and one's own servitude. The exegetes also concur that sadness given by God can ultimately be a positive experience, if one has patience and trust, as was in the case of separation of Moses from his mother.[181]

However, none of the exegetes appears to give a clear explanation why most of the Prophets in general, and Jacob in particular, were so severely

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[177] Ibid.
[178] See 3.6.6.
[179] See 3.7.3.
[180] See Chapter Three.
[181] Ibid.

affected by their loss;[182] in the case of Jacob, for example, he was affected by loss of Joseph to such an extent that he lost his sight and his children were greatly concerned about his general physical health.[183]

The next chapter will analyse work by Muslim thinkers who have written specifically on the topic of *ḥuzn*.

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[182] I will return to this question in Chapter Six on Nursi, in particular in section 6.12.1.
[183] Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

ḤUZN IN THE MUSLIM SCHOLARLY TRADITION
(MUSLIM THINKERS)

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the similarities and differences of the
interpretation of *ḥuzn* according to exegetes from both classical and
contemporary periods were discussed. In this chapter, the works of
Muslim thinkers who have specifically written about *ḥuzn* are explored.
The aim is to compare Muslim thinkers' understanding of *ḥuzn* from both
classical and contemporary periods with the Quranic concept in order to
obtain a broader understanding of *ḥuzn*. This will later be compared with
Nursi's interpretation, which will be discussed in the final chapter.

As Al-Kīndī is considered to be the first Muslim philosopher, and also has
written the longest and more detailed treatise on *ḥuzn*, his work will be
discussed first. But before discussing Al-Kīndī's epistle on *ḥuzn*, major
Islamic, Greek and Stoic influences on his work will be investigated, in
order to be able to discuss his work in a broader context. However, it
should be noted that he sought to follow only those Greek and Stoic ideas
which were in conformity with the Quran. Also, because of his leanings
towards the Mu'tazīlītes, this school of thought will also be discussed
briefly below.

4.2 Main thoughts of early Muslim scholars in the area of human psychology

Early Muslim scholars made exceptional contributions to the developments
of psychological concepts in their writings. Although 'psychology' per se
did not exist at that time, concepts such as *nafs* ('self or soul'), similar to
the Greco-Roman concept of the *psyche,* were covered within the field of

philosophy, mainly under the topics of metaphysics and ethics.[1] Metaphysics is a necessary framework for the subject of ethics. The concepts of being and existence therefore are very important as they serve as a foundation in understanding the nature of the universe, the position of human beings in it and consequently how ethical problems should be addressed.[2]

Although foreign or Hellenistic philosophy was frowned upon initially, mainly by the conservative Muslim theologians of the day, there was less hostility towards new ideas in the eighth century. The gateway for free thinking can partly be attributed to the Abbassid caliph Al-Mamūn (813-933), who on account of his interest in Greek philosophy established 'a philosophical academy' (*Bayt al-ḥīkmah)* to nurture interest in the translation of Greek philosophical works and discussions among Muslim scholars. It was at this time that *kalām,* that is, reasoning to understand the nature of things by Muslim scholars, was flourishing. This led to the emergence of two main schools of theology: the Muta'zilites ('rationalists') and the Asharites ('traditionalists'). Mamun himself was a staunch supporter of the Muta'zilite school whose main ideas will be discussed in brief below.[3]

4.2.1 Mu'tazīlites

The Mu'tazīlites were followers of a school of theology which originated in the eighth century. The adherents of this school emphasized the legitimate role of reason in the pursuit of truth. The faculty of reason was given priority as it was considered to be the main tool for knowing God. However, they did emphasise that although intellect can lead to certain

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[1] David, B. Baker, 'History of Psychology' in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Psychology: Global Perspectives* (London: Oxford University Press, 2012), 443.
[2] For more information on metaphysics see Charles Genequand, 'Metaphysics', in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (Eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Part II (London and New York: Routledge 1996), 783-798.
[3] Amber Haque, 'Psychology from Islamic Perspective: Contributions of Early Muslim Scholars and Challenges to Contemporary Muslim Psychologists', *Journal of Religion and Health*, 43, 4 (2004), 359.

awareness, for example that there must be a God who is outside the realm of creation, revelation is needed to confirm such reasoning as well as to learn about other aspects of belief such as the laws which God has imposed on human beings.[4]

The Sunni theologians were in general agreement with the Mu'tazīlites that belief in the existence of God has to be established rationally. There was, however, a difference of opinion among some Sunni theologians with regard to the discourse of rationalism. This difference was to be found mainly in the sphere of ethics. The Mu'tazīlites believed that generally individuals can distinguish by reason alone what is morally good or evil. However, they did recognise the importance of revelation as a confirmation for this reasoning, and that there are some limitations to the faculty of reason. They recognised the fact that reason alone cannot distinguish all evil acts, for example, the things which have been made obligatory and which can be accessed only through the Quran.[5]

The Asharites, on the other hand, rejected the idea that reason can spontaneously recognise acts of justice or injustice, stating that revelation is the sole foundation for discerning what is good or evil and that, owing to limitations in the human faculty of reasoning, it must fall in line with the Quran.[6]

The Mu'tazīlites also defended the concept of free will, asserting that although in the Quran it is stated that 'God guides and leads astray those whom he wills,'[7] this does not mean that human acts are predestined by Him. They added that God gives the power to carry out an act in this world, but individuals have the choice whether to perform it or not. On

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[4] For more information on the Mu'tazīlites, see Mariam al-Attar, *Islamic Ethics: Divine Command Theory in Arabo-Islamic thought* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 44-62; Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 45-66.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Quran, 14:4.

the point of free will, they stood in complete opposition to the group known as the Jabrīyya.[8]

4.2.2 Jabrīyya

The Jabrīyya school of theology was first introduced by Ja'd bīn Dīrhem (d. 736) and Jahm bīn Sfwāna (d. 745). Contrary to the philosophy of Mu'tazīlite rationalism, they believed that individuals were completely predestined, and hence powerless and unaccountable as their actions were totally controlled by God. In order to defend their argument for predestination *(qadar)*, they drew on specific verses in the Quran and *ḥadīth* to demonstrate the fatalistic nature of human life.[9] Extreme Jabrīsm therefore suggested that everything is predetermined, hence absolving individuals of any responsibility.[10]

4.3 Greek Ethics

Before discussing Al-Kīndī's contribution to Muslim ethics, the Greek background and Stoic tradition will be briefly discussed. Al-Kīndī's epistle on sadness is heavily influenced by both those traditions. Similarly to Epictetus, he stresses the importance of practical philosophy, and how physics and epistemology are inevitably intertwined with the subject of ethics.[11]

For Aristotle, ethics concerned the human good and how to attain happiness. It was therefore seen as a practical science of how to become

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[8] For further discussion on the Mu'tazīlite concept of justice and free will, see Hammond Kassem & Elias Crim, *The Ideas of Justice in Islamic Philosophy* (1st September 1972), on-line version downloaded 25 August 2014: http://dio.sagepub.com/content/20/79/81.citation.

[9] See for example Quran 13:39.

[10] For further information on the Jabrīyya school of theology, see B. Lewis, C.H. Pellat and J. Schacht (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), II, 365.

[11] See Peter, S. Groff, 'Al-Kindi and Nietzsche on the stoic Art of Banishing Sorrow' in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 28 (2004), 139-173; and 'Epictetus' in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2013), accessed on line: 20 December 2013. URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/epictetus/>.

virtuous rather than merely understanding the concept of virtue.[12] Both Aristotle and Plato's emphasis on practical science of ethics are based on Socrates who in the fifth century initiated the philosophical discussion on the idea of human virtue.[13]

According to Socrates, humans may inflict harm on others physically, but they cannot impact upon the virtuous state of the soul. Humans therefore cannot be forced to be evil. Socrates stated that happiness can be obtained by cultivating four virtues in one's life, namely, wisdom, courage, justice and self-control; wisdom being the central component, for in order to be happy one must be virtuous and it is not possible to be virtuous if one is not wise.[14]

4.3.1 The Stoics

Stoicism, founded by Zeno of Citium (332–262), was one of the new philosophical movements of the Hellenistic period. Despite the popularity of Stoicism in this period very little information is available on early Stoics. The history of Stoicism is generally divided into three phases: The Early Stoa, from Zeno to Antipater; the Middle Stoa, which includes Panaetius and Posidonius; and the Late Stoa, which includes figures such as Seneca and Epictetus.

Zeno's beliefs were materialistic and deterministic rather than metaphysical, as he believed that nature was determined by cyclical natural laws. Zeno's God was the soul of the natural world, and individuals could be happy only if they were in harmony with it. And the key according to Zeno, for being in harmony with nature, was to remain virtuous. He therefore believed that possessions, health and wealth were

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[12] See Daniel H. Frank, 'Ethics' in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (Eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1996), Part II, 959-968.
[13] See Mariam al-Attar, *Islamic Ethics*, 2-3.
[14] Plato, *The Apology*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, URL: http://www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/plato/apology.pdf (Pennsylvania University 1998-2013). Accessed on 16 December 2013.

of no account, as these could easily perish, but what really mattered was virtue, from which no one could be dispossessed.[15]

For the Stoics, reason is considered to be the foundation for an ethical life, which meant that through logic and self-discipline, one would be able to free oneself of anguish and unnecessary suffering. Living according to reason *(logos)* was equated with living in accordance with the natural order of the universe.[16] Cosmopolitanism is also a distinctive feature of Stoicism, whereby all individuals are considered to be a manifestation of the universal spirit, and should therefore live harmoniously together and in accordance with their natural disposition. According to Epictetus:

> Each human being is primarily a citizen of his own commonwealth; but he is also a member of the great city of gods and men, whereof the city political is only a copy.[17]

4.3.2 Epictetus

Epictetus (AD 55-135) was a Greek philosopher and an exponent of Stoic ethics. He was born as a slave at the court of Nero. After the banishment of all philosophers by the Emperor Domitian (around AD 93), Epictetus fled to Greece and continued his studies there. It was there, in Nicopolis, that he established his own school and taught until his death around AD 135.[18] Epictetus's main work, *The Discourses*, was transcribed and compiled by his student Arrian of Nicomedia. Arrian also compiled an abridged version of Epictetus's *Discourses*, called *The Enchiridion* or Handbook, to which he added quotations by other ancient authors.[19]

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[15] For more information on the Stoics, see A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 107-152; Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004), 241-256.
[16] A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 107-152.
[17] Christopher Gill (Ed.), *The Discourses of Epictetus* (London: J.M. Dent, 1995).
[18] Epictetus, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, URL: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epictetus/ Accessed: 20 December 2013.
[19] Ibid.

According to Epictetus, it is only through reason that one can avoid evil and become a truly rational human being and be at one with the rest of nature. This gift to rationalize enables one to exercise one's power of choice, which according to Epictetus, is a gift from the benevolent God Zeus.[20] Although Epictetus makes reference to gods, Zeus is the god whom he considers to be the creator, administrator and designer of the whole universe. Zeus is considered to be immanent rather than transcendent, thus his inherently being within nature enables him to be within the reach of all beings.[21] This is significant because the Quranic emphasis on transcendence contrasts with the Stoic emphasis on immanence. The main emphasis in the Quran is on God's Unity and Absolute Existence, in the sense that nothing resembles Him and has any share in His creative acts. God therefore does not have a corporeal entity and because He is immutable and atemporal, His essence cannot be known. However, God is also immanent, in the sense that although at the level of His essence He cannot be known, He can be known at the level of His Divinity through His attributes in creation.[22]

Epictetus's *Discourses* and *Enchiridion* both begin with a discussion of the distinction between the powers human beings can and cannot exercise. Although individuals have no power over externals such as relationships, possessions and so on, what places them above animals is the capacity to choose *(prohairesis)* without being externally impeded. Moreover, God's essence is considered to be pure goodness, and thus, if humans wish to live a life without restraint, then they should, according to Epictetus, wish only what God wills. Thus, if one seeks happiness within oneself rather than externally, through material objects, then one will not suffer any anxiety, fear or grief.[23]

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] For a discussion on God's absolute existence as opposed to contingent beings, see Colin Turner, *The Qur'an Revealed,* 9-54.
[23] 'Epictetus', *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

However, according to Epictetus, the cultivation of this mode of thinking, that is, to love without attachment and to fully comprehend and accept that all externals are transient and mortal and do not belong to us, but are given as a loan, is not easy and requires training. Although this training or self-development can be made easier with the help of an expert, it is also possible to train oneself, since all individuals possess the faculty of reasoning and are therefore able to change their way of thinking and engage in self-training. The obviation of impulsive behaviour and bad practices therefore could only come about through change of habit and repeated practice.[24]

Although moral aphorisms ascribed to Socrates and Aristotle were among the earliest texts translated into Arabic, there is less evidence of texts being translated into Arabic from Stoic doctrines. However, there is some evidence that Epictetus's *Handbook* was translated into Arabic. This arises from the belief that Al-Kīndī was not familiar with the Greek language, and yet in his epistle *On the Art of Dispelling Sorrows*, he quotes from Epictetus's *Handbook* and shares much of his ideas on how sadness can be obviated.[25]

Al-Kīndī (800-870), who is considered to be the first Muslim philosopher, because of his admiration for the Greek philosophers, played a key role in encouraging the translation movement. For Al-Kīndī, what was important was the truth itself, irrelevant of which source it came from, and so he felt compelled to open the doors of Greek philosophy to Muslim scientists. Before discussing his epistle on the subject of sadness *(ḥuzn)*, a brief biography of Al-Kīndī will be given.

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Peter Adamson, *Al-Kīndī* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 150.

4.4 Al-Kīndī's life and work (800-870)

Al-Kīndī (Latin Alkīndus), whose lineage can be traced back to the respected Arab tribe of Kinda, was born at the beginning of the ninth century in Basra.[26] He later moved to Baghdad and served as a scholar for the caliph al-Ma'mum (813-833). His philosophical career continued to peak during the reign of the next caliph, al-Mu'tasīm (833-846), who greatly admired Al-Kīndī's work and promoted him to the position of a court astronomer.[27]

Al-Kīndī gained the honorary title of *the philosopher of the Arabs* in the ninth and tenth century, on account of his contribution to scientific, philosophic and literary knowledge. With his extensive knowledge and appreciation of the Greek scientific tradition, he contributed greatly to the translation movement, which had started before his birth, by overseeing the work of the movement in the rendering of many Greek science and philosophical texts into Arabic.[28]

A list of al-Kīndī's work compiled by Ibn al-Nadim (d. 995) a century later shows that he wrote 239 treatises on subjects as diverse as metaphysics, ethics, the study of the soul, mathematics and astronomy, as well as treatises on a range of miscellaneous subjects such as swords and perfume.[29]

Despite the great number of Al-Kīndī's treatises, most are lost, with the remainder compiled into one manuscript. Reasons for the paucity of Al-Kīndī's works is attributed to the political and cultural climate of the time, such as the destruction of intellectual creativity by reactionary movements; the political weakness of the Abbasid caliphs; and later the general decline in creative productivity in the Arab world. However, in 1932, some of his

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[26] Al-Kindī was a direct descendant of al-Ash'ath b. Qays, the king of Kinda and a companion of the Prophet. See Adamson, *Al-Kindī*, 4.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid. 5.
[29] Ibid. 7.

epistles in the original Arabic language were discovered by H. Ritter in Hagia Sophia library in Istanbul, including his epistle on sorrow (ḥuzn).[30]

4.4.1 Al-Kīndī on metaphysics

Although Al-Kīndī makes extensive use of ideas from Neoplatonic writings in general and Aristotle in particular, it is clear from his own words – shown below – that his aim was to demonstrate the fit between some of the ideas of Greek philosophy with the Divine truths of the Quran. His various treatises on God's omnipotence and monotheism were, for him, a proof that religion and philosophy can be reconciled.

> 'We ought not to be ashamed to applaud and accept the truth,'[he Affirmed], 'from whatever source, even if it comes from far-off places or foreign nations who have different cultures from ours. For nothing is more important to the seeker of the truth than truth itself.'[31]

Al-Kīndī proposed the teleological argument for the proof of God's Unity and His administration of the universe, and believed in the creation of the universe out of nothing (creation ex nihilo). Although he was in agreement with much of Aristotle's philosophy, such as the attribution of effects to the proximate efficient causes, namely, the heavenly bodies, his main divergence with Aristotle was on the question of the eternity of the universe. Al-Kīndī likened the creation of the universe to motion, which, he stated cannot be eternal. He believed that just as everything in creation was finite, with the exception of God who is outside the realm of creation, time and space also has to be finite.[32]

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[30] S. Hamarneh, 'Al-Kindi, a Ninth-century physician, Philosopher and Scholar' in *Medical History Journal*, 9, 4, October 1965, 328-342.
[31] Ibid., 336.
[32] For further discussion on Al-Kindi's metaphysics see Adamson, 64-73, and Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 67-95.

On the subject of the soul and its nature, al-Kīndī diverged from the ideas of the Epicureans and the Stoics, who believed that all substances, inclusive of the soul, are essentially made of matter. Al-Kīndī believed that the essence of the soul is derived from the essence of God and although separate from the body it acts with the body by striving to detach it from material attachments. Through the process of detachment, a purified soul has the potentiality to reflect God's attributes at the highest level.

> When the soul attains the utmost degree of purity, it beholds in dreams a world of marvels, and it will be able to converse with those souls that have already separated from their bodies. It gains God's light and mercy, and it will partake of an eternal bliss superior to all other kinds of pleasures derived from food, drink, cohabitation, hearing, sight, smell and touch. These are sensual and defiled pleasures that end in pain, but its pleasures are divine, spiritual and heavenly that leads to the utmost nobility.[33]

Al-Kīndī did not believe in eternal hell, opining that all souls, not just the souls of Muslims, will eventually be purified.[34]

4.4.2 Al-Kīndī on ethics

Al-Kīndī emphasized that although reason alone was not sufficient for a complete understanding of the reason for one's existence, and therefore revelation is also necessary; he firmly believed that the two were compatible. It is on account of his emphasis on the importance of human reasoning that he was considered to have Mutazilite leanings.[35]

Contrary to the Stoics, Al-Kīndī did not identify God in nature, but emphasised His Unity and that He shared no partners in His Divinity, but at

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[33] George N. Atiyeh, *Al-Kindi: The Philosopher of the Arabs* (India: Nice Printing Press, 2006), 90.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy,* 69.

the same time he stated that God's actions (*'afāl*) should be imitated.[36] Thus this indicates that Al-Kīndī followed the Islamic principle that God can be seen both as transcendent, in the way that he resembles nothing in creation, but at the same time immanent, in the way that His Names and attributes are manifested in creation and therefore can be imitated.

Al-Kīndī defined philosophy in his treatise *On First Philosophy* as:

> "The sublimest and noblest of human arts is the art of philosophy, which is defined as the knowledge of things in their realities to the limit of human power. The Purpose of the philosopher in his knowledge is to arrive at the truth and in his action to act in accordance with the truth."[37]

Al-Kīndī's writings on ethics can be said to be largely influenced by Hellenistic thought, stressing the importance of action, but with the addition of the importance of making small but key changes in order to ensure the conformity of ethics with Islamic principles. For example, with regard to the elements of virtue, he followed Plato, by stating that they constitute wisdom, courage, continence, and justice, but he used key Quranic terminology such as the term 'balance' or 'equilibrium' *(i'tīdāl)*, derived from the Quranic word justice *('adl)*, meaning neither excess, or deficiency, to denote the idea of remaining within one's true nature.[38]

Al-Kīndī's epistle *On the Device for Dispelling Sorrows* is particularly influenced by the Stoic ideal, especially as found in Epictetus, who also emphasized the importance of combining knowledge with action.[39] However, Al-Kīndī stressed that these ideals should be carried out in accordance with Islamic principles by emphasising that religion shared the

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[36] Thérèse-Anne Druart, 'Al-Kīndīs's Ethics' in *The Review of Metaphysics, a Philosophical Quarterly*, 47, 2 (Dec., 1993), 329-357.
[37] See Atiyeh, *Al-Kindī*, 16.
[38] Ibid., 113.
[39] See Arthur Still and Windy Dryden, 'Ellis and Epictetus: Dialogue vs. Method in Psychotherapy' in *Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy*, 21, 1 (2003), 43-44.

same aim as philosophy.[40] One can conclude then, that Al-kīndī's emphasis on the importance of following knowledge with action may have not been solely influenced by the Stoics, but only followed what concurred with the Quran; in this case the Quranic principle that belief should be followed by submission.

Real happiness therefore, according to Al-Kīndī, could only be obtained through knowledge which is necessary for discriminating between good and evil and for living a virtuous life, and thus preserving the purity of the soul. He also believed that human beings have a natural propensity to do good, stating that:

> "What is just is appropriate to his nature, what is evil is only an accident."[41]

4.5 The Epistle of Ya'qub ibnIshaq al-Kīndī on the Device for Dispelling Sorrows *(Rīsāla Ya'qūb b. Īsḥāq al-Kindī fī al-hīla lī-daf' al-aḥzān)* [*ḥuzn*]

The above epistle is the only remaining complete ethical work of Al-Kīndī. It is written in the form of a letter in response to a friend's request on how to dispel sorrow. Its subject is about the concept of sorrow, its nature, its causes and how it can be obviated. This epistle is arguably an early contribution to psychotherapy as its focus is on understanding the nature of sadness *(ḥuzn)* and learning how to deal with it through self-training and change of behaviour.

In order to facilitate discussion and analysis, I will divide the epistle into four parts.[42] Part one, the introduction, starts off by stating that in order to

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[40] On the discussion between the primacy of religion or philosophy, see Atiyeh, *Al-Kindī,* 16-36.
[41] Ibid., 112.
[42] For a discussion on the division of the parts of this epistle, see Charles E. Butterworth, *Al-Kindi and the Beginnings of Islamic Political Philosophy* in'The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy, Essays in Honor of Muhsin S. Mahdi' (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 35-40.

find the remedy for any kind of pain one needs to know its causes. Then a definition of *ḥuzn* is given which includes the reasons for its occurrence. In part two, Al-Kīndī discusses important rules and principles essential for avoiding sorrow. He also states that there are two kinds of sadness which must be distinguished from each other as they require distinctive remedies. These are sadness that is linked to the individual's action and sadness which is experienced as a result of other people's action. It is in part three that the ten devices for dispelling sorrow are enumerated, followed by part four, which is the conclusion.[43]

INTRODUCTION

4.5.1. The definition of Sorrow (*ḥuzn*) according to Al-Kīndī

The Izutsian analysis of *ḥuzn* in Chapter Two and the thematic analyses in Chapter Three revealed that *ḥuzn* is an outcome of loss; loss pertaining to material goods as well as loved ones. It was also deduced from the analyses of the verses, that *ḥuzn* can have a positive side of guidance as a means to belief and submission, but if ignored can lead to despair.[44]

The chapter on the exegetes' analysis of the concept of *ḥuzn* also showed that all the exegetes studied generally concur that the concept is related to loss of worldly possessions and loved ones and that sadness can be obviated only through belief and submission.[45]

Al-Kīndī's definition of sorrow *ḥuzn* is also very similar, as he defines it as:

> A psychological pain *[alam nafsānī]* {literally meaning sickness of the soul} occurring due to the loss of an object of love or the missing of things desired.[46]

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[43] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 121-135.
[44] See 2.7.
[45] See 3.8.
[46] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 122.

However, he produces no evidence for this definition. Given his knowledge of the Quran, one wonders whether his failure to refer directly to the position of revelation on the subject was deliberate or not. And if this is the case, whether one reason for this deliberate act of omission, may have been that he wished to demonstrate in true Mu'tazīlite rationalist fashion that individuals are able to distinguish by reason alone, between what is morally good or evil.

In his response to his friend's request on how to dispel sorrow, Al-Kīndī relates it to 'vice', 'pain' and 'tyranny', a state which a noble friend such as his should not be in. Hence it appears that sorrow is seen in totally negative terms and therefore must be obliterated.

The identification of the causes of sorrow sets the scene for investigating how it can be dispelled. But before discussing the devices for dispelling sorrow, Al-Kīndī discusses some important principles which need to be taken into account.

PART TWO

4.5.2 Important principles for dispelling sorrow

After defining sadness Al-Kīndī recommends that the causes of sadness should be investigated by pointing to important rules and principles. The first principle concerns the fundamental distinction in Al-Kīndī's ethics between 'sensible' and 'intelligible' objects. He points to the inevitability of experiencing loss of loved ones due to the ephemerality of this world. Therefore intellectual reasoning indicates clearly that individuals should derive what they love from the world of the intellect [*al-'ālam al-'aqlī*], which is permanent and not affected by death:

> Because constancy and permanence are non-existent in the world of
> generation and corruption in which we live; rather constancy and

permanence exist by necessity only in the world of the intellect, the perception of which is possible for us.[47]

He then explains that unlike intellectual objects which do belong to us, sensory possessions are shared objects within the common domain and therefore do not necessarily belong to one individual. Seen in this light, it is illogical to expect to obtain something from things which do not possess what is demanded of them. That is, asking for permanency from sensory possessions, which are by nature subject to change and decay. In other words, the important rule here for avoiding sorrow is not to expect things to be how we want them to be, but to see things for what they really are in order not to be disappointed:

> Then we are seeking from nature what is not in nature. And he who seeks what is not in nature seeks what is not existent. And whoever seeks what is not existent will be denied his quest, and whoever is denied his quest will be unhappy *(shaqī)*. Thus who desires transitory things and that his acquisitions and loved objects be of them will be unhappy *(shaqī)*.[48]

Al-Kīndī therefore advises that in order to ensure against sadness *(shaqī)* we should live in the present, which means not having regrets over what has been lost in the past and only seeking the things which are accessible to us. By doing this, he advises, one would reach the station of 'noble kings' *(malūk)* instead of the 'the low populace' *(ṣīghār 'ām)* with 'meanness of spirit' *(īstīghnā)*:

> We must neither long for them prior to our touching and observing them, nor, after their departure from us, burden ourselves with regret or

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid. Al-Kīndī is using the general term for sadness here, i.e. *shaqī* rather than the word *ḥuzn*. The Quranic use of the word *shaqī* refers to 'turning away from God and His guidance' (see verses 11:105 and 20:2). Al-Attas also opines that this word refers to 'those who have lost their souls in this world by being overwhelmed by worldly pleasures leading them astray and making them fall into error'. See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought & Civilisation, 1995), 102-103.

preoccupation of mind. For such [is the disposition that] belongs to the morals of noble kings. They do not [longingly] anticipate an arrival nor [regretfully] bid farewell to whatever departs; rather, they enjoy everything that is a [present object] of observation to them with the firmest action, and with the clearest [indication] of not needing it. The opposite of this are the manners of the low populace and those of mean spirit and stinginess.[49] They would receive [with anticipation] every coming and bid farewell [with sorrow] to every departing.

We should not choose the permanence of sorrow *[ḥuzn]* rather than the permanence of happiness *[sūrūr]*.[50]

Al-Kīndī states that because of the transitory nature of this world, being sad *(ḥuzn)* about loss would be an on-going process, and thus there would be no end to sorrow. He also points out that two opposite feelings such as *ḥuzn* and happiness *(sūrūr)* cannot exist together in the soul *(nafs)* at the same time, and therefore advises that we should not be sad due to any kind of loss and to try and train ourselves *ādatūn jamīlla* (literal meaning 'beautiful habit') to be happy and accepting in situations and circumstances that we have no power to change.[51]

4.5.3 The training of the soul

Al-Kīndī's explanation clarifies that it is not objects or loss of objects and people that cause sadness, but rather our attitude towards those objects, which need to be changed, and this requires the training of the soul *(nafs).* He explains this point by giving examples of people drowned in their immoral habits, to the extent that they do not question their attachments, valuing only their own perspective. The examples include: the effeminate and cross dresser, which most people find distasteful, but

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[49] Note that the Arabic word Al-Kīndī uses for 'meanness of spirit' is *istīghnā*, the Quranic meaning of which is 'considering one-self as self-sufficient or free from need'. See Quran, 64:6; 80:5; 92:8; 96:7 and 2:267.
[50] Jayyusi-Lehn, 123.
[51] Ibid.

who in his own mind imagines that others are missing out on such adventures; the hedonist, who is attached to sensory pleasures and considers their dearth as a disaster; and the gambler, who despite the waste of so much of his time and money, imagines that any obstacle that would prevent him/her to continue this habit as a terrible situation to be in; even the outlaws *(shāṭīr)*[52] who carry out monstrous brutalities with their captives and regard their actions to be 'glorious and honourable' assume not being able to carry on in their brutal ways to be a sad state of affairs. Al-Kīndī concludes that these habits are not inherent in human nature, but acquired through habitual use.[53] It appears that Al-Kīndī is emphasising that in order to avoid sadness, people's thought perception needs to be changed, and this requires the soul (*nafs)* to be cleansed of old habits.

Butterworth's[54] recent criticism of Al-Kīndī is that he is too radical in his approach and also does not actually discuss the nature of these habits of the 'noble kings' whom he advises should be emulated. He therefore concludes that Al-Kīndī's arguments are more theoretical than practical.[55] However, there appears to be a contradiction in Butterworth's statement; as on the one hand he is criticising Al-Kīndī to be too radical for expecting people to completely change their thoughts and actions, while at the same time he states that no practical advice has been provided by him. It should also be noted that Al-Kīndī does offer a way of escaping sadness, namely through the ten devices which will be discussed shortly.

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[52] *Shāṭīr* means 'villain' or 'brigand'. The *shuṭṭār* (pl.) were outlaws from Baghdad and al-Karkh who kidnapped people, including women and boys, and created much havoc and fear among people. See: Jayyusi-Lehn, 123-125.

[53] Ibid., 124.

[54] Charles Butterworth (born 1938) is a Professor of Political Philosophy, with special interest in Arabic and Islamic Civilization. His publications include translations of treatises and books by Averroes (Ibn Rushd), Al-Farabi and Al-Razi.

[55] Butterworth, Al-Kindi and the Beginnings of Islamic Political Philosophy, in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Muhsin S. Mahdi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 42.

Also, it may be that Butterworth is expecting Al-Kīndī to offer a new physical routine for obviating sadness. However, as stated previously, Al-Kīndī's argument indicates that it is not the objects of attachment that cause sorrow, but people's attitude towards them.[56] Therefore it is not about getting rid of old habits in order to acquire a new set of ready-made habits, but to eliminate old destructive habits in order to be able, through change of attitude and reasoning, to enable the soul to revert back to its original pure state. Or as Groff explains, Al-Kīndī's use of the words 'rectifying one's character' allude to the cleansing of one's character in such a way that God's Divine attributes can be manifested.[57] Also, as discussed previously, the word *aslaḥa* in verse 6:48, means to 'reform' or 'correct one-self', [58] thus similar to Al-Kīndī's explanation, implying that wrong habits should be changed or corrected through seeing the transient world for what it is and instead seeking permanence, which is the only way to obviate sadness.[59] Moreover, the word Al-Kīndī uses for training the self, *tarbīya,* is the key to the training of the soul. *Tarbīya* is an important Quranic term. It originates from the word *rab* ('Lord'), verbal root *rabba*, which conveys the idea of 'fostering, bringing up, nourishing, regulating, cherishing, sustaining and bringing into maturity and evolution from the earliest state to that of the highest perfection'.[60]

According to Al-Kīndī, therefore, the training or regulation of the soul should be given a much higher priority than the physical body. He opines that the soul is far more superior to the body since the body has a temporal existence while the soul is eternal. And yet there is a tendency for people to pamper their bodies and endure much physical pain to ensure against illnesses. It appears that here Al-Kīndī is pointing to the importance of moving beyond the corporeal world and looking to the

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[56] Jayyusi-Lehn, 124.
[57] See Groff, *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 146.
[58] See 3.6.8.
[59] For further elaboration of the Quranic concept of self-reform, see William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: Suny Press, 1989), 21-22.
[60] 'Omar 'Abdul Mannān, *Dictionary of The Holy Qur'ān* (United States: Noor Foundation, 2005), 197.

higher realm, by focussing more on perfecting the soul rather than the body.

> Therefore straightening and healing the soul of its illnesses is much more required from us than remedying our bodies, since we are what we are through our souls, not through our bodies. The physical is common to everybody, but the animality of every living creature is in its soul. Our souls are personal to us and the interests of our personality are more important for us than the interests of the things strange to us. Our bodies are tools through which the deeds of our souls are made manifest. Thus remedying our souls is much more essential than remedying our tools.[61]

Al-Kīndī adds that in fact healing the soul is much easier than healing the body, for rather than having to constantly pamper and engage in physical efforts, all that is required is 'steadfastness' (*al-'azm)* which can only come about through firm determination.[62]

Butterworth also criticises Al-Kīndī's idea that sorrow should be avoided, asserting that sadness is part and parcel of the natural human experience.[63] However, Al-Kīndī's argument revolves around the idea that sadness is not part of the innate human nature, and that its cause is due to the attachment to transient things while in fact longing for permanence. Once again, this becomes clear through the expressions Al-Kīndī uses which have Quranic connotations – expressions such as *tarbīya* ('training'), as discussed before, and *takhalluq khulq*.[64] The Quranic understanding of the words *takhalluq khulq* conveys the meaning of rectifying one's character step by step to be in line with the character traits of God. In

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[61] Jayyusi-Lehn, 124-25.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Butterworth, *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, 42.
[64] The trilateral root for these two words is *kh-l-q* meaning to create; *khuluq* meaning moral character or inner qualities, *takhalluq* meaning rectification. Also from the same verbal root are the words *akhlāq* (ethics) and *khalq* (creation). See William Lane dictionary on-line: http://www.tyndalearchive.com/tabs/lane/

other words, to give up ownership of God's attributes, in order to allow the soul to manifest His names like a mirror.[65]

4.5.4 Classification of sorrow

Al-Kīndī points to the fact that sadness arises from two sources: either from our own action or from the action of others. He rationalises in true stoic fashion, asserting that if sadness is due to our own actions, then we ought to do something about it, because continuing to act in a fashion that makes us sad, contradicts the desire not to be sad.

However, if our *ḥuzn* is due to the actions of others, Al-Kīndī states, then we should stop those actions if it is possible for us to do so. But in cases where sorrow is due to the actions of others and it is not possible for us to change those actions, he offers the following strategy: firstly, we should not be sad before it has occurred, for it may be dispelled before it reaches us; secondly, if sorrow occurs during the occurrence of whatever is causing the sadness, then at that time rather than be sad, all effort must be made to try and dispel it; thirdly, if we cannot help being sad, we must make all efforts to employ any device we can to at least shorten its length. Thus it appears that Al-Kīndī regards sadness in totally negative terms, viewing it as a terrible and unnatural disposition which should be avoided at all cost:

> The most miserable of all the miserable is he who is unable to push distress away from himself in whatever way he can. And we should not accept being miserable when we are able to be happy.[66]

There is no discussion by Al-Kīndī on the source of sadness; his focus is on depicting it as totally negative, and something which has to be eliminated. On comparing Al-Kīndī's interpretation with the Quranic interpretation and

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[65] It is by accepting one's own servitude and God's Mastership that one is potentially able to realise that one does not own anything. For a discussion on 'ownership' see Nursi on Divine Unity (6.5).
[66] Jayyusi-Lehn, 126.

analysis carried out in Chapter Two, a clear differentiation can be identified. In the Quran it is God who is identified as ultimately being the source of grief and sorrow.[67] Al-Kīndī, however, appears to identify the source of sadness to be from the ego or the wrong thought perceptions of individuals. There is no discussion as to whether the creation of sadness is from God and therefore may have a positive side as a source of guidance.

Al-Kīndī then starts to offer ways in which sorrow can be dispelled.

PART THREE

4.5.5 Devices to dispel sorrow

One 'subtle device' (*wa mīn laṭīf al-ḥīlāh)* Al-Kīndī offers, is to recall the things endured by us and others in the past, in order to come to the realisation that those previous sorrows abated and therefore the present grief will also come to an end. Al-Kīndī therefore is offering consolation by pointing to the fact that grief is a universal human condition which can be overcome. He illustrates this point by relating the story of Alexander, the Macedonian king, who in order to console his mother, wrote a letter to her on his death-bed, asking her not to grieve over him when he passes away, but to build a new city instead, and invite everyone who had never experienced misfortune in their lives, to commemorate his memory in a joyful manner. Disappointed when no one attended the memorial, she asked the reason for this, and when she was reminded that the condition for attendance was to have never experienced misfortune, something which could not be fulfilled by anyone, she understood that her son was trying to console her that she was not alone in her grief, since loss pertains to the whole of humanity.[68]

Al-Kīndī's second device is to ponder or medidate on the point that 'sorrow

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[67] See Quran, 28:8 and 35:34. Also see Textual exegesis of the Quran, by Muhammad Baqīr Behbūdī, *The Quran, A New Interpretation,* trans. by Colin Turner (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997), 37.
[68] Ibid.

(*ḥuzn)* is by convention, not by nature',[69] meaning that it is self-inflicted. He gives the example of people who are sorrowful due to loss or deprivations of possessions such as money and family, and yet those who have never had any money or family are not sorrowful. He states that in the former case sorrow has been created by those people themselves. He adds that, since sorrow is bad, then it would be madness for a rational human being to allow him/her-self to be engulfed in such a state:

> He who creates for himself something bad is devoid of mind, and we
> should not be devoid of our minds because this would be the ultimate
> lowliness. Because there is no difference between him who has lost his
> mind and the irrational animals.[70]

Al-Kīndī does not make a direct reference to the Quran, and so it is difficult to square his idea of sadness being linked to the state of those 'devoid of mind' and those in 'ultimate lowliness' with the fact that the Quran is full of examples of the suffering of the Prophets and the faithful.[71]

There is also no mention that loss can be viewed as a test, a trial and possibly a means of guidance and that the feeling of sadness may offer the opportunity to understand that it is attachment to worldly possessions that is the cause of pain and the means to understand the necessity to train the soul to detach from the worldly life.[72]

Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Three, all the exegetes, apart from Ṭabatabai, are in agreement that sadness is a universal condition and is given for the purpose of education *(tarbīya)* of the soul, thus implying that its existence is necessary. Ṭabatabai's disagreement focusses on the distinction he makes between 'ordinary people' and the *walī* (literally 'friends of God' – those who have reached a high spiritual station). According to him, because the *walī* attribute all causes to God, they will be

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] See 3.7.3.
[72] For the Iztusian analysis of the word *ḥuzn*, see 2.6.5.

immune to sadness.[73] But, as has been discussed, even prophets, whose station is superior to the *walī,* experience sadness at some time in their lives, hence indicating that the creation of sadness may have have a positive role to play.[74] Although Al-Kīndī admits that sadness is a universal condition,[75] his presentation of sadness as totally negative does not concur with the analysis of the Quranic understanding that it may have a positive role to play, by serving as a form of guidance for believers.[76]

Al-Kīndī's third device offers the argument that one should accept that the transient nature of this world, which is one of 'generation and corruption', necessitates disasters, and that in fact without 'decay', beings could not exist. Therefore, wishing for something which is impossible to obtain is akin to wishing for something which is 'non-existent'. He concludes that:

> Thus if we desire what is not in nature, then we desire what is non-existent; and he who desires what is non-existent will be deprived of his desire, and he who is deprived of his desire will be miserable *shaqī.*[77]

The fourth device focuses on changing our thought perceptions with regard to the concept of ownership. Al-Kīndī states that we are not necessarily entitled to things around us, since possessions are common property and therefore we do not have a natural right to them. The only thing that is not shared by anyone else is our soul, and that is the only loss which we should feel sorrowful about. To feel sad because other people have the possessions we want is to be envious, which is 'the worst of evils'.[78]

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[73] See 3.6.10.
[74] For example, see Quran, 36:76, 10:65, 3:176, 5:44, 6:33, 16:127, 15:88, 12:13 and 12:84.
[75] Jayyusi-Lehn, 126.
[76] See 2.7.
[77] Jayyusi-Lehn, 127.
[78] Ibid.

The fifth device expands on the concept of ownership, detailing that all possessions in fact belong to God; what we have therefore is loaned to us to take care of in the best possible way. If we accept this fact then it will be much easier to submit to the will of God, who is the Lender of all possessions, and not to complain when He chooses to take back the loans He gives to us. To be sorrowful if the Lender takes back what He has asked us to look after is to be unjust and ungrateful:

> He who has been lent something may think it is his own, but this does not show gratitude; the least that [one] must do in gratitude for what he was lent is to return the borrowed thing [if the lender wishes to reclaim it] with a generous spirit and delight and [to respond quickly] to the desire of the lender in reclaiming it. Thus he who feels sorrowful in returning what he was lent is ungrateful. Accordingly we should be ashamed of ourselves for this attitude which departs from justice.[79]

It is arguable as to whether Al-Kīndī borrows this concept of possessions as a 'loan' solely from Epictetus.[80] He does admit however, that he did follow much of Greek thought, as he believed that it did not matter where truth was obtained as long as it did not clash with the criteria of the Quran. Even if Al-Kīndī did borrow this concept from Epictetus, he has made it more 'Quranic' than 'Stoic', possibly by reflecting on the Quranic verses which mention possessions as a loan from God.[81]

Butterworth criticises Al-Kīndī for having a 'passive attitude' not only for accepting whatever happens to us without questioning but also his insistence on the importance of being grateful when experiencing loss and considering it to be justice. He also points to Al-Kīndī's following statement:

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[79] Ibid.
[80] See: 'Epictetus' in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, downloaded 20/12/2013 http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epictetus, section 4.8.
[81] See, for example: Quran, 2:245, 5:11-12, 57:18 and 64:17.

> It is also possible to think of the things common to all people as temporary possessions lent to us by the Creator, loans He can call back when He wishes. From this perspective, it can be argued that we need feel no shame when the Creator recalls a loan at His prerogative, not even if the Creator's collection agent happens to be our arch-enemy.[82]

Butterworth states that there is a risk associated with this stance, as there is no certainty that the so-called lender he refers to is 'a bona fide agent'.[83] However, Al-Kīndī has clarified that only when one is not able to change one's circumstances, should one submit to God's will. He reiterates that when one is powerless to reclaim what has been taken, then it is pointless to allow oneself to fall into a state of grief and sorrow.[84] Al-Kīndī's covert link to Quranic revelation becomes evident by his use of the words 'ungrateful' and 'justice' which allude to the importance of accepting God's Divine Destiny and Decree. Therefore all causes or 'agents' are in fact under God's command. And thus, the one who is sad because the Lender[85] takes back what was loaned to him shows ungratefulness, and by wanting something which does not belong to him/her, behaves in an unjust manner. This, accords with the Izutsian analysis of the word thankfulness (*shukr*), which occupied a strong position in the semantic field of *ḥuzn* and showed that according to the Quranic interpretation, thankfulness is a necessary corollary of belief which in turn is needed for the obviation of *ḥuzn*.[86]

The sixth device is a reminder that although external possessions may be reclaimed by God, the most precious thing – namely one's soul – is not reclaimed. Al-Kīndī then reiterates that, owing to the fact that God has allowed the most precious thing to remain with individuals, there should

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[82] Butterworth, *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, 46.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Jayyusi-Lehn, 127.
[85] Capital L is used for Lender here, as my analysis of Al-Kīndī's analogy shows that by Lender, he is referring to God.
[86] See 2.6.7 and 2.6.8.

be no room for sorrow; in fact individuals ought to be joyful and delighted that God has allowed what is important to be retained.[87] Al-Kīndī's central argument is that although sadness is a universal trait, it is acquired through habit and is therefore not part of the innate nature of human beings. His focus therefore is to change thought processes and de-normalise what individuals have become accustomed to. He is therefore endeavouring to guide the mind to focus on the positive, through rational argument that worldly possessions are of much less value than the soul.

What Al-Kīndī fails to explain, however, is that human reasoning may not automatically lead to belief. The example of İblīs in the Quran shows that human reasoning is not enough, as submission with the heart (*qalb)* is also required. İblīs was a jinn of a very high status who resided in heaven among the angels. He was a believing servant of God, who fell from heaven and was cursed because he refused to bow down to Adam. He used his own reasoning to argue with God that he was of higher status than 'man' since he was made from smoke-less fire, while 'man' was made from clay.[88] It was this excessive reliance on his own judgment which led to his downfall.[89] The story of Moses's mother, where God strengthens her heart with belief so that she does not disclose her secret,[90] also demonstrates the fact that, just as happiness and sadness are given by God, out of His Mercy and Wisdom, belief is also given by God, and is therefore not an automatic corollary of human reasoning.[91]

Al-Kīndī's seventh device alludes to the absurd and contradictory situation of not wanting to be sad on the one hand, and yet on the other hand insisting on attaching oneself to worldly goods. He concludes that the only way to avoid the constant recurrence of sadness would be to acknowledge that sadness is the necessary outcome of attachment to external transient

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[87] Jayyusi-Lehn, 128.
[88] See Quran, 2:34, 15:32, 17:61, 18:50 and 38:74.
[89] For a discussion on İblīs's downfall, see Anna Maria Martelli, *Islamic Images and Ideas: Essays on Sacred Symbolism* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., 2014), 70.
[90] See Quran, 28:10.
[91] See 2.6.7.

possessions. He then recommends by way of relating the following anecdotes about Socrates, Nero and adaptation of Epictetus's famous sea-voyage analogy and concludes that possessions should generally be reduced, since the less one has the less scenarios of sorrow one has to deal with.[92]

> It is related about the Athenian Socrates that it was said to him: 'Why is it that you are not sorrowful? He responded: 'Because I do not possess anything for the loss of which I will be sorrowful.'[93]

The story of Nero is about a precious gift received by him and a philosopher's warning that owning such a valuable gift will only display his poverty, because if it gets lost or damaged it will be a disaster to him. In fact this situation did come about; the king lost his precious gift on a boat trip and he died before anything resembling this gift could be obtained.[94]

Al-Kīndī relates another story from Socrates:

> An artist was present [when Socrates] said among other things: 'We ought not to be sorrowful.' The artist then asked him what if the jar [he was sitting in] breaks? Socrates replied: 'if the jar breaks, the place will not.' What the philosopher said is true, because for everything lost there is a replacement.[95]

He then goes on to explain that everything that creatures need is provided for them perfectly and in the right proportion, yet it is only human beings, despite being made sovereign over all other creatures that exceed the limits, wishing to possess things which are not really essential for their survival. The outcome of wishing to acquire transient possessions will inevitably end in sorrow:

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[92] Jayyusi-Lehn, 130-133.
[93] Ibid., 129.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 130.

> For this reason we say: he who occupies himself in increasing [possessions] that are out of his hands, will not gain eternal life; his temporal life will be disturbed, his illnesses will increase, and his pains will not cease.[96]

He further illustrates this point by again warning against being dazzled by objects in the ephemeral world, through his adaptation of the ship analogy borrowed from Epictetus.[97] Al-Kīndī likens the ephemeral passage of this world to a journey across the sea aiming for the homeland. In great detail he describes the difference in behaviour of the passengers on board the ship. During the journey, the person in charge of the ship stops briefly so that passengers can obtain necessary resources. The passengers are divided into five different kinds of people: those who disembarked just to obtain their required needs and then immediately returned to their seats, had a comfortable and peaceful journey; those who were attracted by the beauty of the scenery but were not neglectful of their places in the boat, were also able to have a somewhat comfortable journey home; others who were dazzled by the surrounding beauty and began to gather the beautiful shells and flowers around them in order to take back to the boat, only found that these very possessions became the object of their discomfort and sorrow, as those possessions only cramped their space and soon began to lose their lustre; those who were so attracted by the surrounding beauty that they temporarily forgot about returning to the boat, their preoccupation with hoarding goods led them deeper into the forest, where they had to face continuous disasters. Some of them did eventually return to the boat but only to find that all the comfortable seats were taken, and the cramped conditions led to many of them dying of fatal diseases; and lastly the passengers who were totally carried away by the scenery around them, had gone so deep into the jungle that they did not hear the

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[96] Ibid.
[97] See Adamson, *Al-Kīndī,* 151.

captain's call and hence the boat had left without them. Cut off from their homeland, they perished under terrible conditions.[98]

Of the five groups Al-Kīndī mentions only the first two arrive home safely; the others perish due to their attachment and allurement of worldly possessions. Al-Kīndī then explains that the boat journey is analogous to the passage from this world to the 'world of truth'.[99] His grouping of the passengers into different ranks suggests that those who look for happiness in the ephemeral world will inevitably be faced with sorrow, while those who detach themselves from worldly possessions will lead a happier and more stable life.

Butterworth criticises Al-Kīndī for not basing his arguments for Divine activity and a homeland beyond this existence on divinely revealed texts.[100] Although Al-Kīndī does not overtly refer to the Quran, his emphasis, however, on detachment from sensory objects and seeking what is 'permanent' rather than what is transitory is akin to the Quranic emphasis on belief in One God and avoidance of associationism (*shirk*). As discussed in the typology, belief in One God is the first and most important criterion for the avoidance of sadness.[101] According to Turner, the Quran's emphasis is not about proving God's existence, but more about proving that the God which exists – is one.[102] Similarly this journey of disassociating partners with God is akin to the journey Al-Kīndī proposes, which is one of detachment, by seeing the transient nature of worldly possessions, and seeking the Permanent.

The criticism levelled against the boat analogy by Butterworth centres on the fact that Al-Kīndī does not clarify exactly where the ship is heading for

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[98] Jayyusi-Lehn, 130-132.
[99] Ibid., 132.
[100]Butterworth, *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, 39.
[101]See 2.2.1.
[102] Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 9-10.

or where this 'true home' is supposed to be.[103] However, as explained by Al-Kīndī, the sea voyage is merely an analogy of the journey from this life to the next, and the words he uses for the next world are the 'world of truth' (*'ālam al-ḥaq)* and the 'true abode' (*mahal al-haq).* It becomes somewhat evident therefore that the true homeland is not mentioned by name, because it is an allegory to the homeland belonging to another realm, namely the hereafter.[104] It appears that the aim of the analogy is to demonstrate that we should see the allurements of this world for what they really are and understand that sadness is justified only if we are threatened to be cut off not from the worldly possessions of this world but from our 'true homeland':

> We [also have to] close our noses to their putrid smells, to lower our eyes so that we do not see them because of their repugnance, and to distance ourselves from them in aversion to their proximity and being repelled by their sight. These are the things that sadden us and which indwell with us in this place. Thus if we are sorrowful, we should be sorrowful [indeed] because of being cut off from our true abode *[mahall al-haq]* and being on the high seas from where our boat will not take us to our true homeland where there are no disasters, as there are no perishables, nor regrets, because there are no things missed, for there is nothing but the truth.[105]

For the eighth device, Al-Kīndī states that even the greatest loss, death, should not be seen in a negative light as it is inherent in the human condition. He argues that what is bad is to fear death, as it is totally irrational, since the very definition of man is that 'he is a living, rational, mortal being'.[106] In this way he attempts to train the mind to hate what is bad, namely the fear of death rather than what is not bad, that is death

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[103] Butterworth, *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, 48-49.
[104] There are many verses in the Quran where the words 'truth' *(haq)* and the 'home of the hereafter' (*al-dār al-ākhira*) occur in juxtaposition with 'the worldly life' *(hayāt-ud-dunyā).* For example, see Quran, 31:33, 35:5, 6:32, 12:109, 16:30 and 28:77.
[105] Jayyusi-Lehn, 132-133.
[106] Ibid.

itself, which is part of the innate nature of human beings. In order to demonstrate that death is not an end but a continuation from one state to a better one, he gives the example of the journey of nourishment from the testicles to the womb, where it follows its natural course, and ends up in a better and more spacious place. This analogy is used to refute the idea of death as an end but the continuation of a journey to a better world.[107]

> Similarly, while in this place, which is this world, it would be immensely fearful about departing from it. If it were to arrive at the rational place, which annuls sensory pains and possessions, that are sequential of all sensory and psychological pains, [the rational place] wherein reside all the good things that cannot be touched by [other] hands or by defects, then whatever possesses [the rational place] will not lose anything at all of its possessions. If it were said to it that it might be returned to this world in which it had been, its worry would be many times greater than when it was said that it was going to be returned from this spacious, mundane [world] to the womb.[108]

Although Al-Kīndī does not make a direct reference to the hereafter (*ākhīra)*, it is evident that he is alluding to it. He makes a distinction between 'this world' (*dunyā)* and the next world which he calls 'the rational place' (*mahal aqlī*)and links this world with sensory possessions while opining that in the next world there are no defects as it is a place where nothing can be corrupted by anyone.

The ninth device is a reminder that when we are faced with disaster, rather than focussing on what has been lost, we should focus on what remains.[109] Again Al-Kīndī is advising his readers to change the way they think and to focus on the positive rather than the negative. Although he does not directly refer to the Quran, he appears to be alluding to the

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[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid., 133-134.
[109] Ibid.

importance of being in a state of 'gratitude' (*shukr*).[110] For just as in the Quran human beings are advised to be grateful for what they have,[111] Al-Kīndī also advises to be grateful for what has not been taken away rather than what has been taken back.

The tenth device is linked to possessions and the concept of ownership, and the fact that the less we have, the less we have to lose, hence the less likelihood of sadness.[112] It is difficult to discern whether Al-Kīndī regards possessions *per se* as the cause for sadness or one's attachment to those possessions. His previous example of Socrates in the jar and the ship analogy, gives the impression that he is following the Neoplatonic discourse where possessions *per se* are seen in a negative light.

In the Quran however, the emphasis is on the recognition that whatever individuals possess, is given to them as a loan from God,[113] and therefore that, it is not the possessions as such, but one's attachment and ownership of those possessions, that which will result in sadness. For example, as discussed previously, the story of Jacob[114] showed that Jacob's loss of his eye-sight was connected to his attachment to Joseph,[115] and that just as Ibrāhīm could have Īsmāīl as long as he was willing to sacrifice him for the sake of God,[116] so could Moses be restored to his mother because she had total trust in God.[117] This shows that from the Quranic perspective, it is not possessions as such, but one's attachment to possessions which is the cause of sadness.

Furthermore, according to the exegetes' interpretation of the Quran, fear and sadness are the outcome of *shirk.* Ṭabātabāī expands on the notion of *shirk* to explain its strong connection with ownership and attachment,

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[110] For a discussion on the word *shukr* see 2.6.7.
[111] Quran, 27:40.
[112] Jayyusi-Lehn, 134.
[113] Quran, 2:245, 57:11, 57:18 and 73:20.
[114] See 2.4.7.3.
[115] Quran, 12:84.
[116] Quran, 37:102-110.
[117] Quran, 28:13.

explaining that this is why God's devotees *(ībād)* who are totally submitted to God and the 'friends of God' *(walī)* who see everything emanating from God, have no cause to fear the future or be sad about any kind of loss including loved ones.[118]

PART FOUR

4.5.6 Al- Kīndī's Conclusion

In his conclusion Al-Kīndī summarizes two points: firstly not to be attached to sensory objects which are innately perishable; and secondly, rather than focus so much on pampering the body, one should pay attention to curing the soul from negative qualities such as anger and desire.

4.5.7 CONCLUSION

On closer scrutiny, one can understand that Al-Kīndī also follows the Quranic concept of ownership as linked to 'attachment' to worldly pleasures and sensory objects. As discussed previously, according to Al-Kīndī, possessions constitute 'sensory things' which are not 'inherent in human nature', and self-training *(tarbīya)* is required for detachment from those 'bad' habits. He makes this clear by adding in the concluding part of the epistle that: 'He who does not own what is out of his hands controls the things that enslave kings'.[119] He adds that negative qualities such as anger *(qaẓab)* and desire *(shahwa)* are illnesses of the soul *(nafs)* which need to be cured, otherwise if released they will take control and what is not inherent in human nature becomes normalised. This is why he reiterates in the conclusion that the illnesses of the soul are much more harmful than the illnesses of the body. It is here that for the obviation of *ḥuzn* Al-Kīndī alludes to the Quranic states of the soul, stating that the soul should be trained *(tarbīya)* in such a way that it is able to detach from the 'lowest level' *(shahwa)*, to the highest level of total detachment from

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[118] See 3.6.10.
[119] Jayyusi-Lehn, 134.

sensory possessions.[120]

4.6 Main thoughts of other Muslim scholars on the concept of ḥuzn

4.6.1 Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (850-934)

In this section background information about the Muslim thinker Al-Balkhī's life and work will be given before focussing specifically on his work on *'Methods of Dealing with Sadness 'ḥuzn' and depression 'jazā''*.

Al-Balkhī was born around fifty years after Al-Kīndī in Shamisitiyan, a small village in the Persian province of Balkh, now part of present day Afghanistan. He authored more than sixty books and manuscripts in a variety of disciplines such as medicine, politics, theology, geography, astronomy, philosophy, literature, astrology, mathematics and poetry, to name a few. Although recognised as a great physician and scholar in all fields, his fame was mainly attributed to his work in geography. Sadly the majority of Balkhī's work cannot be traced.[121]

According to Badri, Balkhī while seeking the true path experienced a spiritual crisis in his youth, at some point following the path of the Shi'ite Imāmiyyah or the Zaydiyyah, at other times following the Mu'tazīlah school of thought, and finally reverting back to the Sunni school.[122] Balkhī did not aspire to a high official position as he did not have worldly ambitions and thus turned down the invitation of the ruler of Khurāsān (in present day Iran) to work for him. He also turned down the ministerial position offered to him by the ruler of Balkh, al-Marwazī, accepting instead the humble

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[120] For the different states or levels of the soul *(nafs)*, see Quran 12:53, 75:2 and 89:27-28. For the Quranic meaning of *shahwa,* see Quran, 3:14 and 4:27.
[121] Malik Badri, *Abū Zayd al-Balkhī's Sustenance of the Soul, The Cognitive Behaviour Therapy of a Ninth Century Physician* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2013),1-7.
[122] Ibid., 4.

post of secretary *(kātīb)* which allowed him the time to also carry out his own research in his areas of interest.[123]

The only religious work surviving[124] is his manuscript *Maṣālīḥ al-Abdān wa al-Anfus* ('Sustenance for Bodies and Souls') which is located in the Hagia Sophia library in Istanbul. The first part of this book is devoted to the physical aspects of health for sustenance of the body and the second part to the sustenance of the soul. Balkhī himself points to the uniqueness of his book, in the sense that it combines the sustenance of the body and the soul.[125]

It is part two of *The Sustenance of the Soul* that I will be discussing here, in particular chapter seven which is on *ḥuzn*. The first chapter serves as an introduction for the whole of part two and focuses on the importance of sustaining the health of the *nafs*.[126] He points to the general obsession of physicians with physical illness but to their lack of regard for the psychological aspects of illness which can have a great impact on physical health.[127] He uses the word *ishtibāk,* meaning intertwining, to describe the psychosomatic approach,[128] a preventative methodology which aims to keep the body and mind in a balanced state. He states that while the ailments that afflict the body are symptoms such as headaches and fevers, psychological symptoms are manifest more through sorrow, fear, anger, panic and so on. He stresses, however, that the intensity of these feelings depends on individual coping strategies, hence the difference in reaction by people to these symptoms.[129]

The second chapter is called 'Sustenance of Psychological Health' and is

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[123] Ibid., 5.
[124] Oliver Leaman, Al-Balkhi, Abu Zayd, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2006), 48-49.
[125] Ibid., 30.
[126] *Nafs* can be described as the inward spiritual state of the 'self'. For more information on the *nafs* see William C. Chittick, The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī, *Studia Islamica*, Maisonneuve & Larose,49 (1979),135-157.
[127] Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul*, 29.
[128] Ibid., 13-14.
[129] Ibid., 28.

concerned mainly with mental health. He states that in order to preserve the calmness of the soul one should ensure continuous harmony by avoiding stirring up any of its faculties. He writes that just as the health of the body can be preserved to an extent through external and internal approaches, the health of the soul can also be protected through these two ways. He advises that the method to employ in order to protect the soul externally would be to avoid harmful outside elements which could induce symptoms such as anger, panic, sadness and so on, and internally the soul can be protected by controlling negative thinking.[130]

Similar to Al-Kīndī, who portrays this world as one of 'generation and corruption',[131] Balkhī also advises that when one is in a serene mood and more likely to think in a rational way, one should convince one's heart and mind that worries and anxieties are an inherent part of this life.[132] He advises next that one should generally train oneself not to overreact to minor incidents. He explains that in the same way that the body can be gradually habituated to tolerate slight increase or decrease in temperature, the soul, in accordance with one's capacity for endurance, can also be trained to be more tolerant of unexpected painful experiences.[133] However, he acknowledges that people differ in their capacity to endure difficulties and therefore advises that individuals should get to know their own capacity, so that those with a strong disposition may wish to confront their problems, while those with a weaker disposition should try to steer clear of the things they cannot endure, even it means depriving themselves of certain pleasures.[134]

The third chapter is called 'Ways of Regaining Psychological Health When One Loses it'. Again he reiterates in this chapter that in the same way that, no matter how much one attempts to keep one's body healthy, one

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[130] Ibid., 30-33.
[131] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 122.
[132] Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul*, 31.
[133] Ibid., 32.
[134] Ibid., 33.

still cannot escape bodily afflictions and illnesses – because this world is the abode of sadness, anxiety, worry and calamity – it is also impossible for the soul to be in perpetual tranquillity.[135] Here Balkhī is pointing to the nature of the soul, which is prone to these symptoms and is referring perhaps to the changing aspect of the *nafs,* which has the potential to change from the lowest animal state to the highest level of certainty.[136] He advises therefore, that because of the volatile nature of the soul, one should protect it as much as possible from external and internal emotionally disturbing influences.[137] He states that one way of fighting these psychological symptoms internally would be to 'neutralize' and 'desensitize' the symptoms by changing one's thought processes by thinking exactly opposite to those thoughts. This technique, referred to as 'opposite therapy'[138] was also later adopted by Ghazali in the eleventh century.[139] He compares the storage of positive thoughts in the mind with a medicine cabinet, ready to be used when negative symptoms present themselves.[140] The external approach he offers is to seek therapy through listening to the advice of a counsellor.[141]

In his fourth chapter, Balkhī enumerates the main psychological symptoms and their distinguishing attributes, which he discusses in detail in the rest of the chapters.[142] Chapter five is about anger and how it should be dispelled;[143] Chapter six is about 'tranquilizing fear,' where he stresses that the best way to repel fear is to habituate our senses to the things we are

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[135] Ibid., 34.
[136] For more information on '*nafs'* see Chittick, *The Perfect Man*, 135-157.
[137] Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul*, 34.
[138] The Principle of Opposites appeared originally in Plato's Phaedo (Phd. 70E). For a discussion on Plato's and Socrates' ontology of The Principle of Opposites, see Julie Staton, '*The Immortality of the Soul'* in Plato's Phaedo, Philosophy Honors Theses, Paper 2, Trinity University, accessed on line on 9 December 2015: http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=phil_honors
[139] See Abū Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazzāli, *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn*, trans. by Fazl-ul-Karim (Karachi: Darul-Ishaat, 1993), 3,199.
[140] Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul*, 36.
[141] Ibid., 35.
[142] Ibid., 36-39.
[143] Ibid., 39-44.

frightened of;[144] Chapter seven, called 'Methods of Dealing with Sadness and Depression' (*Tadbīr daf' al-ḥuzn wa al-jazā'*), will be discussed next.[145] The last chapter goes by the title of 'Mental Manoeuvers that Fend off the Recurring Whispers of the Heart and the Obsessive Inner Speech of the Soul'.[146]

4.6.2 Balkhī's methods of dealing with sadness and depression

Balkhī states that sadness is the opposite of happiness and is caused by the loss of something one loves or is attached to. And while fear is directed to the future, sadness is linked to the past, and if both fear and sadness are experienced together, it can lead to an extremely unhappy and miserable life. However, he states that if one is saved from sadness and fear, then it is possible for one to lead a happy life. He stresses, however, that the nature of this world is such that no one can totally rid themselves of experiences of fear and sadness, and unlike Al-Kīndī, he quotes directly from the Quran and explains that total happiness is reserved only in the hereafter for believers.[147]

Also, unlike Al-Kīndī who describes *ḥuzn* as "a bad thing",[148] Balkhī's views on *ḥuzn* seems to be less negative; he stresses that in this world it is quite natural to have feelings of sadness, but nevertheless agrees that they should be dispelled. He states that there are two types of *ḥuzn*: the first type has an identifiable cause, such as the loss of a loved one or possessions, while the second type tends to happen suddenly and without any obvious cause. He relates the second *ḥuzn* to physical conditions of the body and recommends both physical and psychological treatment.[149]

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[144] Ibid., 44-49.
[145] Ibid., 49-54.
[146] Ibid., 54-71.
[147] Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul*, 50.
[148] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 127.
[149] See Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul*, 50-51. According to Badri, here Balkhī is classifying depression as reactive mood disorder which has a known reason and endogenous depression which has no known reason and is a result of organic malfunction. While

Balkhī devotes the rest of the chapter to the first type of *ḥuzn,* which generally occurs due to a reaction to loss, such as the loss of a loved one or the inability to obtain something one desperately desires to possess. He states that this second type can be helped with mental practices and requires both an internal and external approach. He advises that for the external approach a medical practitioner is needed – counsellors or a wise preacher to empower the patient and raise their morale. The internal strategies, however, require mental mechanisms in order to train onself to think optimistically in order to overcome sorrowful feelings.[150] He then offers seven strategies for changing negative thought processes into positive ones.

The first thought mechanism Balkhī offers is to think logically and consider the physical harm that sadness can do to the body. He explains that the reason a person feels sad is ultimately linked to the self:

> The fact that a person feels sad and depressed for presumed loss is actually because he loves his body and soul and wants to please himself with what he failed to obtain or to stop the loss from happening. Destroying his health in agony over what has been lost, would be akin to someone selling out his capital to gain some little profit.[151]

Balkhī's second thought mechanism is similar to Al-Kīndī's, in which he invites the reader to internalize the reality of the world, which is one of generation and corruption, stressing that ultimately everyone in this world will have suffered some kind of loss. By understanding and believing that this world is not "the abode of perpetual joy and happiness" he believes that the mind will be more accepting of occasional loss and more appreciative of the pleasures in life.[152] Badri attributes Balkhī's approach to the Prophetic Tradition *(ḥadīth),* which stresses the importance of being in

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Balkhī recommends psychotherapy for the former, he states that the latter also requires physical treatment.
[150] Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul*, 51.
[151] Ibid., 52.
[152] Ibid.

a state of gratefulness by looking at other people who are worse off in this world, and in relation to the hereafter, to compare one's own worship with others who worship God in a superior way, thus allowing one to become more appreciative and to concentrate on doing more for the next world.[153] Considering that Al-Kīndī was a close mentor and teacher of Balkhī,[154] it appears that he is echoing Al-Kīndī, in fact, when he advises his readers to accept the ephemeral nature of this world of which loss is a necessary corollary.[155] However, it is possible that both Al-Kīndī's and Balkhī's psycho-spiritual religious cognitive approach is influenced by Islamic teachings.

His third thought mechanism is to accept that to show weakness when confronted with misfortune is worse than the misfortune itself. The reason he gives for this is that life is full of calamities, and if one were to respond each time with the same show of impatience, one would make life much more miserable and wretched for oneself. He therefore advises that one should discipline oneself to accept these losses in order that they become normalised in one's mind.[156]

For the fourth mechanism, Balkhī likens those who lose their patience to "spineless cowards", while those who bear misfortunes with patience and endurance he praises as courageous 'heroes'. He then states that one should ask oneself whether one wishes to behave like a hero or like a coward when faced with a sad event.[157]

For the fifth mechanism Balkhī stresses that one should realize that one's soul is the most precious thing that one possesses and it should therefore be the centre of attention and preservation.[158] Again, this fifth mechanism

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[153] Ibid., 52, footnote 23.
[154] Ibid., 4.
[155] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 126-127.
[156] Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul,* 52.
[157] Ibid., 53.
[158] Ibid.

seems to be almost identical with Al-Kīndī's comparison of the body with the soul:

> Our bodies are tools through which the deeds of our souls are made manifest. Thus remedying our souls is much more essential than remedying our tools.[159]

The sixth mechanism is also very similar to Al-Kīndī's ninth device for obviating *ḥuzn,* in which Al-Kīndī advises the reader to concentrate on what remains rather than on what has been lost.[160] Similarly, Balkhī advises that in order to reduce the effect of a calamity, one should ponder the fact that it might easily have been a much more grievous and unbearable experience, and thus rather than be in a state of despair, one should allow this knowledge to bring about gratitude to God in one's heart for having been saved from what might have been a much greater misfortune. He states that we should be especially grateful that the most precious thing, namely the soul, has been spared, thus allowing the opportunity and potential to make up for one's loss.[161]

Balkhī's last mechanism aims to turn the attention of the reader to his or her own sorrows in the past as well as to other people's grief, in order to observe how that grief has been reduced or has diminished. He states that by contemplating on this fact and accepting that the pain of loss will be gradually reduced and eventually forgotten, one will bring about a feeling of comfort and reassurance.[162] Al-Kīndī also discusses the same point but gives a much more detailed explanation. While Balkhī only points to the fact that the pain of loss will be reduced as time goes by, Al-Kīndī gives more detail and expounds on the idea that "sorrow is by convention, and not by nature" by giving examples. One such example is the observation that those who do not have a thing such as children – are

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[159] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 125.
[160] Ibid., 32-33.
[161] Ibid., 53-54.
[162] Ibid., 54.

generally content with their lot, which allows him to argue that it is not the thing itself which one possesses that gives happiness. Al-Kīndī is making an important distinction here for it seems that he is cutting off any causal relationship between the feeling of happiness and worldly objects, hence indicating that the feeling of happiness is given directly by God and leading to his conclusion that sorrow is something which the person creates for him/herself "in place of what he has been deprived of or has missed."[163] He then stresses that since sorrow is "a bad thing" we should acknowledge this and avoid creating such bad things.[164] However, while Al-Kīndī does not attribute the creation of happiness to created beings, it appears that he does attribute the creation of sorrow to them.

4.6.3 Conclusion

Balkhī points to his *Sustenance of the soul and body'* as being unique in the way that it combines remedies for the body and the soul all in one book. He stresses that his approach, which acknowledges the interaction between the body and the mind, has been lacking among physicians. Similar to Al-Kīndī, Balkhī is considered to be an early contributor to the field of cognitive behaviour therapy. However, what distinguishes Balkhī from Al-Kīndī, and what is arguably attributed to Emit Kraepelin ten centuries later, is Balkhī's distinction between two types of *ḥuzn:* one relates to the environment and with a known reason such as the loss of a loved one, is referred to today as reactive depression; the other is caused by bodily symptoms and has no apparent known reason, and is referred to today as endogenous depression.[165]

Although Balkhī stresses the importance of a healthy balance between mind and body, he states that humankind's experience of psychological symptoms is more prevalent than bodily symptoms, and that if such

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[163] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 127.
[164] Ibid.
[165] See Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul,* 21.

symptoms are not halted they may lead to bodily illnesses.[166] Balkhī states that in order to preserve the health of the soul, both external and internal approaches are needed: externally, this means avoiding elements which may arouse one's emotions; internally, this means avoiding negative thinking.

Balkhī offers seven thought mechanisms for the obviation of *ḥuzn*. His approach is based on changing negative thought patterns into positive ones through logical reasoning. Firstly he argues that the fact we are sad is to do with the love of the self, in which case it goes against logic to harm the self physically and emotionally by being depressed; secondly to contemplate and accept the nature of the world we live in, where sorrow is inherently part of it; thirdly, just as medication is kept in jars ready to use for a physical ailment, one should also keep positive thoughts in the store of the mind in order to be able to deal with emotional stress when it occurs; fourthly to reason with oneself whether we want to behave like a coward or a hero; fifthly to understand and accept that the soul is the most precious thing we have and therefore we should preserve it, with any loss being secondary; sixthly, to consider the fact that the loss experienced could have been much worse, therefore encouraging the state of sadness to change to a state of gratefulness; and lastly a reminder and consolation that with the passing of time all sorrows are destined to be gradually forgotten.

Unlike Al-Kindī, Balkhī makes direct references to the Quran to support some of his arguments,[167] stating also that due to the transient nature of this world, perfect happiness is not possible as it is reserved for the believers in the hereafter.[168] He also offers two definitions of *ḥuzn* – one with a cause and another without an apparent cause – or in today's terminology reactive and endogenous. Although he applies the same

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[166] Ibid., 19.
[167] See Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul,* 50, where he quotes Chapter 2:38 directly from the Quran.
[168] Ibid.

cognitive behavioural approach as Al-Kīndī, stressing that emotional disorder is simply a 'learning habit' which has to be unlearnt, and although he appears to be in the most part duplicating his methods he does however, express these ideas in his own unique way. Balkhī does not put the same emphasis as Al-Kīndī on the negative nature of sadness, although he agrees with him that it should be eliminated. Also Balkhī does not really discuss the concept of ownership in connection with sorrow, whereas Al-Kīndī focuses on possessions from two aspects: firstly he identifies attachment to worldly possessions as the reason for grief, and advises his readers to emulate Socrates by ridding the self of unnecessary possessions;[169] and secondly, although he does not discuss God or quote from the Quran directly as Balkhī does, he does however point to the fact that if one does not own certain worldly goods such as children or wealth, sadness is not felt, and that it is only when one loses those possessions that one becomes sorrowful. Through this example it appears that he is alluding to the fact that since happiness cannot be found in ephemeral beings, then, one must seek the Real Source of happiness.

4.7 Avicenna

Hakīm Abū 'Alī al-Husayn 'Abd Allah Ibn Sīnā (980-1037) known in the West as Avicenna wrote around 450 works on a variety of subjects of which only around half have survived. Most of Avicenna's remaining articles are on philosophy and medicine. He is regarded as the father of modern medicine mainly due to his famous medical books namely: *The Book of Healing (Kītāb al-Shīfā')* where his theories on the doctrines of natural sciences, psychology, astronomy, music, metaphysics and logic were developed; and *The Canon of Medicine (al-Qanun fī al-tībb)* which was a standard medical text in Europe and the Islamic world "because of its clarity, concision and order, became the most widely used

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[169] See 4.5.7.

comprehensive work on medicine in the Middle Ages."[170] The writings of Avicenna are heavily influenced by the Stoics, as well as Neoplatonic philosophers such as Aristotle.[171]

Avicenna's major difference from Al-Kīndī lies in his metaphysics. Although he believes that God is omnipotent, he does not follow Al-Kīndī's *ex nihilo* doctrine. According to Avicenna, the existence of contingent beings necessitates the existence of a necessary being who is the First cause, and that God gives form to pre-existent matter through the agency of the active intellect.[172]

His work in the field of psychology include, *Rescuing from the Fear of Death* (*Rīsāle fī def `ī ghamī `l-mut)* in which he uses his theory of the soul as a substance to argue that there is no reason to fear death. Also attributed to him is a short piece of writing on the treatment of sadness (*ḥuzn*), which also comes under the title of *Rescuing from trouble and anxiety* (*Defu `l-gham ve `l-ham*). This manuscript (photocopy of Arabic original and rough translation in Appendix A) appears to be very similar to Al-Kīndī's epistle on sadness, but much shorter in length.

4.7.1 Avicenna's definition of *ḥuzn*

Similar to Al-Kīndī, Avicenna also defines *ḥuzn* as a psychological *(nafsānī)* pain which occurs due to loss of objects or loved ones and also due to not being able to attain what one wishes to seek *(talab)*.[173]

4.7.2 Avicenna's description of the soul

Although Avicenna generally followed the Greek ideas on the soul, such as the divisions of its parts as vegetative, animal and human, his description of the soul was not limited to a physical entity in charge of organising the body, but described as an independent substance in its own right. This

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[170] Lenn E. Goodman, *Avicenna* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 32.
[171] For more information on Avicenna's life and works see Soheil M. Afnan, *Avicenna, His Life and Works* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958).
[172] Ibid., 109-112.
[173] See translation of Avicenna's manuscript on *ḥuzn* in the Appendix.

dualistic perspective of the soul is demonstrated in his thought experiment known as the 'flying man', where he attempts to show the non-sensory nature of human awareness:

> One of us must suppose that he was just created at a stroke, fully developed and perfectly formed but with his vision shrouded from perceiving all external objects – created floating in the air or in space, not buffeted by any perceptible current of the air that supports him, his limbs separated and kept out of contact with one another, so that they do not feel each other. Then let the subject consider whether he would affirm the existence of his self. There is no doubt that he would affirm his own existence, although not affirming the reality of any of his limbs or inner organs, his bowels, or heart or brain, or any external thing. Indeed he would affirm the existence of this self of his while not affirming that it had any length, breadth, or depth. And if it were possible for him in such a state to imagine a hand or any other organ, he would not imagine it to be a part of himself or a condition of his existence.[174]

The essence of his argument is similar to Descartes' *Cogito Ergo Sum* ('I think therefore I am'), as the central point of both arguments focus on making a distinction between the sensory world and the self or the soul. However, for Descartes, while there is doubt about everything else there is no doubt about the fact that he thinks.[175] For Avicenna the world does exist but has a dependent existence and is subject to decay whereas the soul *(nafs)* is immortal, and it is by virtue of the soul that different levels of perfection can be achieved.

Avicenna's dualistic explanation of the soul is again very similar to that of Al-Kīndī who stresses that although the soul which is non-material and derived from the essence of God, is separate from the body, it does none the less work with the body in order to detach it from material

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[174] Lenn E. Goodman, 155.
[175] See: Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy accessed on line: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-epistemology/ on 26 June 2014.

attachments. Al-Kīndī makes a distinction between 'sensible' objects which are shared within the common domain and 'intelligible' objects which are not shared but remain in the permanent possession of individuals. He stresses that 'sensible' objects are subject to decay while the soul is part of the personal possession of individuals and therefore remains with them.[176] What Avicenna elaborates on is the uniqueness of souls due to their potential of achievement of different levels of perfection which remain with individuals in the next world.[177]

4.7.3 Detachment from worldly possessions

Similar to Al-Kīndī, Avicenna appeals to the faculty of reason to argue that everyone is affected by loss because of the nature of this world and due to the ephemeral nature of everything. He states that, if it is understood that ephemerality is part of the nature of all worldly objects then there should be no expectation of permanence from things which are subject to decay.[178] Al-Kīndī's discussion on the ephemerality of objects including the body is essentially the same, but much more detailed and elaborated. He spells out clearly that to wish something which is impossible to obtain is akin to wishing something which is non-existent and concludes that due to the fact that 'sorrow is by convention and not by nature', it is self-inflicted.[179] While Avicenna uses the same reasoning to argue the pointlessness of attachment to worldly objects, Al-Kīndī goes further by solely holding individuals responsible for their sorrow.

Unlike Al-Kīndī, Avicenna does not go as far as equating sadness with those 'devoid of mind' but argues for the importance of behaviour change and de-normalisation.[180] This means accepting and becoming accustomed

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[176] Jayyusi-Lehn, 128.
[177] For further information on Avicenna's ideas concerning the soul, see F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952). For further discussion on Avicenna's 'floating man' argument for the existence of the soul, see Lenn E. Goodman, 155.
[178] See translation of Avicenna's manuscript on *ḥuzn* in the Appendix.
[179] Jayyusi-Lehn, 127.
[180] Ibid.

to a world which is subject to change and corruption in order to decrease the likelihood of despair *(ya's)* when one is not able to obtain what one desires as well as decreasing the likelihood of grief over loss.

Al-Kīndī points to death as possibly the greatest loss human beings can imagine and argues that since it is inherent in human nature then it is totally irrational to perceive it in a negative light. He opines that in fact what is bad is not death per se, but the fear of death.[181] In his writing on sadness Avicenna does not discuss death as he deals with this subject in a different epistle called *Rescuing from the Fear of Death (Rīsāle fī def`ī ghamī`l-mut)*, where he also argues about the irrationality of fear of death.[182]

Avicenna stresses that fear of death is linked to having the wrong ideas about death, and so squarely blames fear of death on ignorance. He states that fear stems from not knowing what death means, from being uncertain about what happens after death and the supposition that both the body and soul will cease to exist. He explains that just because the soul becomes separated from the body, it does not mean that it ceases to exist; rather, it continues on its journey to the eternal realm.[183] This is similar to the differentiation Al-Kīndī makes between ephemeral corporeal entities and the soul which is permanent, and the individuals' task to train the soul in preparation for its true destination or homeland.[184]

Avicenna also mentions other factors which can contribute to fear of death: the belief that death is painful; the belief that one will be penalised after death; and the perception that with death comes an end to life's pleasures and enjoyments. He explains that death cannot be painful since

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[181] Ibid., 133.
[182] See Faruk Karaca, *Modern Thanatological Researches and Ibn Sina (Avicenna)*, Conference paper, 1-5, downloaded on 24 July 2014. https://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ptb/mso/dd/dd3/karaca%20paper.pdf
[183] Ibid.
[184] Jayyusi-Lehn, 135.

pain is only palpable when one is alive, as sensory perceptions such as pain or happiness are felt only when the body and soul are together.

He states that death therefore is simply the separation of the soul from the body.[185] As for fear of death due to appending punishment, he explains that in this case the fear is not about death per se but about one's deeds in this life. He therefore suggests that instead of being frightened of death, the solution would be to refrain from committing sin. With regard to loss of pleasure after death, he reminds that unlike the permanence of the soul, worldly pleasures ultimately do not give satisfaction due to their ephemerality. However, unlike Al-Kīndī who considers worldly attachments to be the cause of sadness, and gives Socrates as prime example to emulate and to free oneself from possessions,[186] Avicenna counsels against directly blaming sadness on possessions and to an extent, encourages the enjoyment of the pleasures of this world as long as it is not excessive.[187] He considers both pleasure and pain as relative concepts as it depends on how individuals perceive them. He grades pleasure into three types, firstly the sensual, then the inward and lastly intellectual happiness which he considers to be the highest level. Unlike Al-Kīndī who equates happiness only with the world of the intellect,[188] Avicenna believes that it is possible to experience happiness at all these levels to some extent. He does however appear to be in agreement with Al-Kīndī that the state of attaining intellectual happiness, that is, total happiness, is only possible in this world if one is able to totally detach from material objects.[189]

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[185] Karaca, 1-5.
[186] Jayyusi-Lehn, 129-130.
[187] Karaca, 1-5.
[188] For a discussion on Al-Kīndī's distinction between 'sensible' and 'intelligible objects' see Adamson, *Al-Kīndī*, 151-153.
[189] Idris Zakaria, 'Ibn Sina on Pleasure and Happiness' in *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences*, 6, 8 (2012), 1285.

4.7.4 Avicenna's remedy for *ḥuzn*

Avicenna does not offer devices to dispel sorrow in the same way as Al-Kīndī, but concludes that one should only possess what is necessary, and when experiencing loss, continue to occupy one's mind with other things in order to distract oneself, instead of going to extremes to repossess those attachments. Avicenna likens this attitude to the morals of the kings *(mulūk)*, as they do not give importance about what they gain or what they lose, as compared to 'common people' *('ām)*, who become very happy when they are in possession of things and sad *(ḥuzn)* when they lose them. Avicenna uses the same comparison as Al-Kīndī who recommends the attitude of the 'kings' who live for the present instead of being preoccupied with what will happen in the future and sad about what has departed, in comparison to the 'low populace' who longingly await 'every coming and bid farewell [with sorrow] every departing'.[190] Therefore similar to Al-Kīndī, Avicenna advises that since it is impossible for transitory things to last, then in order to avoid grief *(ḥuzn)* one must be satisfied with one's situation. However, he does not elaborate as Al-Kīndī does, on the fact that the responsibility falls on the individual to use his/her intellect and choose between the permanence of sorrow and the permanence of happiness.[191]

While Avicenna appears to be promoting a passive attitude by advising to accept one's situation in order to dispel sorrow, Al-Kīndī explains further that only when one is powerless to reclaim loss that it is pointless to grieve. In other words, grief can be avoided by either doing something about it, but if nothing can be done then one should submit to the circumstances. What's more, while Avicenna does not appear to make any reference to the Quran, Al-Kīndī alludes to the idea of Divine Destiny and Decree by use of Quranic concepts such as the 'world of truth' and

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[190] See the translation of Avicenna's manuscript on *ḥuzn* in Appendix One.
[191] Jayyusi-Lehn, 123.

'justice'.[192]

4.8 Abū-Ali Aḥmad ībn-Muḥammad ībn-Ya'qūb Mīskawayh

MīsKawayh was born around the year 320/932 in Rayy close to modern Tehran and he died in 1030. He was a renowned scholar in many fields, in particular in history and ethics. His most important work in the field of ethics is *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* ('The Refinement of Character').[193] Similar to Al-Kīndī and Avicenna, he adapts both the Platonic notion of the dualistic nature of the soul as well as the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance and justice in this work.[194] *The Refinement of Character* consists of six discourses on the following subjects: 'The Principles of Ethics'; 'Character and its Refinement'; 'The Good and its Divisions'; 'Justice'; 'Love and Friendship' and lastly 'The Health of the Soul'. The last discourse ends with a brief discussion on remedy for *ḥuzn*, based heavily on Al-Kīndī's epistle *On the Device for Dispelling Sorrows*.

Mīskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* serves as a training or educational manual for the purification of the soul. He states that in order to ensure that one has a good character and manifests that character through good actions, it is important to understand the soul and its purpose for existence, what keeps it pure and what corrupts it. According to Mīskawayh true prosperity can only come about through efforts in ensuring the least corruption of the soul. He then offers advice on how this can be achieved in the sixth discourse.[195]

Before discussing Mīskawayh's Sixth discourse on remedy for *ḥuzn* a brief account of his concept of happiness as compared to other ancient Greek philosophers will be given.

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[192] Jayyusi-Lehn, 132.
[193] Aḥmad ibn-Muḥammad Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, trans. by Constantine K. Zurayk (Beirut: Heidelber Press, 1968).
[194] For a discussion on Plato's influence on Miskawayah, see Majid Fakhry, 'The Platonism of Miskawayh and Its Implications for His Ethics' in *Studia Islamica,* 42 (1975), 39-57.
[195] Mīskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 157-196.

4.8.1 The concept of happiness according to Mīskawayh

Mīskawayh details the differentiation Aristotle makes between *the* good and *happiness*. The former being something which is common to all whereas the latter, described as *a* good, is relative and has no definite essence. For Aristotle happiness consists of five parts and the degree of happiness depends on the proportion of these five qualities one possesses: the health of the body; possession of fortune; fame; success in affairs; good judgement and some belief in religion.[196]

However, the philosophers who preceded Aristotle, such as Pythagoras, Plato and Socrates believed that all the virtues and happiness pertained to the soul alone and asserted that the faculties of the soul namely wisdom, courage, temperance and justice were adequate for happiness and no other virtue was needed.[197] The Stoics on the other hand, did not consider the body as merely a tool and believed that happiness required both bodily as well as spiritual satisfaction.[198]

The ancients therefore differed in their opinions as to whether happiness can be realized in this world. Those who believed that happiness pertained only to the soul did not believe that complete happiness could be achieved in this world because of its attachment to the body. Aristotle, however, believed that happiness was possible in this world as long as one strives for a virtuous life.[199]

Mīskawayh holds a combination of the above views. Unlike Al-Kīndī, he does not totally deny the need to satisfy sensory needs but similar to Avicenna stresses that ideally it is best to aim to move beyond these and seek spiritual contentment. He describes only two ranks of people who are able to achieve happiness and whoever is not within these two ranks resides in the rank of animals and is not able to achieve happiness. The

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[196] Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 72.
[197] Ibid., 73.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid., 74.

first consists of those who are merely at the level of bodily rank but who desire and attempt to reach the spiritual level. Although the people in this level are able to receive to a degree, they will not be totally free from sorrow due to the fact that they are not completely detached from the world. The second are those who are in the spiritual rank and observe and learn from the bodily rank and because of their detachment are able to achieve complete happiness:

> He is the one who does not mind being separated from his beloved in this world, nor does he regret the enjoyments which he misses in it.[200]
> He is the one who does nothing but that which God wants him to do, who chooses only that which brings him near to Him, who does not disobey Him by following any of his whims or base desires, who is not deceived by the deceits of nature, who does not pay attention to anything that hinders him from his happiness, who is not grieved at the loss of a beloved, and who does not regret his failure to attain a desire.[201]

Unlike the above Muslim thinkers, with the exception of Balkhī, the Quranic analysis showed, through the examples of the Prophets,[202] that although an imperfect kind of happiness is possible in this world, perfect happiness or *beatitudo* as expressed by Thomas Aquinas[203] is not possible; this is due to the nature of this world as a place of test and a journey towards perfection.

Mīskawayh's sixth discourse

4.8.2 The Health of the Soul *(nafs)*: Its Preservation and its Restoration

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[200] Ibid., 77.
[201] Ibid.
[202] See Chapter Two.
[203] Deal W. Hudson, *Happiness and the Limits of Satisfaction* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 138.

In this discourse, MīsKawayh discusses the causes of a diseased soul and its remedy. He claims that all illnesses such as grief, anger, fear and so on are a disease of the soul. He states that although the soul[204] is an incorporeal reality it is connected to our physical being, hence damage done to the soul will naturally affect the physical body. He adds that just as one should do one's best to preserve a healthy body and try to restore what is lost, the same approach should be applied for preservation of a healthy soul.[205]

4.8.2.1 The preservation of the health of the soul

Mīskawayh advises that in order to preserve the soul from corruption, it should avoid 'the wicked'. This is especially important for the youth, as they are particularly at risk, since they tend to be attracted more to physical pleasures which he opines, is a natural disposition of human beings due to their imperfections:

> The course of all of this is inborn in man on account of his imperfections. We are inclined to them and we covet them by our primitive nature and our original disposition, and it is only by means of reason's restraint that we keep ourselves from them, stopping at the limits which reason prescribes to us and contenting ourselves with what is necessary.[206]

So similar to Al-Kīndī the power of reason is the focus here, which should be used to save the soul from excessive indulgence.[207] He states that just as exercise is necessary for the body, the soul needs knowledge, without which one's character can become corrupted. Rather than stressing as Al-Kīndī does on looking after the soul rather than constantly pampering the

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[204] Although the terms soul *(nafs)* and spirit *(rūh)* tend to be used interchangeably, Al-Kīndī, Avicenna and Mīskawayh distinguish it from spirit, as the spirit is not subject to change, whereas the *nafs* can remain at the animal level or reach the highest point of perfection. For further insight into the difference between *nafs* and *rūh*, see Golam Dastgir, 'Contextual Analysis of the Concept of Nafs' in *Copula*, V. 16 (1999).
[205] Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 157-158.
[206] Ibid., 159.
[207] Jayyusi-Lehn, 129.

body,[208] similar to Balkhī, Mīskawayh's emphasis is on the interdependence of the body and the soul and how the illness of the soul affects the physical body.[209] Nevertheless, he concurs with Al-Kīndī with regard to the importance of preserving the soul, stating that the soul is where 'the great treasures' can be found.[210] He points to the permanence of the soul as opposed to the futility of attempting to satisfy one's endless desires by seeking and attaching oneself to external objects which due to their ephemerality will ultimately end in sorrow:

> And even if they attain one of their desires, this is inevitably lost quickly or is exposed to loss and holds no hope of endurance, since it is external. What is external to us cannot be secure against the innumerable accidents which affect it; and, at the same time, its owner is in a state of intense fear, constant anxiety, and weariness of body and of soul, trying to keep what can in no way be kept and to watch over something where watchfulness is of no avail.[211]

Mīskawayh concludes that external pleasures are impossible to maintain as 'dissolution' and 'annihilation' are part of their nature, as opposed to internal blessings which are a gift from God and are not subject to decay, and in order to rise to a higher station, they should be employed correctly.[212] Al-Kīndī and Avicenna give the example of the noble Kings as the ideal high station to be emulated because they give no importance to what they gain or lose and because they tend to live in the present as compared to the 'low populace' who have the tendency to grieve over past loss and crave for future gains.[213] Although the examples of the 'noble kings' (meaning incorporeal beings) and 'low populace' (sensory objects) is used only in a metaphorical sense by Al-Kīndī and Avicenna, Mīskawayah

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[208] Ibid., 128-129.
[209] Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 157.
[210] Ibid., 159.
[211] Ibid., 161.
[212] Ibid., 163.
[213] Jayyusi-Lehn, 123. See also the translation of Avicenna's manuscript on *ḥuzn* in the Appendix.

uses the same examples but also uses the example of kings literally in a derogatory and inferior way. Quoting Abu-Bakr he describes kings as 'the most wretched people in both this world and the next' and that they deserve mercy because of the position they are in:

> It may be that some of those who attain to [a position of] kingship or rule are happy for a very short time in the beginning, until they become established in [this position] and look [at it] with open eyes, but after this stage, all that they possess becomes as a matter of course to them and they are neither delighted in it nor mindful of it. They then look beyond to what they do not possess, and, even if they come to own the [whole] world with all that it includes, they still long for another world, or their aspiration rises towards gaining the eternal life and the true kinship, with the result that they become weary of all that they have achieved and have been able to attain. For [the king] to maintain the things of this world is extremely difficult on account of the [predisposition to] dissolution and annihilation in the nature of those things.[214]

Mīskawayh also implores that the rational faculties of thought and discernment which have been endowed by God to His servants should not be used to serve the concupiscent and irascible faculties as this would be going against God's guidance and design. Hence one should avoid seeking past pleasures as they may become an end in themselves, running the risk of being enslaved by them and thus resulting in injustice against God's plan as well as to oneself.[215] Here Mīskawayh is directly pointing to Divine Destiny and Decree, and suggesting that anything which is not in accordance to God's plan is ultimately unjust. Whereas Al-Kīndī and Avicenna only allude to, or make reference to verses in the Quran indirectly, similar to Balkhī, Mīskawayh directly quotes verses from the

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[214] Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 162-163.
[215] Ibid., 166.

Quran and points to traditions reported from the Prophet to support his arguments.[216]

Furthermore, he advises that for the preservation of a healthy soul minute attention should be paid to all one's plans and actions. What he adds to Balkhī, Avicenna and Al-Kīndī's advice is that apart from using one's faculty of reason to deal with all situations one should also reproach and penalise oneself for transgressing and going against one's resolution.[217]

Al-Kīndī, Balkhī and Avicenna's training of the soul focus mostly on changing thought processes, whereas Mīskawayh combines abstract thought with practical suggestions in order to train the soul to resist temptation. He states that in order to preserve a healthy soul which is the key to prevention of sadness, one should pay attention to all one's actions instead of following habitual routines. He advises that if our actions go against intended resolutions, such as succumbing to anger, laziness and so on, then one should penalise oneself in order to get back into a state of harmony and balance again. He gives the non-adherence to a self-imposed diet as an example:

> Whoever finds himself in this position should fix for himself penalties to counteract such misdeeds. If [for instance] he suspects himself of seeking some kind of harmful food, or failing to adhere to a self-imposed diet, or eating unwholesome fruits or pastries, he should penalise himself by fasting and should only break his fast by taking the lightest and the smallest amount of food...[218]

Mīskawayh gives similar examples on how to train oneself against anger and laziness and stresses that whoever learns self-control from childhood would be in a better position to control their passions and have the ability

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[216] Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 174.
[217] Ibid., 170.
[218] Ibid., 166.

to deal with difficulties in life more easily.[219] He urges that we should accustom our bodies and soul to be virtuous by constantly being on guard and changing our behaviour when necessary. In order to be able to do this, he advises that one needs certain qualities:

> This preparation consists of accustoming ourselves to being patient where patience is necessary, to forgiving those whom we should forgive, to abstaining from wicked desires, and to mastering these vices before they rage, for then the task would be very difficult if not utterly impossible.[220]

Mīskawayh does not agree with Galen's writings in *Man's Understanding of His Own Defects*[221] where he advises that in order to become aware of one's faults it is good to encourage a close friend to point out those faults. He opines that in this situation enemies may be more useful for on their part there would be no reluctance to enumerate their faults. Mīskawayh recommends that in order to become aware of one's faults and also be reminded of good deeds it is best to follow Al-Kīndī's advice rather than those of his predecessors:

> The seeker of virtue should look at the images of all his acquaintances as if these images were to him mirrors in which he can see the image of each one of these acquaintances as each of them undergoes the pains which produce misdeeds. In this way, he will not fail to notice any of his own misdeeds, for he will be looking for the misdeeds of others. Whenever he sees a misdeed in some one, he will blame himself for it as if he had committed it and will reproach himself exceedingly on its account.[222]

> We should not be content to become like notebooks and books, which convey to others the meanings of wisdom while remaining themselves

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[219] Ibid., 167.
[220] Ibid., 168.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid., 169.

devoid of such meanings, or like the whetstone which sharpens [other instruments] but does not itself cut. Rather let us be like the sun which benefits the moon. Whenever the sun shines on the moon, it causes it to shine out of the emanation of its light and exerts its effect on it exactly in that way which makes it resemble itself, though not so radiant. The same should be true of us if we transmit virtues to others.[223]

4.8.2.2 Discussion of the restoration of health to the soul when health is missing

On the discussion on the nature of virtue, Mīskawayh combines Aristotelian and Platonic ideas with his own theory.[224] The moral development that he recommends that one should aim for is based on virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, which when used in the right balance and according to the correct proportion, will result in justice.[225] He makes a distinction between Divine Justice which is permanent and human justice which due its contingency takes a different form in the realm of multiplicity.[226] Although he ranks spiritual happiness at a higher level than earthly happiness, he does nevertheless, state that one can be assured of happiness in this world as well as the next as long as one uses one's reasoning in accordance to the precepts of one's nature.[227]

This leads to the discussion that if human justice is contingent and changeable depending on the norms of particular societies, even if one uses one's virtues of wisdom, courage and temperance in the correct proportion, it is questionable as to whether in an ephemeral world perfect happiness or true justice can be obtained. Mīskawayhs' idea of the 'perfect man' who can potentially reach the highest level of justice is

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[223] Ibid., 170.
[224] For further discussion on the Platonic and Aristotelian influences on Miskawayh's ideas of virtue, see Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 194-195; and Oliver Leaman, in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 254.
[225] For further understanding of Miskawayh's ideas on justice, see Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, Fourth Discourse; and Y. Mohamed, 'Greek Theory in Arabic Ethics: Miskawayh's Theory of Justice' in *Phronimon*, 2 (2000), 242.
[226] Oliver Leaman in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 254.
[227] Fakhry, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 191-196.

comparable with the 'friends of God' who in accordance to the exegetes' interpretation of the Quran, have no fear or sorrow and will attain eternal bliss since they recognise their impotence and through belief and submission become at one with their innate nature and consciously become mirrors for manifesting God's Names.[228] However, the journey to reach such a stage, whether it is for the 'perfect man' who has totally detached himself from the worldly life as Mīskawayh, Avicenna and Al-Kīndī describe, or for 'the friends of God', is not an easy one, for as discussed in the Izutsian analysis and exegetes' understanding of the concept of *ḥuzn* even the Prophets were admonished at times and reminded not to be sorrowful.[229]

Mīskawayh discusses the main diseases which are connected to the four virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance and justice, which affect the health of the soul. He points to recklessness and cowardice as being the two opposing extremes of courage; profligacy and frigidity as being the opposing extremes of temperance; ignorance and stupidity extremes of wisdom and lastly tyranny and servility being the two opposing extremes of justice.[230] He then discusses the causes and treatment of various diseases of the soul connected to the above virtues and their opposites, such as anger, fear, fear of death and grief, some of which will be discussed below.

4.8.3 Fear: its causes and remedy

Mīskawayh considers excessive and unjustified fear to be one of the diseases of the soul and related to the same [irascible] faculty as anger. The Izutsian analysis of the Quran carried out in Chapter Two, showed that fear is related to anxiety about the future or the unknown. [231] Also the exegetes studied in Chapter Three, concurred that fear is linked to something which has not yet taken place, due to "either the anticipation of

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[228] See 3.6.10.
[229] See 2.5.4 and 3.7.3.
[230] Miskawayh, *The Refinement of Character*, 172.
[231] See 2.6.5.1

an evil or the expectation/of a danger".[232] Mīskawayh also links fear to events that may take place in the future, in which case they may either be necessary or contingent. He states that contingent events should not be feared as they have not yet taken place and it would be pointless to be fearful about an occurrence which has not yet taken place.[233] This is similar to Al-Kīndī's argument that it is totally illogical to be anxious about an event which has not yet taken place.[234] With regard to fear of things which are necessary, such as old age, Mīskawayh states that the remedy is to anticipate the inevitable and to view it in a positive way.[235]

4.8.3.1 Fear of death: its causes and remedy

Similar to Al-Kīndī and Avicenna, Mīskawayh blames fear of death on ignorance, and goes on to explain what death means. He explains that death is not an evil, but merely the abandonment of the soul from the body, and by leaving the body it reaches completion, detached from the ephemeral world, it becomes cleansed and experiences complete happiness.[236] He also concurs with Avicenna that there should be no fear that death is a painful experience and explains that without the soul the body cannot experience any pain.[237]

His explanation of fearing death because of impending punishment is also exactly the same as Avicenna's[238] and Al-Kīndī's.[239] He explains that in this case it is not death which is feared but the punishment itself. He advises therefore that one should remind oneself that God is Just and only punishes individuals for their bad deeds, in which case the remedy for this fear would be to avoid bad deeds.[240] He further states that fear due to

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[232] See Chapter Three.
[233] Miskawayh, 183.
[234] Jayyusi-Lehn, 125.
[235] Miskawayh, 184.
[236] Ibid., 185-192.
[237] Ibid., 188.
[238] See 4.7.3.
[239] Jayyusi-Lehn, 133.
[240] Miskawayh, 188.

leaving this world because of leaving one's loved ones and possessions is due to not understanding the difference between what is corruptible and what is permanent. His explanation of the inherent nature of the human condition as 'a living, rational and mortal being' is exactly the same as Al-Kīndī's.[241] He therefore arrives at the same conclusion as Al-Kīndī that to cling on to what is ephemeral while expecting permanence from it is nothing more than self-delusion.[242]

As discussed in Chapter Three, all the exegetes associated the word fear *(khawf)* with the future, and especially in connection to the hereafter. Ṭabātabāī expressed clearly that when the Quran states that God has removed general fear, it means that He has favoured those who believe and submit with His bounty of happiness, and that these bounties are everlasting and not subject to deterioration.[243] Al-Kīndī also describes death as a journey to a place where there are no defects or corruption and refers to the next world as the 'rational place' *(mahal aqlī)* as opposed to the worldly life *(dunya).*[244] While Avicenna does not discuss the existence of a physical paradise, he does point to different levels of happiness in the next world and links the rational soul to the source of highest pleasure, since it is at this level that the soul has the potential to understand essences which are not polluted with matter. This seeking of pleasure is linked to all physical beings' innate yearning for perfection which is ultimately towards God, as only His essence does not lack anything and is therefore perfect and complete. According to Mīskawayh the worldly abode offers the opportunity for the soul to detach itself from material objects and prepare for the next stage of life. Seen in this light, death is not an end but a completion or perfection since it is a return passage to the Creator of the universe.[245]

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[241] Jayyusi-Lehn, 187.
[242] Miskawayh, 190.
[243] See 3.6.6.
[244] Jayyusi-Lehn, 134.
[245] Miskawayh, 191

What Al-Kīndī, Avicenna and Mīskawayh have in common therefore is that through the use of human reasoning they all point to the ephemerality of this world as opposed to the permanence of the hereafter. In a truly Sufi fashion,[246] they, in particular Al-Kīndī and Mīskawayh, encourage the training of the body and the soul to detach itself from the world and to recognise that the innate inclination of human beings towards permanence points to a permanent abode.

4.8.4 The remedy for grief (*ḥuzn*)

Mīskawayh's remedy for grief appears to be more a brief summary of Al-Kīndī's epistle on sorrow rather than an original contribution. In fact Leaman questions the originality of Mīskawayh's work generally and accuses him of presenting "a mixture of ideas and theories which were not properly integrated, and which consisted of a ragbag rather than a synthesis".[247] But it is possible that he adopted the same ideology as Al-Kīndī, that is, focussing on the truth itself rather than being concerned about the source. For as Waltzer opines:

> After all, he is not a Greek philosopher but a Muslim who uses the discoveries and the experiences of the Greeks for his own way of life and wants to naturalize the spiritual religion of the Greek philosophers within the world of Islam, as other Muslim Philosophers did in their own time and in their own way.[248]

In fact in the last section of the sixth discourse Mīskawayh quotes Al-Kīndī's remarks on grief directly and therefore only the first part 'the remedy of grief' will be the subject of discussion here.[249]

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[246] The Sufi saying attributed to the Prophet, 'die before you die', exemplifies this state of self-annihilation. For a discussion on Sufism and detachment, see Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London: Arkana, 1989) 36-39 and Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 232.

[247] Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 256.

[248] Richard Walzer, *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, edited by S.M. Stern and R. Walzer (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer Ltd., 1962), 232.

[249] Miskawayh, 194-196.

Mīskawayh defines grief as "a suffering of the soul occasioned by the loss of a dear one or the failure to fulfil a desire."[250] Again this definition is in line with all previous definitions of *ḥuzn*. Mīskawayh blames its cause on attachment to material objects and bodily desires, which he states is because of the deluded idea that these material attachments are permanent. His remedy for grief is the realisation that all material objects are subject to decay and that stability can only be attained from things which belong to the world of the intellect:

> He will direct his efforts to ends that are pure and limit his attention to the seeking of permanent goods only. He will discard all that is not by nature stable and enduring. When he obtains any of these goods, he will immediately put it in its proper place and take only as much of it as is necessary to remove the pains which we have enumerated, such as hunger, nakedness, and similar exigencies. He will not try to treasure up these things, or to seek to accumulate them or to show them off and boast of them. He will not entertain the hope of amassing them, nor will he long for them. If he loses them, he will not regret them, nor care about them. Whoever accepts this advice will feel confident rather than distressed, joyous rather than grieved, and happy rather than miserable.[251]

He reiterates that failure to accept that material objects are subject to corruption will end in "constant distress and un-abating grief."[252] On the other hand for those who are satisfied with what they have and are not affected by material loss, they will always be in a joyful state. He uses the same examples as Al-Kīndī, namely, the gambler, the swindler and the effeminate,[253] but without the elaboration, in order to demonstrate the delusionary state of people who imagine that they are happy, whereas in fact they have merely become accustomed to a particular routine.

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[250] Ibid., 192.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid., 193.
[253] Jayyusi-Lehn, 123-124.

Mīskawaysh's remedy for grief is to keep to the course of virtue rather than relapse and cling to worldly attachments and the world of the 'insane'.[254] Again unlike Al-Kīndī and Avicenna who only allude to Quranic verses, he ends his work on the remedy for grief by directly quoting from the Quran: "Verily, God's friends – no fear shall be on them, nor shall they be put to grief."[255]

Mīskawayh sees no contradiction between philosophy and Divine Law and uses philosophical arguments to interpret the Quran. He refers to the above verse in the Quran (10:62) to illustrate the point that 'God's friends' are those who follow the course of virtue, and God's enemies are those who stray in the 'darkness of their own ignorance'.[256] Therefore unlike Al-Ghazālī (Abu Hamid 1058-1111) who later criticized philosophers who depended too much on their own reasoning,[257] he believed that philosophy was an excellent tool to use in order to understand the truths of the Quran. Therefore had he been alive at that time, one supposes that he would have been an advocate of Averroes (1126-1198) who responded to Ghazālī's attack by supporting the argument for the compatibility of philosophy and Divine revelation.[258]

4.9 Abū Bakr Muhammad ībn Zakarīyā al-Rāzī (Rhazes)

Abū Bakr Muhammad ībn Zakarīyā al-Rāzī (864-925) was born in Ray, near modern-day Tehran. He is considered mostly as a famous physician, although he defended his position as a philosopher and believed that to be a good physician both knowledge of medicine and philosophy is needed. This is in line with other philosophers' belief at that time that medicine

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[254] Miskawayh, 193.
[255] Ibid., 194.
[256] Miskawayh, 194.
[257] Al-Ghazālī, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. by Michael E. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), 7-9.
[258] Averroes *(Ibn Rushd)*, *Tahafut-al-Tahafut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence), trans. by Simon Van Den Bergh, E-text, conversion by Muhammad Hozien, accessed on line on 29th July 2014, URL:
http://www.newbanner.com/Philosophy/IbnRushd/Tahafut_al-Tahafut_en.pdf

comprised bodily and spiritual aspects, in the same way as philosophy included both practical and moral divisions.[259]

With the Arabic translations of Greek medical and philosophical texts at his disposal, Al-Rāzī, wrote over 200 books on philosophy, medicine, logic, cosmology, theology, mathematics, alchemy, as well as a commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, epitome of Aristotle's writings on logic, epitomes of Hippocrates Aphorisms and medical works of Galen and Plutarch, and refutation of Porphyry.[260]

Among Al-Rāzī's most famous books on medicine is his *Kitāb al-Mansūrī* which was also translated into Latin. All his work on medicine were greatly valued by medieval physicians and used as a source of reference. The reason why his philosophical work did not earn him the same respect is because of some of his opinions which were considered not to be in line with the teachings of the Quran and were thus condemned as heretical, in particular his book *On Prophecy* which shocked both orthodox and unorthodox Muslims of the time.[261] In this book, which for obvious reasons became obliterated, he is said to have expressed the view that reason was superior to revelation, whereas the general Quranic understanding would be that all human knowledge is directly inspired by God. He is also said to have rejected the idea of prophetic mission, prophetic miracles and the imitability of the Quran.[262] However, as Walker explains, al-Rāzī may have been misunderstood in some aspects, as he did not reject the sacred nature of the Quran, and explains that he argued that the Quran's incomparability is due to its uniqueness, and as such cannot be compared

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[259] See Mehdi Mohaghegh, 'Notes on the Spiritual Physic of Al-Rāzī' in *Studia Islamica,* 26 (1967), 6.
[260] See the introduction to *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, trans. by Arthur J. Arberry (London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1950), 10.
[261] Ibid., 8-9.
[262] Paul E. Walker, 'The Political implications of Al-Razi's Philosophy' in Butterworth, *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, 86-87.

to anything else. Therefore, the demand to compare anything else with it is an absurd notion.[263]

Al-Rāzī demonstrates his passion for human reasoning over blind acceptance by pointing to the fact that all human beings, including prophets and religious figures, by nature are equal, no one is superior to anyone else. It is only by the dint of the extent they apply their knowledge and investigation that differences appear. Al-Rāzī concludes therefore that no one should blindly and uncritically follow religious figures.[264]

Because of disapproval of Al-Rāzī's metaphysical doctrines, most of his work, in particular his non-medical work, has not survived, with the exception of two treatises on ethics: *The Philosophical Life (al-Sīra al-falsafiyya)* and *The Spiritual Physic (al-Tibb al-rūḥānī)*. For Al-Rāzī ethics was akin to psychological medicine – the medication with the potential to restore and bring back balance to the individual. Balance for Al-Rāzī was the key, for although he believed that one should have a disciplined life, he was totally opposed to the idea of extreme self-abnegation. He therefore did not oppose a pleasurable life as long as it was not taken to extremes. When he was accused of not following the ascetic model of Socrates, he responded by pointing out that Socrates did eventually return to public life and gave up the initial extreme position which he had adopted.[265]

Al-Rāzī derived his metaphysical doctrine from five eternal principles, namely God, the soul, space, matter and time. Contrary to Al-Kīndī he did not believe that God created the world from nothing *(ex nihilo)*, but used the principles already in existence in the universe. According to Al-Rāzī, the soul is cast into the world, only to be saved by the gift of the intellect. However, ironically and contrary to other philosophers who followed the

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[263] Ibid., 89-92.
[264] Ibid., 91-92.
[265] See the introduction to *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, 10-11.

Neoplatonic and Aristotelian doctrines, Al-Rāzī did not consider the intellect to be one of the eternal principles.[266]

4.9.1 Al-Rāzī's *Spiritual Physick*

Al-Rāzī's *Spiritual Physick* contains twenty chapters, beginning with 'The Superiority of Reason' which he believed to be the most important topic, since he believed that reason is the only tool for survival from one's own passions.[267] Other chapters include topics such as 'Of Conceit', 'Of Envy', 'Of Repelling Anger', 'Of the Fear of Death' and 'Of Repelling Grief'. Although I will be focussing on the chapter on Repelling Grief, I will also make some references to other chapters where necessary. It should be noted that before Al-Rāzī, Al-Kīndī had written a book on 'Spiritual Physick' which is apparently lost.[268]

In his Spiritual Physick, Al-Rāzī deals with the evil qualities of the soul such as uncontrolled passion, which invites people to enjoy immediate pleasures without thinking of the consequences. He likens the animal passions with uncontrolled beasts which need to be trained and educated.[269] He defines pleasure as follows:

> Pleasure consists simply of the restoration of that condition which was expelled by the element of pain, while passing from one's actual state until one returns to the state formerly experienced.[270]

He explains that pleasure cannot be perceived without prior pain. It is only when one departs 'from the state of nature' that one is able to appreciate a return to the former state. He concludes that the idea of endless pleasure is therefore a delusion as it cannot exist without pain.[271]

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[266] Paul E. Walker, 'The Political implications of Al-Razi's Philosophy', 75.
[267] *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, 27.
[268] Mehdi Mohaghegh, 'Notes on the Spiritual Physic of Al-Razi', 7.
[269] *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes,* 22.
[270] Ibid., 39.
[271] Ibid., 40.

He further adds that those who are constantly engaged in a life of indulgence and gratification are never satisfied and constantly hunger for more. They become so habituated to this situation that leaving this circle of endless desires becomes almost impossible, and results in them being sorrowful rather than happy. He then asks the rhetorical question of: "so what difference is there between them and the man who deliberately sets out to destroy himself?"[272] Similar to Al-Kīndī he appeals to use of reason rather than being a slave of animal appetites and recommends: "to utilize and improve the reason, and not be slave and lackey of the calls of nature."[273]

Al-Rāzī explains that listening to one's rational soul and labouring to wrestle with one's appetitive soul will prove to be worth-while. For even if one owned half the world one would not be happy for fear of losing what one has in possession and the constant yearning for more:

> If any man should possess half the world, his soul would still wrestle with him to acquire the remainder, and would be anxious and fearful of losing hold of as much as it has already gotten; and if he possessed the entire world, nevertheless he would yearn for perpetual well-being and immortality.[274]

Although Al-Rāzī is hinting that worldly possessions because of their ephemeral nature will not satisfy the endless desires of human beings, he does not make any reference or even allude to Divine Revelation. Al-Kīndī however, follows the exegetes in clearly stating that all possessions in fact belong to God and they are loaned to us to look after and return to its Owner, and therefore we should not complain when He chooses to take them back, as this would show ungratefulness and injustice on our part.[275] Also, unlike Al-Kīndī who followed Socrates in viewing possessions as

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[272] Ibid., 25.
[273] Ibid., 27.
[274] Ibid., 28.
[275] Jayyusi-Lehn, 128.

generally a hindrance and obstacle to training one's soul to detach from the worldly life,[276] Al-Rāzī considers both excess and deficiency, even in practice of religion, as harmful and recommends moderation. He defended his own position of enjoying certain necessities in life by referring to Socrates' later life where he did partake of certain possessions such as home and family life.[277]

4.9.2 Al-Rāzī's *Of Repelling Grief*

Al-Rāzī does not give a definition of grief as such, but rather explains the cause:

> "When the passion through the reason pictures the loss of a beloved associate, grief thereby follows" [278]

Here, unlike Al-Kīndī, Balkhī, Mīskawayah and Avicenna, as well as the exegetes of the Quran, who connected grief to loss of possessions as well as loss of loved ones, Al-Rāzī does not appear to include possessions and reiterates that: "the substance out of which sorrows are generated is simply and solely the loss of loved ones".[279]

He is however, in agreement with Al-Kīndī and the other early Muslim thinkers that grief clouds the thought and reason and thus it is harmful to the soul as well as the body and therefore it should be reduced or preferably diminished. The strategies he offers for accomplishing this task are: either to guard against it before it actually occurs, or if it has taken place to try and repel it.[280]

4.9.3 Precautions against the occurrence of grief

Al-Rāzī explains that loss of loved ones brings about grief because they are

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[276] Ibid., 129.
[277] See Paul E. Walker, 'Political Implications of Al-Razi's Philosophy', 77.
[278] *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, 68.
[279] Ibid., 69.
[280] Ibid., 68.

not eternal but subject to 'generation and corruption'. And this is the reason why the person most severely affected by grief will be the one who has the greatest number of loved ones and who has the greatest attachment to them. He states that a person with intellect would address the reason for his grief by cutting himself off from the substance of his grief. He gives similar example as Al-Kīndī[281] that:

> "A man who has no children cannot be so grief-stricken as the man who loses his child."[282]

He explains that while one's loved ones are in one's possession and one has become habituated to them, there is no sense of pleasure as such, but it is only when one has lost those loved ones that one becomes aware of previous pleasure and is grieved by their loss. He states that this is because: "nature accounts and reckons all that long enjoyment as her due and right".[283] Although here Al-Rāzī alludes to the idea that one does not have a natural right to one's possessions, he does not make any reference to revelation and does not argue and rationalise in the same way as Al-Kīndī that all possessions are a loan from God which ultimately have to be returned to its Owner.[284] Instead the remedy he gives for obliterating grief is merely not to possess those attachments:

> This being so – since the pleasure and enjoyment felt in having loved ones, while they are there, is something so poor, so obscure, so feeble and inconsiderable, whereas the grief, distress and anguish of losing them are so palpable, so huge, so painful and ruinous; what is one to do, but get rid of them altogether, or assert one's independence of them, in order that their evil consequences, their train of hurtful, wasting griefs, may be destroyed or at least diminished? This is the highest level that can be

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[281] Jayyusi-Lehn, 127.
[282] *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, 69.
[283] Ibid., 70.
[284] Jayyusi-Lehn, 128.

reached on this topic, and the most effective in amputating the very substance of grief.[285]

Al-Rāzī also offers an alternative choice for those who are weaker in resisting their passions: to acquire more than one beloved, so that when one is lost there is another to take their place. He explains that: "In this way it is possible for his sorrow and grief not to be extreme over the loss of any of them."[286] However, he provides no logical reasoning for this argument. It is questionable that if one has many children for example, that even the loss of one of them would not be a cause of extreme grief.

After offering these precautions for avoidance of grief, Al-Rāzī offers ways in which grief can be repelled or lessened once it has occurred.

4.9.4 The manner in which grief may be repelled or lessened

Al-Rāzī appeals to the use of reason to argue that when individuals understand and accept the fact that everything is subject to 'generation and corruption' then it would be easier to accept the loss of a loved one. Seen in this light, he opines, one will make most of their existence while they are still present, rather than take them for granted. He reiterates that it is the expectation of permanence from ephemeral natures that causes grief.[287]

He then argues that sorrow passes and life continues and happiness does eventually return. He explains that just as we see people who have faced terrible calamities in life and yet picked themselves up again, it is possible to leave sorrow behind and become accustomed to one's new circumstances.[288] Similar to Al-Kīndī and Balkhī Al-Rāzī is recommending changing one's thought processes. Firstly to accept that nothing lasts in

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[285] *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, 70-71.
[286] Ibid., 71.
[287] *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, 72.
[288] Ibid.

this world, secondly to accept the fact that one will eventually get over one's loss. However, while Al-Kīndī alludes to revelation and the hope of eternal abode, where there is justice and eternal happiness,[289] Al-Rāzī does not use the same arguments for the consolation of loss. In fact from what remains of Al-Rāzī's work, there is very little reference to the concept of justice. Although he acknowledges that human beings are not created merely to satisfy physical pleasures but to acquire knowledge and practice justice, he does not specify a clear criterion for justice, apart from equating this virtue with moderation:

> True virtue consists in taking of every need so much as is indispensable, or so much as will not involve pain exceeding the pleasure thereby procured.[290]

Al-Rāzī adds that the impact of grief can be reduced by reminding oneself that one is not alone in grief, but it is a state that is shared by all. Again this is similar to Al-Kīndī who gives the example of Alexander, son of Philip, the Macedonian King, who on his death bed tried to reduce his mother's grief by demonstrating that she is not alone in experiencing grief, but it is a feeling which is shared by all.[291]

He adds other ways which grief can be lessened: Firstly to reflect on the way others have coped with affliction and the various methods they have used to console themselves; secondly to consider one's own situation and reflect about one's own coping mechanisms for consolation when confronted with afflictions previously; thirdly, to consider the fact that the loss of a loved one has the potential to make a person stronger when confronted with similar affliction in the future; and lastly he gives the example of "the intelligent and perfect man " who "follows only the dictate of reason" rather than following his passion which would lead him to the

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[289] Jayyusi-Lehn, 135.
[290] Paul E. Walker, 'Political Implications of Al-Razi's Philosophy', 81.
[291] Jayyusi-Lehn, 126.

wrong direction. This status of the 'perfect man' whom he describes in his work *Kitāb al-Ṭibb al-Rūḥānī* is only attainable by 'the supreme philosopher' who follows reason in denying his passion and thus has complete control over his grief.[292] Similar to other early Muslim thinkers therefore, Al-Rāzī appears to express that grief is not God-given but is something totally negative, self-induced and therefore must be repelled. But for Rāzī, only supreme philosophers, rather than Prophets can reach the highest stage of being totally free of their passions which he considers to be the sole cause of grief.

4.10. Conclusion

In this chapter Al-Kīndī's epistle *On the Device for Dispelling Sorrows* was chosen for study and analysis and compared with other Muslim thinkers who have written on the subject of *ḥuzn*. The epistle is in a form of a letter in response to a request from a friend on how to dispel sorrow, but it also generally serves as a spiritual medicine for others who may be suffering with the same affliction.

Although this epistle is heavily based on Stoic ideas and analogies, Al-Kīndī develops only those ideas which are compatible with revelation. His detractors consider his work simplistic[293] while in fact his uses of Quranic terms take this work beyond the generic to another realm. His allusion to important concepts are comparable to Sufi expressions, some of which will be discussed below, and require a deeper analysis than those offered by his critics.

Al-Kīndī's definition of *ḥuzn* as: "Psychological pain occurring due to the loss of an object of love or the missing of things desired",[294] falls in line with the Quranic definition offered by the exegetes as well as other Muslim

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[292] Paul E. Walker, 'Political Implications of Al-Razi's Philosophy', 79.
[293] For example, see Butterworth, The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy, 39.
[294] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 122.

thinkers with the exception of Al-Rāzī who does not include possessions, but confines sadness as being exclusively due to loss of loved ones.[295]

Before offering remedies for dispelling sorrow, Al-Kīndī clarifies an important point relating to the ontological understanding of existence, that is, the emphasis on the distinction between the 'sensible' and 'intelligible', which he opines is essential to comprehend and internalize in order to be able to dispel sorrow.[296] All the exegetes and Muslim thinkers are in agreement with his argument that the transient nature of this world is one of 'generation and corruption'[297] which innately necessitates disasters. Al-Kīndī adds that the inclination towards permanence is a natural disposition, therefore it should be sought in what is permanent, namely the soul which he conceives as immortal and separate from the body, rather than material objects which are transient and ephemeral. He then offers ten remedies for the tarnished soul, for the de-normalisation of one's immoral habits and rectification of one's character.

While Al-Kīndī's ideas of 'self-training' *(tarbīya)* for harmonizing with one's true self and becoming at one with the rest of nature shows similarities with the Stoic ideal of self-liberation and cultivation, his use of this term which has a deeper meaning of training, guiding, directing, and also the term *takhalluq khulq* ('rectifying one's character')[298] are more akin to the Sufi ideas of cleansing and polishing the self [299] where one through total submission becomes purely a mirror for the manifestation of God's Names and Attributes. This means moving beyond the realm of multiplicity and attributing everything to One God.

Whilst supporting the Stoic idea of unity with nature, Al-Kīndī progresses beyond the limited boundaries of nature, and in fact speaks of the world in

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[295] *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, 68.
[296] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 126.
[297] Ibid., 127.
[298] Ibid., 124.
[299] Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 21-22.

a pejorative way, and points to the hereafter as the place of permanence and the true home.[300] He skilfully uses Platonic and Stoic analogies to demonstrate that this life with all its trials and tribulations is merely a journey from the ephemeral world to the world of permanence.[301]

The ten devices offered by Al-Kīndī all concentrate on detachment from the worldly life. He likens attachment to ephemeral objects with the state of 'delusion' and 'madness' and sorrow an evil which must be obliterated.[302] While most of the Muslim thinkers under discussion in this chapter, appear to convey sorrow in a negative light, the Quranic analysis showed that the feeling of sorrow and happiness are both directly from God and the former can have a positive role of direction, guidance and reminder [303] and thus may, if read in the correct way, serve to guide rather than hinder.   Moreover, there seems to be an apparent contradiction in Al-Kīndī's concept of sadness, for on the one hand he states that sadness is not part of innate human nature and is self-inflicted, yet on the other hand he opines that grief is a universal condition experienced by all and proper moral training will empower individuals to change their inclinations.[304] Al-Kīndī does not discuss why these inclinations are given to human beings in the first place. In fact he states that sadness is a negative attribute stemming from human beings and thus indicating that it is not God-given.[305] However, we might note that the Quranic analysis shows that these inclinations are given by God [306] and can serve as a form of guidance and signs to be read and acted upon for the purification of the soul.

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[300] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 130-133.
[301] Ibid.
[302] Ibid., 125-127.
[303] See 2.4.7.1 and 2.4.7.2.
[304] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 126-127.
[305] Ibid., 127.
[306] See 2.6.4. and 3.7.1.

Al-Rāzī opines that one only becomes aware of pleasure after the loss of previous pleasure, that is, pain being a necessary corollary for pleasure.[307] If this is the case, then logically it follows that in order to be able to experience pleasure, the existence of pain and sorrow is necessary, therefore indicating that spiritual pain and sorrow have a positive role to play. And yet both Al-Rāzī and Al-Kīndī appear to depict sorrow as totally negative and the substance which causes it; in the case of Al-Rāzī attachment to loved ones and in the case of Al-Kīndī all possessions which are not necessary for human survival should also be removed.

While all the Muslim thinkers, with the exception of Al-Rāzī who has a more liberal view, and possibly Balkhī who does not directly blame possessions for grief, appear to promote the Socratic view of physical detachment for material objects and loved ones, the Quranic analysis shows that it is not possessions per se that is the problem, rather it is the ownership and attachment to these possessions that cause sorrow. The Sufi saying attributed to the Prophet, 'die before you die', exemplifies this state of self-annihilation[308] and the cutting oneself off from attachment to the illusory life of this world, in such a way that the self becomes pure manifestation of God's Divine Names.

Although Al-Kīndī depicts sorrow in a totally negative way, he follows the Quranic ideal of manifesting God's active attributes by detaching from sensory objects and giving priority to the soul rather than the body and training *(tarbīya)* it in order to de-normalise acquired habits such as anger *(ghaḍab)* and desire *(shahwa)*. Therefore his convergence of Greek and Islamic ideas seem to now resemble more the Sufi idea of self-mastery or self-annihilation in order to become a perfect mirror for manifestation of God's attributes through liberating oneself of worldly desires.[309] However, Al-Kīndī does not directly discuss the fact that there may be a wisdom in

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[307] *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, 40.
[308] See Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, 232.
[309] Ibid.

the creation of the inclination for desire *(shahwa)* itself, and the fact that if it was not given by God in the first place, we might ask how human beings would be able to train their soul to resist their animal appetites in order to reach the high level of total detachment. Although from the Quranic perspective also, sorrow is seen mainly from a negative aspect, exhorting one not be sad, as discussed previously often God's admonition of Prophets not to be sad also comes as a form of reminder and guidance, therefore also used in a positive context.[310] Moreover, from the creation point of view if sadness is given by God, then there must ultimately be some kind of wisdom in its creation.

All the Muslim thinkers discussed in this chapter, agree that happiness is possible in this world but because of the nature of the world which is one of 'generation and corruption' total happiness is only reserved for the hereafter. Therefore for Al-Kīndī happiness relates to two dimensions of existence, the hereafter as well as the present world. The former is considered to be the most important as he advises to use one's human reasoning in order to disconnect from the worldly life and to prepare the soul for the true home.[311]

Unlike Al-Kīndī who equates total happiness with total detachment from the worldly life, and Balkhī who also asserts that total happiness can only be experienced in the hereafter by believers, Avicenna grades pleasure into three types, starting from the sensual, then the inward and the intellectual being the highest level, and states that it is possible to experience some happiness at all these levels.[312] Mīskawayh states that only two ranks of people are able to achieve happiness in this world, the first are those who are at the bodily rank but desire to reach the spiritual level, and the second are those who are at the spiritual rank. He statesthat while the former are able to receive happiness to a certain

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[310] See 2.4.7.1 and 2.4.7.2.
[311] Jayyusi-Lehn, 135.
[312] See 4.7.3.

extent, only the latter will have the capacity for complete happiness.[313] For Al-Rāzī happiness is associated with 'people of knowledge' and not necessarily Prophets.[314] Although all the Muslim thinkers and exegetes concur that true happiness can only be found in the knowledge of God and that the animal soul must be in subordination to the rational soul, the Quranic analysis has shown that just as happiness and sorrow is from God, true knowledge and wisdom is also a gift from God and not acquired independently and without recourse to revelation.

The Quranic analysis shows that in this world which is a training ground for the next world, complete happiness is not possible. Perfect happiness or in the words of Thomas Aquinas, *beatitudo* is not possible in this world, but it is possible to experience an imperfect kind of happiness (*felicitas*).[315] The analysis of the Quran and the exegetes' interpretation, with the exception of Ṭabātabāī,[316] shows that even the Prophets, although infallible in conveying the message, were not infallible from human error.

To conclude, while in the main the Muslim thinkers' understanding of the concept of sorrow concurs with the Quranic analysis, the following tensions have been identified:

1. Although all the Muslim thinkers are in agreement with the exegetes that the only way *ḥuzn* can be obviated is through less attachment to the body and more concern for training the soul, most however, when explaining their arguments, tend to appeal to the readers' power of reasoning rather than referring openly and directly to revelation.

2. The majority of the Muslim thinkers appear to depict *ḥuzn* in a negative way, with Al-Kīndī going as far as associating the experience of *ḥuzn* with

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[313] See 4.8.1.
[314] See 4.9.4.
[315] See 4.8.1.
[316] See 3.6.10 and discussion in 4.5.7.

those 'devoid of mind',[317] and yet the Quranic analysis showed that even prophets experienced *ḥuzn*.

3. The Muslim thinkers generally appear to agree that *ḥuzn* is self-inflicted,[318] which concurs with the Quranic analysis to an extent, but they do not discuss the fact that from its creational aspect both happiness and grief are given by God and therefore may have a role to play.

Nursi has written extensively on the issues of trials and tribulations; his 'Message for the Sick', [319] is a salient example. However, as *ḥuzn* is the main subject of enquiry here, it is Nursi's conceptualisation of that concept, and not his wider discourse on illness as tribulation, that will be discussed here, with the aim being to resolve some of the tensions mentioned above.

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[317] See 4.5.7.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Nursi, *The Flashes,* 266-285.

CHAPTER FIVE

SAID NURSI'S LIFE AND WORKS

5.1 Introduction

Before turning to the resolution of the tensions summarized in the previous chapter,[1] this chapter will serve as a bridging section in order to provide a brief historical background to Nursi's life and works. It will also provide a contextual backdrop against which his teachings are to be understood generally; it will also serve as a background for Chapter Six which will focus specifically on the concept of *ḥuzn* in Nursi's work.

The *Rīsale-ī Nur* is considered to be not only an interpretation of the Quran but also in a sense a reflection of his experiences. Nursi claims to have been inspired by his own life story and he involves the reader in the narrative of his life's journey and the lessons he has learnt. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, by sharing his personal life he is teaching the reader not to look superficially at life events, but to go beyond the external and the apparent and to treat everything that unfolds as a message and direct guidance from God.

The account of his life story will also show that it is impossible to label Nursi as a follower of a particular 'group' or 'ideology'. For example, as will be discussed in this chapter, he stressed the importance of rational thought yet he realized its limitations; he had a Sufi upbringing both at school and at home, yet he did not feel compelled to concur completely with Sufi teachings; and he disagreed with the assumptions and conclusions of secular science, yet believed that they should be taught alongside the so-called Islamic sciences. Throughout his life it seems that Nursi did not find a perfect 'fit' with any group, his only source of inspiration being the Quran. It is possible therefore that Nursi's alienation

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[1] These tensions will be discussed in Chapter Six.

from the 'worldy' life in which he found himself actually fuelled him to write *The Rīsale*.

This chapter will examine Nursi's transition from the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said', following the demise of the Ottoman Empire. It is this second stage of Nursi's life, described by him as a period of spiritual rebirth in which he turned his back on the world, which eventually gave rise to the appearance of his *magnum opus*, the *Rīsale-i Nur*. At the end of his life is the period known as that of the 'Third Said', in which he emerges from relative isolation and engages once more – albeit in a limited capacity – with social issues and political life. It is these changes that led Nursi to take the Quran as his sole guide and to focus directly on the question of belief. It is important therefore to examine some of Nursi's work in the context of his life and worldview.

5.2 Historical context

In order to gain a better insight into Nursi's mindset, it is important to consider the historical context and look very briefly at some of the events in Nursi's life – in order to see whether – and, if so, how – the difficulties he encountered during his life journey shaped his perception of the world in any way, and whether his personal suffering served as a form of inspiration for his teachings and writings.

Though not a philosopher as such, Nursi nevertheless earned the title of *Bediüzzaman* or 'nonpareil of the age'[2] since he was considered to be the saviour of Islam at a time when materialism was at its peak and when science and philosophy were being used to draw mainly the elite and young people away from religion. It is this secular current that was partly the drive for Nursi to write the *Rīsale-i Nur*.

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[2] Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 23.

Nursi's life spans significant historical periods, including two world wars and the westernization programme of Kemal Ataturk. Ataturk's endeavour would lead finally to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and gave birth to the new westernised and secular Republic of Turkey. Nursi's magnum opus, the *Risale-i Nur*, a commentary on the Qur'an, was written over a period of six decades and reflects the historical transition of the Ottoman Empire, which successfully retained a multi-ethnic and multi-religious demographic, to a westernised, secular Republic. The aim of the *Risale* was to concentrate on the truths of belief and, contrary to the secular sciences, to empower people to read the 'book of the universe' through the Divine Names and attributes in order to move beyond the apparent and understand the meaning and purpose of creation.

Nursi was born in 1877 in Eastern Anatolia, a predominantly Kurdish area. Ottoman rule was by this time almost six centuries old and covered three continents – from Asia Minor to the Middle East, into south-eastern Europe and across North Africa. Its greatest years were the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries when, under the umbrella of Islam, the arts and sciences were able to flourish. Indeed it was believed that what gave strength to the empire was Muslim unity, which enabled it to bring together all the different tribal factions and minority ethnic groups.[3]

However, by the end of the nineteenth century, Europe had gained dominance over much of the Muslim world and by the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was crumbling. There had been a sense of decline since the opening decades of the nineteenth century, when the Sultans, ending with the autocratic rule of Sultan Abdulhamid,[4] tried to rescue the ailing Empire with a series of reforms, beginning with the army. This was followed by a period known as *Tanzīmat* or 'Restructure' (1839-1876) when reform expanded to cover all governmental areas, including

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[3] For more information on the Ottoman Empire see Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe : New Approaches to European History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[4] Ibid.

education. These reforms were the result of pressure exerted by Europeans and European-educated elites within Turkey, to modernize Turkey and to emulate European values – in order to save the Empire from its perceived 'backwardness' and decline.[5] Although these groups had conflicting ideas and objectives, what united them was the opposition to Abdulhamid's despotic regime and their insistence on the restoration of the Constitution.[6]

The announcement of the Constitution, which came into effect in 1908, was greeted with jubilation, but the period of freedom it engendered was not to last long. In fact the rule of the CUP [7] lasted only nine months, followed by discontent and a famous uprising known as the 'Thirty-First of March Incident'. According to one explanation it was the liberals *(aḥrār)* backed by the British who were behind the revolt.[8] Another explanation, propounded by Said Nursi, was that the revolt was due to factions favouring a speedy secularization and westernization programme, which pointed the finger at significant members of the CUP whose attitude towards religion had now become extremely lax.[9]

With the second Constitutional Era (1909-1922), and under the influence of the West, came the period in which the 'Turks' found their national identity as a single people, in contrast to Ottoman rule which united the different ethnic groups under the banner of Islam. After World War I, Mustafa Kemal, a nationalist and proponent of western philosophic materialism, headed the new secular republic. He named the country

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[5] Şūkran Vahide, *The Author of the Rīsale-ī Nur: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Istanbul: Sőzler Neṣriyat, 2000), 33-37.
[6] Ibid.*,* 53.
[7] The CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) were a secret organization who opposed Sultan Abdulhamid's regime and were in favour of a constitutional government. For more information on the CUP see Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union & Progress in Turkish Politics 1908-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973).
[8] See Erik J. Zurcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 103-104.
[9] Şūkran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (State University of New York Press: Albany, 2005), 71-72.

Turkiye ('the land of the Turks'), which by name at least disregarded the diverse culture of other, mainly Muslim, ethnic groups.[10]

5.3 Family context

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, the fourth of seven children, was born in 1877 in the village of Nurs, a small hamlet in the province of Bitlis, one of the six eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. He grew up on the small holding of land worked by his father, a Kurdish mullah named Mirza, and his mother, Nuriye. Nuriye, who originally came from a small village called Bilkan, about three hours away from Nurs, died during the First World War. All his brothers and sisters, apart from his youngest brother Abdulmecid, predeceased him. Both his parents were devout Muslims. Mirza was addressed as 'Sufi Mirza' owing to his being a follower of the *Khalīdīyyah* branch of the *Naqshbandī* Sufi order;[11] he died in the 1920s and was buried alongside his wife in the cemetery at Nurs.[12]

5.4 Nursi's educational background

Nursi spent his early years with his family in Nurs, but contrary to the rest of the family, who followed the Naqshbandi order, he never admitted to following a Sufi brotherhood, and would later describe Sufism as being inappropriate for the needs of the modern age. He was, nevertheless, hugely influenced by the renowned mystic Abd al-Qadir Jilani (d. 561/1165-6). He was also inspired and influenced by the spiritual changes he had witnessed in his elder brother Abdullah, and was eager to emulate him. And so at the age of nine he began Quranic studies under Abdullah's supervision, before moving on to works on Arabic grammar and syntax. Initially he attended the religious school *(madrasa)* in the nearby village Tag, near Isparit, and then proceeded to attend many other such schools

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[10] Colin Turner and Hasan Horkuc, *Said Nursi* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009), 23.
[11] For more information on the Naqshbandi Order, of which the Khalidiyya is a branch, see Hamid Algar, 'A Brief History of Naqshbandi Order' in Marc Gaborieau, Alexandre Popovic & Thierry Zarcone eds., *Varia Turcica XVIII – Naqshbandis* (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1990), 117-46.
[12] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey,* 4.

in eastern Anatolia. However, he was dissatisfied with the education provided mainly by members of the *Khalīdīyya* Order, quarrelling with the students and sometimes even the teachers and refusing to conform totally to their teachings.[13]

The young Said's early studies provided him with a good foundation of religious sciences on which he was able to base his work. Here he was able to complete his course of study, obtain his diploma and gain the title of Molla Said.[14] Impressed by Nursi's intelligence and his ability to memorize huge religious texts, another teacher, Molla Fethullah of Siirt, conferred upon him the title Bediüzzaman – Wonder of the Age. However, unlike some of his school teachers at the 'religious schools' Nursi was not afraid to cross boundaries and so while in Beyazīt, he spent day and night not only studying philosophy and religion but also teaching himself the new secular sciences.[15] In order to teach himself self-discipline he also for a short while tried to follow the path of the Illuminationist *(Ishraqīyyūn)* philosophers'[16] extreme discipline and asceticism.[17]

Nursi gradually became very popular. He was not afraid to voice his opinions as long as they were based on belief and he drew large crowds wherever he preached in mosques. But with increased fame came increased hostility due to jealousy on the part of some of the local

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[13] Ibid., 5-8.
[14] Ibid., 11.
[15] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 27-29.
[16] Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Ḥabash ibn Amīrak of Suhraward (d. 1191) is considered to be the founder of the Illuminationist School. Although following the Peripatetic philosophy developed by Ibn Sīnā, he has his own fundamental philosophy according to which all creatures emanate from the 'pure and immaterial light' (*nūr-al-anwār).* The Ishrāqiyyūn*, unlike other mystical orders, also have no *murshid* ('spiritual guide') other than the 'Angel of knowledge' and invisible master or interior guide that guides towards self knowledge. For more information on the Illuminationist School see E. J. Jurji, *Illumination in Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton N.J: University Press, 1938), 14; W.M. Thackston, 'Introduction', in W.M. Thackston (trans.), *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Sihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi* (London: The Octagon Press, 1982), 5; and H. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital,* trans. by W.R. Trask, Bollingen Series LXVI (Princeton N.J: University Press, 1988), 73.
[17] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey,* 11.

scholars. Unhappy with Nursi's activities, the governor of Mardin expelled the sixteen year-old and sent him under armed guard to Bitlis.

At the invitation of the governor of Bitlis, Tahir Pasha, a respected official of Sultan Abdulhamid II, Nursi made his way to Van, where he was to remain for fifteen years. While in Van, Nursi divided up his time teaching, acting as conciliator for tribal disputes as well as mixing with government officials and other intellectuals. It was also at this time that he taught himself the modern sciences. And feeling that his language abilities in Kurdish, Arabic and Persian were not adequate, he began to learn Turkish.[18]

The new atmosphere, brought about by endeavours such as the Tanzimat, in which the Ottoman Sultans came under pressure from Europe to make changes by separating religion from worldly functions and emulating the west's secularization programme, opened Said's eyes to the importance of incorporating the new sciences into the Islamic curriculum. For without them, he reckoned, it would be difficult to respond to criticisms directed at Islam – especially since these reforms and secularization programmes at that time had affected the views of some of the elite and educated, who, by making comparisons with Europe, were beginning to blame Islam for the empire's backwardness.[19] Apart from these influences other factors influenced Nursi in the direction he followed, which will be discussed next.

5.5 Intellectual and spiritual influences

As we have seen, Nursi received his early education from various *madrasas* in northern Kurdistan, tutored mainly by shaykhs from the Naqshbandi/Khalidi Sufi order. Despite the fact that most of his relatives and teachers were followers of that order, Nursi did not submit to any shaykh or become affiliated to any brotherhood; rather he took 'Abd al

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[18] Ibid., 28.
[19] Ibid., 29.

Qadir al-Jilani (d. 561/1165-6) and Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1034/1624), whom he called 'the Highest Saints', as his spiritual guides.[20] Although not opposed to Sufism per se, he believed that it was inappropriate for the modern age.[21] The reason for this is that he believed that it was time for a new method to be devised which blended science with the truths of religion. His dissatisfaction with the curricula of the Khalīdī *madrasas* gave him the determination to reform *madrasa* education by updating the religious sciences and also introducing modern science.[22]

During his visit to Mardin in 1892 he encountered two dervishes. One was a follower of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-97), who had been brought to Istanbul at that time by Sultan Abdulhamid to further his pan-Islamic policies; the other was an adherent of the Sanusi order. Although the sources are unclear on the identity of these dervishes, it is evident that they emphasized the importance of Islamic unity and education, and, in so doing, had a tremendous impact on Nursi. Inspired by them, he was determined to unite Muslims and revitalise Muslim civilization, but through constitutionalism and educational reform.[23]

5.6 Nursi's attempts of educational reform

External influences, especially during the Second Constitutional period (1908-1918), also influenced Nursi's thinking. These influences included the adoption of liberal ideas by the majority of Ottoman intellectuals and the spread, particularly among some of the elite, of positivism and materialism inherited from the West – trends which were already finding their way into the curricula of the new secular schools. For Nursi, then, the only way forward to halt the expansion of these materialistic ideologies was educational reform and the endeavour to combine modern sciences with religious sciences, for he believed firmly that science did not

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[20] Hamid Algar, 'Sufism and *Tarikat in the Life and Works of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi'* in *Journal of the History of Sufism*, 3 (2001), 200-04.
[21] Said Nursi, *The Letters*, 85.
[22] Turner and Horkuc, *Said Nursi,* 17.
[23] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 23.

contradict religion; rather, it supported the truths of belief. Nursi hoped that his idea of educational reform would come to fruition by uniting three educational traditions within the establishment of a university which he called the *Medresetu'z-Zehra*. The reform would take place by combining *madrasa* (traditional religious school) education with those of the *maktabs* (new secular schools), and the teachings of the *tekkes* (Sufi establishments), so that each would be able to complement and also "complete the deficiencies of the other."[24] Nursi advocated that the teachings at the new university and the new *madrasas* should be tri-lingual, stressing that Arabic language should be "compulsory", Kurdish "permissible" and Turkish "necessary", in order to ensure access to everyone and preserve unity.[25] He felt that the combining of religious and modern sciences was particularly important at this time, as many of the religious scholars or *ulama* believed that modern science clashed with certain 'externals' of Islam, hence the inclination to keep the two separate. However, Nursi saw no contradiction and believed that the only way the truth could become manifest would be by combining the two. Nursi tried to lift the veil of prejudice against science and to change the tendency towards the dualist ideas of what was considered 'religious' as opposed to irreligious – similar to the division between the sacred and the profane – by explaining that Islam comprehends everything including science:

> This is strange, to say the least, for how can something be in conflict with the very phenomenon that has given rise to it? For it is Islam which has shepherded the sciences, and even given birth to many of them. Yet the fallacy of conflict between Islam and science continues to prey on our minds, driving many to hopelessness and serving to close the doors of knowledge and civilization to many of the Muslim people.[26]

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[24] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 46.
[25] Ibid., 45.
[26] Nursi, *The Reasonings: A Key to Understanding the Qur'an's Eloquence*, trans. by Hūseyin Akarsu (Tughra Books: New Jersey, 2008), 4.

The benefits of this educational reform would be what Nursi was passionate about, namely the preservation of unity. The *ulama* would still be involved in the education in the Eastern provinces, and the introduction of the new sciences would help to uproot superstitions and false assumptions made about modern sciences and the erroneous belief that they contradicted elements of Islamic teachings. Also this could open the doors for spreading some of the useful aspects of constitutionalism. One such aspect would be that through its democratic principles, it would enable the creation of a consultative council which would run under the guidance and mutual consultation of the three divisions of Islamic education, namely the *madrasas,* the *maktabs* and the *tekkes,* with the *Medresetu'z-Zehra* University representing this ideal. Nursi believed that this multifaceted form of education would encourage debate and reduce the likelihood of "scholastic despotism."[27] Right up to the First World War it was these educational issues with which Nursi was mostly concerned, his aim therefore being to publicize his ideas on educational reform.

It was around June 1908 that Nursi presented his ideas on educational reform to the palace; by November 1908 the text was printed in *The East and Kurdistan Gazette*. In the article he stated that the new secular government schools, where children were taught only in the Turkish language, would alienate young people: Kurdish children had not learnt the language yet and feelings of separation would lead to disorder and uncivilized behaviour. He went on to suggest that as a starting point, three educational establishments should be set up in different areas of Kurdistan for different tribes where both religious and modern sciences were to be taught side by side. In this way the basis of education would be established and the Kurds' needs would not be ignored.[28] However, not only were Nursi's attempts at unity and inclusiveness rejected, they were seen as impertinent meddling with His Imperial Majesty's educational policies, and led to his arrest. Subsequently he was examined by state

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[27] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 47.
[28] Ibid*., 43.

affiliated doctors and sent to *Toptasi* mental asylum. But after a short period, and discussions with the hospital doctor, Nursi was released, as the doctor who examined him found no deficiencies in his mental health.[29]

The confirmation by the hospital doctor that Nursi was not insane did not please the palace, and the decision was made to send him back to prison. However, with the help of the Young Turks, somehow he managed to escape. Safely out of prison, Nursi stayed as a guest of some of the CUP's leading figures.[30]

Discontent with Abdulhamid's despotic regime meant that there were many uprisings in the Balkan provinces and so finally the Sultan had to give in and reinstate the Constitution, which he did on 23rd July, 1908. Thus the Young Turk Revolution had achieved its objective. People from all different minority groups came together and celebrated the victory of constitutionalism in the streets. However, although during the first days of the Constitutional Revolution Nursi worked closely with the CUP – mainly because he had the same aims of educational reform – this was not to last, and it was not long before he began to be disenchanted with them.[31]

Furthermore, Nursi's solution to the main enemy of ignorance – the building of the *Medresetu'z-Zehrā* – did not come to fruition. Funding had been approved and the foundations laid at a site near Lake Van but unfortunately on account of the breakout of the First World War, the project came to a halt and never resumed. Nursi fought in the war as commander of a militia force on the Caucasian Front; his military endeavours were later to earn him a medal. The inspiration for his work *Signs of Miraculousness* happened during this war and while in active combat.[32]

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[29] Ibid., 43-44.
[30] Ibid.*,* 51.
[31] Ibid.*,* 36-37.
[32] Ibid.*,* 107.

5.7 The 'Old Said': Nursi's involvement in politics

Three days after the military coup against Abdulhamid, Said Nursi, with the support of the CUP, delivered a speech in Salonica and also Istanbul. Entitled 'Address to Freedom', Nursi's speech stressed the importance of constitutionalism, but in a form that would be consonant with the precepts of the *sharī'a*. He believed that absolutist government and despotism were among the major causes of internal and external conflict and disunity, and that the only way freedom and progress could be achieved would be to ensure that the *sharī'a* was its foundation, since Islam itself, he claimed, contained the necessary requisites for progress and civilization.[33]

Nursi had first become politically aware in the early 1890s during his stay in Mardin, but it was only now that he was becoming fully engaged. Inspired by Namik Kemal, who had guided him and showed him what he called the 'middle way' *(muktasid mesleği)* in politics[34], Nursi strove to fight against what he believed where two extremist reactions: many people, it seemed, either recognised the freedom of the 1876 Constitution or they went to the other extreme by expressing the opinion that Islamic principles should be abandoned altogether and European civilization as a whole taken as a model for emulation. Nursi was thus at pains to point out that the liberal principles of constitutionalism were in fact in conformity with Islamic principles and so wholeheartedly supported the constitutional cause.[35]

The short period of freedom brought about polarity of ideas and much discontent. Said Nursi believed that constitutionalism could still be achieved if unity could be preserved and public order maintained. He did

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[33] Turner and Horkuc, *Said Nursi,* 14.

[34] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey,* 21.

[35] For a discussion on Nursi's arguments that democracy is in perfect harmony with the spirit of the *shari'a* see Mucahit Bilici, '*Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Said Nursi's Moral Philosophy*', published on-line http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cicm20 on 21 September 2010.

not take part in the 'Thirty-First of March Incident'; indeed, he tried to use his influence to persuade others not to join. Nevertheless he was arrested, only to be acquitted once it was proved that he had no part in it.[36]

In November 1922, Mustafa Kemal, President of the Grand National Assembly, invited Nursi to Ankara to congratulate him for the role he played in the victorious War of Independence. Mustafa Kemal was also keen to offer him a governmental position, but Nursi refused as he was not happy with the situation in Ankara. The government was mired in secular politics and religious obligations were being abandoned in favour of atheistic ideas of philosophical materialism. Disappointed with events in Ankara, Nursi returned to Van and spent the summer months in contemplation and the winter months preaching in the *Nursin* Mosque, where he attracted large groups of both religious scholars and students to his speeches. At this time his talks were less about politics and more about the fundamentals of belief.[37]

In February 1925, Nursi was approached by the Naqshbandī leader, Shaykh Said of Palu, to join him in a revolt against the government. Nursi, despite his concerns over the direction the country was taking politically, refused the request, stating that he was opposed to internal disunity; it was simply wrong, he said, and at odds with the spirit of the *sharī'a*, for 'brother to fight against brother'.[38] Nursi believed that the only hope for salvation was to use the truths of Quran and belief as guidance, and that focus should be placed on the extirpation of ignorance, which had always been the greatest enemy. Despite the fact that a large group of people in the Van area heeded Nursi's warnings, the Shaykh and his followers went

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[36] Vahide, *The Author of the Rīsale-ī Nur Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, 99.
[37] Turner and Horkuc, *Said Nursi*, 21.
[38] Ibid., 22.

ahead with the Revolt, which resulted in imprisonment, exile and execution for all those involved.[39]

Although Nursi took no part in the insurrection, he was nevertheless accused of having links with the rebels, and along with hundreds of other people was sent into exile in south-western Anatolia. This period marked the beginning of twenty five years of imprisonment, exile and unlawful harassment and house arrests for Nursi, authorized by the government. While in Burdur, Nursi continued to attract the attention of local people by giving sermons in the mosque. These sermons or teachings were later collected and made into a book called *Nur'un Ilk Kapisi* ('The First Door of the *Risale-ī Nur*'), which, according to Vahide, would be the seed of the *Risale-ī Nur* collection.[40] Worried by Nursi's popularity in south-western Anatolia, the authorities exiled Nursi for eight and a half years to Barla, a small village in the mountains of Isparta Province. These years marked the transformation of the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said' and the writing of the *Risale-ī Nur*.

Before discussing the reasons for the transformation of the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said', some of his works produced prior to this transformation will be briefly discussed.

5.8 The works of the 'Old Said'

Before 1921 Nursi published twelve pieces of work, mainly in the form of pamphlets; works published after this date, including the *Risale-ī Nur*, he attributed to the 'New Said'.[41]

It was between the years 1908 and 1910 that Nursi took advantage of the short period of time in which freedom to engage with the public and make speeches was allowed. At this time he was fully active in political life and

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Vahide, *The Author of the Risale-ī Nur*, 197.
[41] Ibid., 153.

spent much time propagating the advantages of constitutionalism. He tried to involve the public by inviting questions and offering answers in order to erase any doubts that constitutionalism might not be consonant with Islamic principles. These debates were collated into two volumes: *Muhakemat* ('The Reasonings') published in 1911, and *Munazarat* ('The Debates'), published in 1913.[42]

Nursi's political involvement also consisted of efforts to preserve unity under the banner of the *sharī'a*, both internally and externally. It was with this in mind that early in 1911 he went to Damascus and gave his famous sermon on what he described as 'six dire sicknesses in the social and political life and their cure'.[43] These sicknesses, he said, consist of despair and hopelessness; the death of truthfulness; the love of enmity; the lack of Islamic unity; despotism; and egocentricity. Nursi's suggested cure for these sicknesses was that people should not give up hope; rather, they should ensure that truthfulness, mutual love, trustworthiness, consultation, solidarity and freedom are maintained by following Islamic principles, for true civilization, he claimed, could be found only within Islam itself.[44]

It was during World War I that Nursi began to write his partial commentary on the Quran, *Isharat al-I'jaz* ('Signs of Miraculousness'). Other works published during this time include *Sunuhat* ('Inspirations') (1920); *Hakīkat Cekīrdeklerī* ('Seeds of Truth') (1920); *Nokta* ('Points') (1921); *Işarat* ('Indications') (1920-21); and *Lemeat* ('Gleams') (1921). All of these dealt with the causes of the decline of the Muslim world in general and the Ottomans in particular. His aim in writing *Sunuhat* for example, was to awaken the Muslim world to the importance of belief. He begins by stating that the 'externals' of religion, while important, have served to act as a veil over the important issues linked to the fundamentals of belief, which form ninety per cent of the religion, while

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[42] Ibid., 84-89.
[43] Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon* (Sozler Publications: Istanbul, 1996) 26-27.
[44] Ibid.

the externals form only ten per cent.[45] Nursi goes on to blame the indifference of many believers to the Quran on their inability to understand that it is more than a sacred book – it is the speech of God and it is directly addressing them.

> If the Quran had been shown directly in the fundamentals of religion, the mind would have naturally perceived its sacredness, which urges conformity (to the precepts of religion), is the rouser of the conscience, and is [the Quran's] inherent property. In this way the heart would have become sensitive toward it, and would not have remained deaf to the admonitions of belief.[46]

At the end of the other extreme Nursi had to confront the reactions of others who judged Islam through superficial understanding. Saddened by the obsession of many of the elite and 'educated' classes' attraction with secularization and westernization, in *Lemeat* ('Gleams'), a collection of writings on various subjects, Nursi makes a comparison between European literature and the Qur'an. He attributes the destruction of Western civilization to its separation from true Christianity, a tragedy which, he says, has led to inequality, dissipation and immorality and as a result the distress and corruption of individuals and society.[47] Nursi connects this corruption of society to the tendency to see the world as the work of 'nature' rather than as a work of divine art, as it is depicted in the Quran. Nursi's ideas on 'true civilization' will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

The New Said (1926-1948)

5.9 Nursi's inner struggles and spiritual rebirth

Nursi's mental and spiritual transformation began at some point during the second half of 1920 and was completed by the end of 1921. It was after

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[45] 'Externals of religion' here denotes the periphery rather than the core, or emphasis on rituals with little reference to belief.
[46] Vahide, *The Author of the Risale-i Nur*, 162-63.
[47] Ibid., 158-59.

his escape to Istanbul from the Russian prison camp that Nursi underwent a radical spiritual change. He had suffered greatly, both physically and mentally, on account of the harsh conditions of war and captivity, the loss of many of his students and also the events that had followed, such as the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the consequent transformation of society to a materialistic and secular one by the successors of the Empire. These events, together with the stark reality of death and separation and the transitory nature of the world, prompted Nursi to seek solitude and search for direction.[48]

Nursi was middle-aged when he went through this profound mental and spiritual crisis and eventual 'spiritual awakening'. Towards the end of his life he described his experience to one of his students, Mustafa Sungur:

> Sixty years ago, I was searching for a way to reach reality that was appropriate for the present age. That is, I was searching for a short way to obtain firm faith and a complete understanding of Islam that would not be shaken by the attacks of the numerous currents. First I had recourse to the way of the philosophers; I wanted to reach the truth with just the reason. But I reached it twice with extreme difficulty. Then I looked and saw that even the greatest geniuses of mankind had gone only half the way, and that only one or two had been able to reach the truth by means of the reason alone. So I told myself that a way that even they had been unable to take could not be made general, and I gave it up…….Then I had recourse to the way of Sufism and studied it. I saw that it was truly luminous and effulgent, but that it needed the greatest caution. Only the highest of the elite could take that way. So, saying that this cannot be the way for everyone at this time, either, I sought help from the Quran. And thanks be to God, the Rīsale-ī Nur was bestowed on me, which is a

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[48] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 163-164.

safe, short way inspired by the Quran for the believers of the present time."[49]

Nursi also refers to his two spiritual guides as being responsible for his transformation to the New Said. Firstly he said that reading 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani's *Futuh al-Ghayb* was responsible for 'carrying out drastic surgery on his soul' and 'smashing his pride'.[50] Secondly, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's *Maktubat* ('Letters') made him feel, he claimed, that it was addressing him directly, especially when he read: "Take only one *qibla!*" ('direction of prayer towards Mecca') or, in other words, take only one master, for only one master is necessary and there is no need to follow anyone else.[51]

Nursi's transformation happened in three stages. First came his realization that he had put too much importance on "human philosophy"; second came a period of intense self-examination, in which he questioned his own intentions and mistakes; and third was the epiphany that that the only guidance he needed was from the Quran itself. Moreover, he believed that it was only through the guidance of the Quran and employing both the mind and heart that his spirit could be healed, allowing him to escape from doubts and reach the truth. And so by the age of around forty-four Nursi's spiritual crisis was over and he believed that he had found what he was looking for.[52]

5.10 The New Said's Life and Works

Nursi had by this time turned his back on politics. The difference in the sermons he gave now was that as the New Said, he had moved away from integrating politics into Islamic principles and was now focusing more directly and with much greater intent on building up the foundations of

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[49] Ibid., 167.
[50] Ibid., 165.
[51] Ibid., 166.
[52] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 166.

belief.[53] It is not totally clear whether Nursi came to believe that religion and politics were incompatible per se, or whether he felt that within the modernist secular era a new way had to be found to spread the message of the Qur'an.

However, what is certain is that Nursi began to realise that religion played no part in the modern European capitalist ideals, and as Abu-Rabi points out, despite the mainstream understanding which takes a positive view of 'modernism', the minority Third World discourse points to the destructive origins of modernity,[54] one which Nursi described as "drawn far from the religion of Jesus"[55] and based on "waste and destructive competitiveness." [56] It was partly this realization and the need for the Quran to speak for itself rather than attempting to integrate its truths into any system that brought about the change from the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said', and the change in his approach.

Although Nursi kept out of political and, to an extent, social life, he nevertheless experienced very harsh conditions, which will be explained next.

5.11 Conditions during Mustafa Kemal's rule

Mustafa Kemal's positivist ideology led him to believe that the only way to progress was 'science': in his view, religion was a big barrier and thus Islam had to be eliminated or at least rendered ineffectual. With all opposition now silenced, Mustafa Kemal had the power to gain absolute control over the state. In 1924 he officially abrogated Article Two of the Constitution which recognised Islam as the state religion. He then abolished the Sultanate, dismantled the Caliphate and continued apace

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[53] Ibid., 177.
[54] Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi, *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State University of New York Press, Albany, 2003), 73-74.
[55] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 161.
[56] See Abu-Rabi, *Islam at the Crossroads,* 78.

with his radical westernization programme. His aim was to eliminate Islamic rituals, culture and traditions altogether and replace them with western secular ideas under the banner of nationalism. The disestablishment of Islam meant radical structural changes which began with control over education and the replacement of Islamic institutions, religious schools and Sufi meeting places with a government run education system.[57]

The new western, secular and modern system relied on cutting off any relationship or connection with the 'backward' Islamic past. This was accomplished very astutely by changing the concept of time and space itself. In 1926 the twenty-four hour clock was adopted in place of the *Hijrī* system and the traditional calendars were changed to the Western Gregorian calendar. In 1935, Sunday replaced Friday as the weekly holiday. The changes did not stop there. Young people had to be completely cut off from the past, and so by 1928 the Latin alphabet had replaced the Arabic alphabet and attempts were made to 'purify' Turkish by taking all foreign words, particularly Arabic and Persian, out of the language. But the change that caused the greatest resentment was when the call to prayer – the *adhān* – was changed from original Arabic to Turkish. [58] But what Mustafa Kemal could not eliminate was belief itself. Although the New Said was no longer actively involved in politics, he was nevertheless involved in what he termed the 'greater *jīhad'*, that is, the 'war of the pen'. Through the teachings of the *Risale-i Nur* he tried to show the destructive nature of materialist philosophy, pointing out that the only way to progress, felicity and salvation was to follow the criteria of the Quran.[59] As Al-Attas argues:

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[57] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 189-192.
[58] Gavin D. Brockett, 'Collective Action and the Turkish Revolution: Towards a Framework for the Social History of the Ataturk Era, 1923-38', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34, 4, (Oct., 1998), 44-66.
[59] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 193.

> Western civilization is constantly changing and 'becoming' without ever achieving 'being'. Its values pertain to the secular, material and physical realities of existence.[60]

When Nursi talks about the 'literature of civilization' it is the above aspect of Europe that he is criticizing.[61] Reviving belief in God was always Nursi's mission, but the important change that occurred in Nursi was the realization that the Qur'an was all that was needed. The rest of Nursi' life was devoted to promoting this cause.

5.12 The New Said's persecution

Nursi at this time was immersed in matters of belief and although he did not take part in any revolt against the government and discouraged others, particularly his students, from doing so, he still posed a threat to the new government on account of his fame and influence. It was thus important for the authorities that he should be kept out of sight and under tight control. Although acquitted of having any connection with the Shaikh Said Revolt of February 1925, he was nevertheless to be ostracised from the rest of society and thus began twenty five years of exile under oppressive conditions.[62]

Nursi's first place of exile was Burdur, a small town in south-western Anatolia. Unhappy with his activities and popularity, the authorities moved Nursi again. In 1926 he was sent to a small city called Isparta, to the east of Burdur. But Nursi continued to attract the attention of people who came to visit him and after only twenty five days he was deported again, this time to a remote village called Barla, which nestles on the hillside near the north-west shore of Lake Egīdīr.[63]

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[60] Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam,* 81.
[61] Nursi's discussion on 'literature of civilization' will be studied in greater detail in Chapter Six.
[62] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 185.
[63] Ibid., 189.

Barla was not a village that could easily be reached as it could not be accessed by car: people could only get there if they took a long trek by foot or on horseback or donkey. Although in 1928 the government granted an amnesty to others who had been deported for actively opposing the government, Nursi was denied this freedom and repressive measures to isolate him continued. He was therefore forced to remain in Barla for over 8 years and was allowed no books apart from the Quran. He was also only permitted to receive the occasional visitor. But Nursi looked at this situation as a mercy from God for it was here that he was able to write most parts of the *Rīsale-ī Nur*.[64]

> In addition, although 'the worldly' left all the influential and powerful leaders and shaykhs who could interfere in their world in the towns and cities and permitted them to meet with their relatives and everyone, they wrongfully isolated me and sent me to a village. With one or two exceptions they gave permission to none of my relatives and fellow-countrymen to visit me. My All-Compassionate Creator transformed that isolation into a vast mercy for me. It left my mind clear and was the means of my receiving the effulgence of the All-Wise Qur'an as it is, free of all malice and ill-will.
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> Also, 'the worldly' considered the two commonplace letters I wrote in two years at the beginning of my exile to be excessive. And now even, they do not look favourably on one or two visitors coming to me purely for the sake of the hereafter once every ten or twenty days or once a month; and they have harassed me because of this. My All-Compassionate Sustainer and All-Wise Creator transformed that tyranny into mercy, for He transformed it into a desirable solitude and acceptable retreat for me during these three months, which will gain a spiritual life of ninety years. All thanks be to God for all conditions, my condition....[65]

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[64] Ibid., 189.
[65] Nursi, *The Letters*, 67.

In April 1935, Nursi and a number of his students from all over Turkey were taken to Eskişehir prison, accused of organizing a political movement and undermining and challenging the regime of the day. Nursi was imprisoned for eleven months; fifteen of his students were sentenced to six months and the rest were acquitted. The conditions in the prison were very harsh, particularly for Nursi, who was placed in solitary confinement. But emulating prophet Joseph in the way he managed to reform the prison during his confinement; he turned these difficult conditions into what he called *Medrese-ī Yusufīye* ('The School of Joseph') and managed to complete *The Flashes* and also write another five treatises from the fourth book of the *Rīsale*, known as *Şualar* ('The Rays').[66] In 1936 Nursi was released from prison as there was no evidence of his being politically involved in the state's affairs. He was nevertheless seen as a threat due to his continuing popularity and at the age of fifty-nine he was exiled to Kastamonu in central-northern Anatolia. He was to live there for the next seven years, during which time he completed *Şualar* and wrote a new treatise called *Ayetu'l Kubra* ('The Supreme Sign').[67]

Nursi claims that he wrote *Ayatu'l-Kubra* for himself.[68] In it he describes himself as a traveller observing the universe in order to learn about and become acquainted with its Owner and to emulate the saints by moving gradually from the stage of 'imitative belief' *(taqlīdī īmān)* to the stage of *'ayn al-yaqīn* ('vision of certainty') or even *haqq al-yaqīn* or absolute certainty.[69] In effect this means moving away from seeing the world from a materialistic perspective to connecting everything to The Wise and All Knowing Creator. Here again Nursi strives to prove that belief in the Creator is the only cure for the illnesses of individuals and society at large.[70] Some of these writings will be discussed in greater detail in

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[66] Said Nursi, *The Rays* (Sözler Neşriyat: Turkey, 1998), trans. by Şükran Vahide.
[67] Ibid., 123-198.
[68] Ibid., 123.
[69] Ibid., 153.
[70] Ibid., 162-63.

Chapter Six.

In 1943 Nursi was arrested again, charged this time with creating a new Sufi order. This accusation was linked to a section in *Şualar* about Prophetic Traditions which discuss the signs of the end of time.[71] Once again Nursi transformed prison life to a 'school of Joseph' and with great difficulty, since there was no paper available, wrote the last main section of the *Rīsale* on the *Fruits of Belief*.[72] With Nursi having once again transformed prison life for the inmates, consequently making life easier for the prison officials, the guards turned a blind eye to the copying and distribution of the writings in the prison:

> My friends who are studying together with me in this School of Joseph! Since the reality is this and the Rīsale-ī Nur proves it so clearly and decisively, like sunlight, that for twenty years it has broken the obstinacy of the obdurate and brought them to believe; we should therefore follow the way of belief and right conduct, which is easy and safe and beneficial for both our own worlds, and our futures, and our lives in the hereafter, and our country and nation; and spend our free time reciting the suras of the Qur'an that we know instead of indulging in distressing fancies, and learn the meaning from friends who teach them; and make up for the prayers we have failed to perform in the past, when we should have done; and taking advantage of one another's good qualities, transform this prison into a blessed garden raising the seedlings of good character. With good deeds like these, we should do our best to make the prison governor and those concerned not torturers like the Angels of Hell standing over criminals and murderers, but righteous masters and kindly guards charged with the duties of raising people for Paradise in the School of Joseph and supervising their training and education.[73]

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[71] Ibid., 97-102.
[72] Ibid., 213-289.
[73] Nursi, *The Rays*, 222.

Once again Nursi and his students were acquitted by the court as Nursi was able to show clearly that his writings were about religion and not about politics. He was nevertheless still seen as a threat right throughout his life and was under constant harassment and periods of house arrest.

In 1944 Nursi was exiled to Emirdag, where he continued to write. It was here that the *Risale-i Nur* itself was closely examined by the authorities, and on account of its inability to fathom exactly what Nursi was trying to say in his work, the Committee from the First Ankara Criminal Court reported that Nursi was suffering from hallucinations.[74] This was not the first time Nursi had been accused of mental illness: the Old Said also had to justify his sanity to a hospital doctor.[75]

Unfortunately for Nursi and fifty-four of his students, the court in Afyon did not agree with the Denizli court's decision regarding their release, and in 1948 Nursi and his students were once again imprisoned, this time under much harsher conditions, with Nursi again kept in solitary confinement. Nursi was now over seventy years of age and apart from the harsh conditions he had to endure for nearly one year while in custody, he also had to put up with several attempts on his life. During his periods of exile and imprisonment Nursi was allegedly poisoned seventeen times.[76]

However, as always, while initially Nursi grieved over the terrible conditions he experienced, in particular incidents such as the death of his nephew and the destruction of his home town, which added to his grief,[77] he states that through the guidance of the Qur'an he was able to attribute his sorrow to his own heedlessness and see beyond the apparent:

> The heedlessness arising from my intense grief showed me the world to
> be terrifying, empty, desolate, and about to collapse over my head. My
> spirit sought a point of support in the face of innumerable hostile

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[74] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey,* 266.
[75] Ibid.*,* 44.
[76] Ibid.*,* 285-90.
[77] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 315.

calamities. Its endless desires which stretch to eternity were seeking out something to satisfy them. While awaiting consolation in the face of the sorrow and grief arising from those endless separations and deaths, that endless devastation, suddenly the reality was manifested of the All-Wise Qur'an's verses:

Whatever is in the heavens and on earth-let it declare the praises and glory of God; for He is Exalted in Might, the Wise. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: it is He Who gives life and death; and He has power over all things.

It saved me from that pitiful, terrible, sad, separation-stained imagining, and opened my eyes. I saw that the fruits at the tops of the fruit-trees were looking at me as though smiling. "Note us as well," they were saying. "Do not only look at the ruins." The verses' reality brought the following thought to mind:

Why does an artificial letter written in the form of a town by the hand of man, who is a guest on the page of Van's plain, being wiped out by a calamitous torrent called the Russian invasion sadden you to this extent? Consider the Pre-Eternal Inscriber, everything's True Owner and Sustainer, for His missives on this page of Van continue to be written in glittering fashion, in the way you used to see. Your weeping over those desolate ruins arises from the error of forgetting their True Owner, not thinking that men are guests, and imagining them to be owner.

A door to reality opened up from that error, from that searing sight, and my soul was prepared to accept the reality completely. Like iron is plunged in the fire so that it softens and may be profited from, that grievous sight and terrible state were fire which softened my soul. Through the reality of the above verses, the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition showed it the effulgence of the truths of belief, causing it to accept it.[78]

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[78] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 317.

Throughout his life, Nursi was either imprisoned under very harsh conditions or exiled to small and scarcely accessible villages. Initially Nursi suffered greatly from the harsh conditions which he experienced. He admits to five kinds of exile which particularly impacted on him: the realization that he was ageing; his sense of loneliness due to attachment to the things he loved; being alone on the mountains at night; the changing of the seasons which reminded him of separation from his native land and relations and finally his own spiritual exile.[79] Despite all these trials or what he refers to as 'heedlessnes' on his part,[80] Nursi began to see that ultimately his situation was decreed by God and it was only through his own experiences and the attempt to understand them through the guidance of the Quran, that he was inspired to write the *Rīsale-ī Nur*.

As Abu-Rabi opines:

> Nursi reached the peak of his creativity in times of great sadness. This is why his most dynamic and moving writing seems to have been accomplished as he withstood great distress.[81]

5.13 The 'Third Said' and the last years of his life

It was during the 1950s at the time when the Democrat Party came to power that Nursi underwent another slight transformation, moving from the second stage of his life when he was totally disengaged from politics to the next stage, later referred to as his 'Third Said' period. During these last ten years of his life he saw fit to become more involved in social and political life of Turkey. This change in approach came about because he considered the policies of the Democrat Party to be an improvement on those of the Republican Party. The Democrats might have been secular in outlook, but they were opposed to communism and were more supportive of the freedom of religious activity. Nursi therefore offered the

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[79] For a discussion on some of Nursi's sense of exile and alienation see Chapter Six.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Abu-Rabi, *Islam at the Crossroads*, 71.

government guidance on religious matters as it was important, he believed, that politics should serve religion and not the other way round. He did not, however, engage actively in politics himself, and also deterred his students from any involvement. Nursi's method of fighting unbelief remained the same, with emphasis on a spiritual struggle or '*jihad* of the word', relating to matters of belief based on the criteria of the Quran.[82]

Nursi was now eighty years of age and wished to spend the last few years of his life in Urfa, in south-eastern Turkey. And so in 1960 he asked a few of his closest students to take him there. People gathered in crowds to welcome him. Yet even now Nursi was seen as a threat and the authorities, concerned by the attention Nursi was receiving, issued orders that he be removed to Isparta. But unfortunately Nursi was too ill to be moved and in the early hours of Wednesday 23rd March 1960 he passed away in his sleep. Thousands of people came to Urfa for Nursi's burial, but even in death Nursi was not left to rest. On 27th May 1960 a military coup took place and the Democrat Party officials were sent to prison. Subsequently the new government had Nursi's corpse disinterred and taken to an undisclosed location.[83]

It was always Nursi's wish that he should not be the focus of attention and that his followers should use the *Rīsale-ī Nur* and not him as a guide to Quran, in order to understand the meaning and purpose of their creation.[84] The fact that he is buried in an unknown place is an indication, perhaps, that his wish was finally granted.

5.14 Conclusion

In one sense we can understand that Nursi's whole life was one of exile and alienation from worldly life. Although he had much respect for his family, he did not strictly follow the same Sufi Order as they did, and

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[82] Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey,* 305.
[83] Ibid., 345.
[84] Ibid., 334.

although he owes much to his schools for his religious education, he was not totally content with their approach. He felt that too much emphasis was put on externals of religion and very little emphasis on the inner meanings of the Quran. He also disagreed with the dualistic approach towards science and religion.

Not only was Nursi dissatisfied with the religious schools who regarded 'the natural sciences' with suspicion but he also felt alienated from many of the young intellectuals who either associated Islam purely with its 'externals' or associated the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and its failures, and specially Abdul Hamid's despotic regime, with the 'backwardness of' Islam. Nursi felt that lack of knowledge and prejudice was the cause of these two extreme views hence the need for educational reform.

The emphasis of the 'Old Said' on science and philosophy at this time, that is, at the beginning of the twentieth century, was due to the onslaught of secular western ideas that were finding a foothold in Ottoman society and impacting on the minds of the elite and the young alike. For Nursi it was important to respond to these new materialistic and secular ideologies that were emerging and which, with their supposedly definitive scientific proofs, were being used to deride the idea of belief in God. Nursi felt that at this time, the same scientific 'language' was needed to silence their unfounded claims.

Also Nursi did not find himself to be a complete fit with the Ottoman Empire or the Young Turks' initiatives. His initial support for the Ottoman Empire was contingent upon the continued support for the *sharī'ah* as well as western technology. Therefore although in essence he supported the Empire he believed that reform was needed. Being against the despotic regime of Abdulhamid, Nursi sided with the Young Turks who favoured constitutionalism, which he thought would be inclusive of all approaches, enabling a refreshing exchange of ideas. However, Nursi's involvement in

the constitutional movement was brief. His involvement was not due to political aspirations or nationalist zeal but, rather, was down to the idea that a democratic system would enable more tolerance and understanding between different factions and, as a result, enable changes to be brought about in the school curricula where all educational disciplines could be offered.

After the Turkish victory in the War of Independence, Nursi witnessed the lack of enthusiasm for Islamic principles among the leaders of the new regime. He believed that this lack of enthusiasm was in a way a silent consent to the arrival of Attaturk's secularization and westernization programmes. For a brief period Nursi was in a spiritual turmoil until, he says, the Qur'an came to his rescue and facilitated the transformation of the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said', bringing with it the understanding that he should withdraw from political life. His new mission was to wage a 'jīhad of the word' – an internal jīhad by way of the exposition of Qur'anic truths rather than any kind of struggle with weapons.

However, despite the fact that Nursi was no longer involved in politics in any way, he was still seen as a threat throughout his life – his ideas on belief simply did not fit in with the new secular materialist current. He was therefore accused of suffering from mental illness on at least two occasions in an attempt, through hospitalization, to keep him out of the way and thus deprive him of an audience. When attempts to prove his insanity failed, other strategies were pursued in order to silence him.

Nursi believed that the *Rīsale-ī Nur*, served as a means of guidance not only for him, but also for his fellow prisoners as well as being the right antidote for the sicknesses of today's so-called 'civilized' societies which imposed secularism within all their institutions.

Inspired by the Qur'an, Nursi was able to write his *magnum opus*, the *Rīsale-ī Nur*, which he claimed would address the main ailment of modern

times, namely the need for belief, meaning spiritual development through the understanding of the 'self' vis-à-vis the creation. He believed that this was something which all individuals and all societies were in need of, even though they were not aware of their need. Despite the constant persecution Nursi suffered at the hands of the authorities, he tried to avoid all disputes and confrontations that might cause disunity and continued to take a positive stance to promote belief. Nursi promotes the *Rīsale-ī Nur* as the safest and the most direct and accessible way to belief, enabling individuals at all levels, as it did him, to read 'the book of creation' in the correct way.

CHAPTER SIX

The concept of sadness *(ḥuzn)* in Nursi's works

6.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to determine whether Nursi has his own unique approach in understanding Quranic concepts such as *ḥuzn*, and if so, to what extent, if at all, it contributes to a greater understanding of this concept.

Similar to the Izutsian analysis of *ḥuzn* in the Quran, in order to obtain a holistic view of the meaning of this concept the word *ḥuzn* has been selected from various parts of the *Rīsale* in order to throw light on Nursi's *Weltanschauung* and to go beyond the basic meaning by examining its relation with other concepts such as happiness.

In order to understand whether *ḥuzn* is a negative feeling and therefore must be obliterated or whether in fact it is a positive concept and its existence is there to serve a purpose, a short summary of previous discussions will be provided for easy reference and comparison with terms such as the power of reason.

Izutsu in his Quranic analysis has shown that all semantic fields in the Quran are directly connected to the concept of *Allah.*[85] The exegetes in this study also concur with Izutsu.[86] Therefore since ontologically *Allah* is the central focus of all the concepts in the Quran including *ḥuzn*, this chapter will also examine Nursi's understanding of Divine Unity. Alternative views such as Sufi mysticism and the Christian understanding of 'sadness' and 'happiness' will also be briefly discussed in order to obtain a broader understanding of this concept. The subject of free will will be discussed in relation to discourses on Divine Determining and theodicy in

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[85] See 2.6.2.
[86] See 3.6.11.

order to understand how Nursi reconciles human free-will with Absolute Divine Sovereignty.

The exegetes in this study had very little to say about why Prophets were reprimanded for being sad.[87] It is hoped that a discussion on the infallibility of Prophets will also enable a greater discourse and openness on the subject.

6.2 Summary of previous discussions on *ḥuzn*

The typology revealed the notion that in order not to have *ḥuzn* in the negative sense there should be no deviation from belief in One God.[88] This belief in One God would necessitate the belief in the Last Day; submission with total sincerity in carrying out righteous deeds; regular prayers and giving charity. The example of 'God's devotees' and 'the friends of God' is given in the Quran as people who have reached this state of *taqwa* ('trust and submission') by following the criterion that is the Quran rather than their *nafs* ('ego'). The thematic categorization of *ḥuzn* in the typology also showed the positive aspect of this concept as a means of the Divine test, a means of reassurance and guidance for believers, often through the experience of a calamity such as loss of goods or loved ones *(balā)*. It also showed that *ḥuzn* has the potential to be a means of guidance or misguidance depending on whether one chooses the path of the Quran or heedlessness through the covering *(kufr)* of the truth.[89]

The Izutsian analysis served as an important tool for identifying other members of the semantic category of *ḥuzn*. According to the findings *ḥuzn* had a strong semantic relation with the word 'belief' and its opposite 'unbelief'. The semantic field of these two terms provided other useful categories related to *ḥuzn* such as the connection of belief to belief in 'One God', the 'hereafter', 'guidance', 'thankfulness', 'trust', 'submission' and

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[87] See 3.8.
[88] See Chapter Two.
[89] Ibid.

'happiness' as opposed to 'unbelief' connected to the concepts of '*shirk*' ('association of partners with God'), 'denial of the hereafter', 'misguidance', 'ungratefulness' and 'misery'.[90]

Also the Izutsian analysis of the concept of *ḥuzn* revealed the fact that there are many words in the Quran with similar meaning as *ḥuzn*, but that when these concepts were examined in accordance with the Quranic *Weltanschauung* ('world view'), the different nuances of these concepts became apparent. It became clear that *ḥuzn* has a strong connection with loss, such as the loss of goods or loved ones. It also showed that if the Quran is not used as the criterion *(furqan)* to follow in life then one will have sadness in the negative sense, as one's imbalance and alienation from the truth and hence the whole universe, would lead to corruption *(fisq)*, oppression *(zulm)* and ungratefulness *(kufr)*. The analysis also revealed the positive side of *ḥuzn*, a feeling given by God, as without it there could be no concept of happiness; and also how belief in One God, i.e., the submission to Divine Determining and Destiny, the non-attribution of effects to causes through having total trust in God *(taqwā)* can be a means of comfort, reassurance and guidance.[91]

As discussed in Chapter Three, most of the exegetes studied also interpret the concept of *ḥuzn* in terms of loss of possessions, including loved ones. They also concur that *ḥuzn* can be obviated if one follows God's guidance through the criteria of revelation. According to the exegetes, the key to guidance is the acceptance of God's Mastership *(rubūbīya)* and one's own servitude, in other words giving up all ownership and instead attributing everything to its true Owner. They therefore agree that it is attachment that is the cause of sadness and that detachment from ephemeral things is the only way to obviate *ḥuzn*. Similar to the findings of the Izutsian analysis they also concur that accepting God's Mastership *(rubūbīya)* comes through belief followed by submission, that is performing prayers,

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.

carrying out righteous deeds and giving charity in total sincerity and trust *(taqwā)*, which translates to carrying out those acts purely for the sake of God and not for the *nafs* ('self-interest').[92]

All the Muslim thinkers studied in Chapter Four, with the exception of Al-Rāzī, also give a similar definition of *ḥuzn* to Al-Kīndī's definition as: "psychological pain occurring due to the loss of an object of love or the missing of things desired".[93] Al-Rāzī does not appear to include possessions in the definition and confines sadness as being exclusively due to the loss of loved ones.[94]

The solution all the Muslim thinkers offer for the obviation of *ḥuzn* is to use the power of reason in order to save the soul from excessive indulgence. The focus of most of the Muslim thinkers therefore is on changing thought processes in order to facilitate behaviour change. Their reasoning begins with the understanding that all possessions, including loved ones are given to us as a loan to look after and are to be given back to its rightful Owner whenever it is requested.[95]

All the Muslim thinkers studied are also of the opinion that *ḥuzn* occurs as the result of wrongly expecting permanence from transient things. Mīskawayh states 'dissolution' and 'annihilation' is part of the nature of transient beings and Al-Kīndī concurs, stating that 'sorrow is by convention and not by nature', therefore to expect something which is not part of its inherent nature, is the attitude of those 'devoid of mind'. It appears that most of the Muslim thinkers are in agreement that grief is not God-given but is self-induced and that through the use of human reasoning it should be repelled.[96] Nursi, however, argues that there is a limitation to human reasoning. As will be discussed in the next section his emphasis is that

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[92] See Chapter Three.
[93] See discussion in 4.10.
[94] Ibid.
[95] See Chapter Four.
[96] Ibid.

since the Quran is the criterion for truth, human reasoning has to be subservient to it.[97]

6.3 Limitation of 'human reasoning'

Human beings are defined as rational animals able to use their powers of judgment, discrimination and clarification in order to understand universal truths.[98] In the chapter on Izutsian analyses, it was understood that words are symbols charged with meaning and therefore cannot be understood in isolation, as they represent a whole 'world-view', and therefore it is important to go beyond the dictionary definition in order to understand what they signify.[99] In the Quranic analysis it was also shown that God is deemed to be the source of knowledge and guidance and it is the soul which interprets that knowledge.[100] Therefore as Attas puts it, knowledge is merely "the arrival of meaning in the soul".[101]This is exemplified by the verse in the Quran, where God commands Muhammad, who is illiterate, to "Read!", and he asks "How should I read?" God then instructs him to "read, read in the name of your Lord…"[102] Therefore the reading here is not concerned so much with his functional illiteracy but with the emphasis that anyone has the potential to read and understand the 'book of creation' if it is seen as a sign or symbol pointing to other than itself.

However, the doctrine of atheistic naturalism enforced a barrier for viewing the world beyond the visible and measurable. Nursi saw this as a huge threat especially since it was hidden under the deceptive guise of 'advancement' and 'progress'. This was a time when the Ottoman Empire had come to an end and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's (1881-1938) new Republican Turkey encouraged the youth to leave the so-called 'outdated' religion behind and emulate the 'civilised' countries of the west by

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[97] See Nursi, *The Words*, 106.
[98] See Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, 121-122.
[99] See Chapter Two.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Al-Attas, 133.
[102] Quran 96:1.

following the 'modern' and 'scientific' doctrines of materialistic naturalism.[103] The secular scientific view regarded the universe in purely physical and materialistic terms, with all existence referring only to itself. Viewed in this light, that is, devoid of real meaning and without any connection to a transcendent source its manipulation for self-interest could be justified. Nursi termed this stance 'self-referential' *(ismī)* as opposed to 'other-indicative' *(ḥarfī)*, meaning creation pointing to other than itself. He objected to the fallacious claim that this atheistic stance followed 'scientific knowledge' when in fact its view of existence only went as far as the shell, missing out on the kernel or the true source of knowledge.[104]

Similar to the Quran[105] and Muslim thinkers[106] Nursi appeals to the individuals' use of power of reason in order to investigate *(tahqīq)* rather than accept blindly through imitation *(taqlīd)*. Emulating the Quranic style, Nursi either asks rhetorical questions or aims to appeal to human beings' faculty of logical reasoning in order to encourage his readers to see beyond the apparent face of existence:

> Is it possible that another hand could share in this amazing order and all-comprehensive organisation based on an absolute measure and balance? Who other than the Unique One of Unity, the Absolutely All-Wise and All-Powerful One, could share in this art, this regulation and government, and this raising and sustaining?[107]

Although Nursi does not deny the possibility of reaching revealed knowledge through interaction with nature, it can be said that he is somewhat in agreement with Al-Ghazali in his critique of Muslim philosophers, that too much pre-eminence is given to the faculty of human

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[103] See 5.11.
[104] These Nursian concept pairs *ma'nā-i ismī* and *ma'nā-i ḥarfī* represent two opposing hermeneutical positions. The former interprets the cosmic narrative as a sign pointing to the Creator of the cosmos, while the latter cuts off that connection by pointing only to its material existence. See Nursi, *The Words*, 757.
[105] See Chapter Two.
[106] See Chapter Four.
[107] See Nursi, *The Words*, 96-97 and 101.

reason and that in fact human will is free to choose and is therefore not compelled by reason.[108]

For Nursi, true happiness cannot be obtained if human reason is not subservient to Divine revelation, for in order to understand important concepts pertaining to the hidden realm *(malakūt)* such as angels and the hereafter, revelation is needed. However, he stresses that the corporeal or visible realm *(mulk)* is also necessary as it serves as a mirror or mirrors for God's manifestation and therefore without it the connection between the two would not be possible.[109]

Before discussing Divine Unity which is the kernel of all the concepts in the Quran, including *ḥuzn*, the Nursian definition of *ḥuzn* will be examined.

6.4 The Nursian concept of sadness

6.4.1 The Definition of *ḥuzn* according to Said Nursi:

According to Nursi, there are two kinds of *ḥuzn*. He describes the first kind in terms of total disconnection:

> a dark sorrow arising from the lack of friends, that is, having no friends or owner, which is the sorrow produced by the literature of civilization, which is stained by misguidance, enamoured of nature, tainted by heedlessness….

He describes the second meaning of *ḥuzn* in more positive terms:

> This arises from the separation of friends, that is, the friends exist, but their absence causes a yearning sorrow. This is the guidance-giving, light-scattering sorrow which the Qur'an produces.[110]

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[108] See Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. M.E. Marmura (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2000).
[109] For discussion on limitation of reason and the two concept pairs of *mulk* and *malakūt* see Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 84-94.
[110] Nursi, *The Words*, 424.

6.4.2 *ḥuzn* due to 'literature of civilization'

Nursi's comparison of 'literature of civilization' and the Quran throws further light on the differences between the two *ḥuzns*. The first definition describes *ḥuzn* as "the dark grief and hopeless wailing of a motherless orphan and the low uproarious song of a drunkard", while the latter meaning of *ḥuzn* is described as "the yearning, hopeful sorrow of an elevated lover, arising from a temporary separation and patriotic songs urging victory or war and high self-sacrifice." Nursi's use of the term 'civilisation' refers to moral decadence and decline of religion and not scientific progress. In other words Nursi stresses the fact that literature that is divorced from revelation will ultimately lead to misguidance and grief. Therefore according to Nursi, the literature from Europe that is disconnected from revelation, with all its apparent glamour, will only lead to the corruption of society. In contrast the literature of the Quran does not deceive but helps to unveil reality. Whereas the former looks at the universe from the spectrum of nature, the latter looks at creation from the point of view of 'Divine Art'.[111] Nursi then goes on to explain that both these paths produce sorrow, but the sorrow connected to the 'literature of Europe', that is, a world-view disconnected from belief is a worldly sorrow, as compared to the 'sorrow of love' produced by revelation:

> The literature born of Europe excites a pathetic sorrow *[bir ḥūznū]* arising from the lack of friends, from being ownerless; not an elevated sorrow *[ulvī ḥūzūn]*.
>
> For it is a woebegone sadness *[hüzn-ü gamdar]* inspired by deaf Nature and blind force. It shows the world as desolate, not in any other way.
>
> It depicts it in this way, holds the sorrowing [*maḥzūn*] man there, places him ownerless among strangers, leaving him without hope.

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[111] Nursi, *The Words*, 770-771.

Due to this feeling of consternation it has given him, he gradually sinks into misguidance; it opens up the way to atheism, from whence it is difficult to return. Perhaps he never will return.

Qur'anic literature produces a sorrow *[bīr ḥüznü]*, but it is the sorrow of love *[âsıkane ḥüzündür]*, not of orphans. It arises from separation from friends, not from the lack of them. Its view of the universe, in place of blind Nature, is as conscious, merciful Divine art; it does not speak of Nature.

Instead of blind force, it describes wise and purposeful Divine power. The universe, therefore, does not take on the form of a desolate wasteland.[112]

Nursi further asserts that the aspect of the 'Quranic *ḥuzn*'which he calls 'a yearning sorrow' *(ḥūzn-ū mūṣtakane)* with its elevated feeling as compared to the 'dejected mournfulness' *(gamlı bīr ḥūznū)*, through its connection to the Creator of the universe enables a positive view of love rather than distress. And because of this, the melancholic *(maḥzūn)* person feels once again connected to society.[113] As discussed above, he contrasts this with the 'literature of Europe' which promotes 'worldly life' as glamorous and eternal and states that in fact this claim is a big lie, a deception and thus a cause of sadness due to its real nature of impermanence and transience.[114]

a mendacious tongue in mankind's mouth, attached a lustful eye to its face, dressed the world in a scarlet petticoat, and does not recognize sheer beauty.[115]

In comparison he states that the 'literature of the Quran' does not stir up desire but instead:

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[112] Ibid., 771.
[113] Ibid., 772.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 771.

It imparts a sense of love of the truth, a passion for sheer loveliness, an appreciation and taste for beauty, a desire for reality. And it does not deceive. It does not look at the universe from the point of view of Nature; it speaks of it from the point of view of Divine art, with the colouring of the Most Merciful. It does not confuse the mind. It instils the light of knowledge of the Maker. It points out His signs in all things.[116]

An example of positive *ḥuzn* can be demonstrated in Nursi's description of Prophet Muhammad's prayer in the quote below. He explains that just as eating and drinking does not cause us boredom because of the fact that we acknowledge that we need it the necessity of prayer should be acknowledged in a similar way, given that it sustains the heart, the spirit and the subtle faculties of human beings. Describing the prayer of the Prophet, he says:

And he supplicates with such want, so sorrowfully *[ḥazīnane]*, in such a loving, yearning, and beseeching fashion that he brings the whole cosmos to tears, leading them to join in his prayer.[117]

Nursi also appears to be pointing to the positive understanding of *ḥuzn* when he describes the crying of the cats and the songs of the nightingales, and in fact all creatures, reciting God's Names. Similar to Prophet Muhammad's prayers, he describes their mournful (*ḥazīn*, derivative of *ḥuzn*) sounds as part of their inherent recognition of their Creator. He explains that their 'sorrowful song' is merely their way of giving thanks to God:

However, the nightingale's small wage is the delight he experiences from gazing on the smiling, beautiful roses, and the pleasure he receives from conversing with them and pouring out his woes. That is to say, his sorrowful *[ḥazīn]* song is not a complaint arising from animal grief, it is thanks *[shukr]* in return for the gifts of the Most Merciful. Compare the

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Nursi, *The Words*, 248.

bee, the spider, the ant, creeping insects...[118]

According to Nursi, the obviation of *ḥuzn* is possible only by understanding the nature of created beings, which by virtue of their impotence and dependence point to the One who is not impotent and transient.

As discussed in the introduction (6.1), the concept of Divine Unity will be discussed next, as Nursi believes that Divine Unity is the key to belief without which the universe would be an extremely frightening and sorrowful place to live in.

6.5 Nursi on Divine Unity

The Quranic understanding of God's Unity can be described as 'Absolute', meaning that God is self-subsistent, not divisible or temporal. He is also transcendent and immanent, meaning that although God's essence can never be known, He can be understood through the manifestation of His Names in creation. Only human beings, by dint of being created in *Imago Dei*, have the potential to have the most comprehensive knowledge of Him and thus be able to manifest His Names as vicegerents, at the highest level.[119]

Nursi's emphasis in the *Rīsale* is that spiritual progress is not about becoming 'more God-like', but more about realizing that all the Names and Attributes reflected in creation, including human beings, do not belong to themselves but are signs pointing to God's Divine Unity, and therefore more about stripping off or dis-owning these attributes by returning them to its rightful Owner.[120]

For Nursi the aim of writing the *Rīsale-ī Nur* was that it should serve as mirror or a prism for the light of the Quran, and this is why he constantly

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[118] Ibid., 364.
[119] Ibid., 265, 268, 329, 339 and 442.
[120] For further discussion on Divine Unity see Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam*, 12 and Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Quran* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 1-12.

refers to the verses in the Quran for inspiration and explanation. He considered the Quran itself as being the most beneficial and much needed 'salve' for the darkness and wounds of this time.[121]

What in particular concerned Nursi was not the kind of misguidance which was due to genuine lack of knowledge, but those who use the tools of knowledge in order to promote misguidance:

> You know that if misguidance arises from ignorance, it is easy to dispel. Whereas if it proceeds from science and learning, it is difficult to eliminate. In former times, the latter were one in a thousand, and of these only one in a thousand could come to the way through guidance. For such people fancy themselves. And they do not know, but they suppose that they do know. I think that Almighty God has bestowed the Words at this time, which are flashes of the Qur'an's miraculousness, as an antidote to this atheistic misguidance.[122]

Although the *Rīsale-ī Nur* cannot be strictly classed as a systematic exegesis of the Quran, it is nevertheless, considered as an interpretation of the Quran accessible to today's audience from all levels of knowledge in the field. The *Rīsale* covers all the major themes, focussing in particular on the concept of Divine Unity *(tawhīd)*.

Mirroring the Quran, Divine unity is the kernel of Nursi's arguments and reasoning. He indicates clearly that Divine Unity is the key to happiness and the only route for the obviation of 'negative' sadness.[123] Therefore the only way human beings can attain the highest level of perfection as God's vicegerents on earth and thus become the most valuable and happiest of all animate beings is through the affirmation of Divine Unity. He stresses that it is only through this affirmation that existence becomes meaningful, alternatively without this connection the universe would resemble 'a house

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[121] Nursi, *The Letters*, 41.
[122] Ibid., 41.
[123] Nursi, *The Rays*, 23.

of sorrows', 'a ruin' and 'a place of utter confusion'.[124]

> Indeed, all man's perfections and his lofty aims are tied to the affirmation
> of Divine Unity and find existence through its meaning. For if there was
> no unity, man would be the most unhappy of creatures, the lowest of
> beings, the most wretched *[ḥūzūnlūsū]* of the animals, the most suffering
> *[azāblisi]* and sorrowful *[gamlisi]* of intelligent beings.[125]

According to Nursi therefore true belief in One God means not only
recognizing God's Unity, but also submission through trust and non-
ascription of partners to Him.

6.6 Belief and unbelief

As discussed previously the 'line of philosophy' or so-called 'civilization'
which sees everything as pointing to itself *(ma'nā-i ismī)*[126] obscures the
connection to the transcendent, hence reducing the value of beings merely
to the sum of their parts, whereas creation seen in terms of signs pointing
to God (Other-indicative/*ma'nā-i ḥarfī*), or as Nursi describes it, seen as
"officials charged with duties and bearing meanings…" brings the whole
cosmos to life, demonstrating a sense of purpose in existence.[127]

The Izutsian Quranic analysis and the chapter on the work of the Quranic
exegetes show that belief is about having trust *(tawakkul)* in God which
can only come about if the knowledge gained is actualised through
submission.[128] Therefore the acknowledgement of truth requires not only
the faculty of reasoning but also the heart, the intuitive faculty that has to
be constantly open to guidance. The Nursian schema also shows the
interdependence of belief and submission, stressing that belief should be
through investigation *(taḥqīq)* and must be followed by submission. Also,
Nursi stresses that belief is not static but subject to change, therefore no

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[124] Ibid., 614.
[125] Ibid., 23.
[126] See 6.4.2.
[127] Nursi, *The Words*, 466.
[128] See Chapters Two and Three.

one can claim that they have reached belief and are no longer susceptible to wrong-doing.[129]

According to Nursi then, the only way *ḥuzn* can be obviated is through belief. He uses the same Quranic concept pairs of light and darkness in order to differentiate between belief and unbelief. He opines that worldly enjoyment is very brief, likening it to 'poisonous honey' whereas the only route to a true pain-free pleasure is to be found in belief in God.[130] Moreover, because unbelief views the past and future as a dark void, there can be no real pleasure, whereas the light of belief illuminates both the past and the future resulting in everlasting contentment.

> As for life, if it is without belief, or because of rebelliousness belief is ineffective, it will produce pains, sorrows *[ḥūzūnler]* and grief *[kederler]* far exceeding the superficial, fleeting enjoyment it brings. Because, since, contrary to the animals, man possesses a mind and he thinks, he is connected to both the present time, and to the past and the future. He can obtain both pain and pleasure from them. Whereas, since the animals do not think, the sorrows *[ḥūzūnler]* arising from the past and the fears and anxieties arising from the future, do not spoil their pleasure of the present. Especially if the pleasure is illicit; then it is like an altogether poisonous honey. That is to say, from the point of view of the pleasure of life, man falls to a level a hundred times lower than the animals. In fact, life for the people of misguidance and heedlessness, and indeed their existence, rather their world, is the day in which they find themselves. From the point of view of their misguidance, all the time and universes of the past are non-existent, are dead. So their intellects, which connect them to the past and the future, produce darkness, blackness for them. Due to their lack of belief, the future is also non-existent. Furthermore, because they think, the eternal separations resulting from this non-existence continuously produce darkness for their lives. Whereas, if belief gives life to life, then through the light of belief both the past and the future are illuminated and find existence. Like present time, it produces

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[129] Nursi, *The Words*, 322.
[130] Ibid., 158.

elevated, spiritual pleasures and lights of existence for the spirit and heart – in respect of belief.[131]

Therefore, according to Nursi without belief there is a sense of powerlessness since happiness and desires are never totally satiated in an ephemeral world, and it is this expectation of permanence in a world of transience that results in a sense of alienation. When the world is seen through the eye of belief, however, the 'orphan-like' state disappears and the universe becomes alive and meaningful:

> The view of unbelief sees human beings, powerless as they are to secure their desires, as ownerless and without protector; it imagines them to be grieving *[ḥūzūn]* and sorrowful *[keder]* like weeping orphans on account of their impotence. The view of belief on the other hand, sees them as living creatures; not as orphans but officials charged with duties; as servants glorifying and extolling God.[132]

In the Izutsian analysis of the word *ḥuzn,* in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the Quranic usage of the word, its opposite – 'happiness' – was also discussed. Similarly, Nursi's definition of happiness will also be discussed, especially in the context of the Enlightenment, when the discourse on happiness was extended from salvation in the next world to the right to pursue happiness also in this world.

6.7 Nursi's definition of happiness

Before the Enlightenment the dominant Protestant view was that being in a hopeless state of sadness is a sin, while happiness was considered as "a sign of God's grace" to be "pursued into every crevice of the self." Although religious sanction was given for the pursuit of happiness, the insistence that sadness was a sin inevitably made the task of becoming happy a burden. By the end of the seventeenth century, with the advent of the Enlightenment, some less religious scholars began to argue that

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[131] Ibid.
[132] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 652.

happiness was also intended for this world.[133] The Enlightenment emphasis on human agency and pursuit of happiness in this world, as an end in itself, brought about a change in individuals' expectations. As noted by Porter the question of "how can I be saved" was now less relevant than "how can I be happy". [134] The quest for happiness therefore in the worldly sense became a 'right', a natural human condition that all human beings were entitled to aim for. Jean-Jacques Rousseau followed the Jacobin constitution that the goal of society should be 'common happiness'.[135] He made a distinction between pleasure and happiness, stating that the sensations and sentiments used purely for the satisfaction of human needs is pleasure and does not necessarily result in human happiness, whereas happiness is linked more to a 'psychological state' of balance between one's needs and powers.[136] Nevertheless he did not connect happiness to the next world but only to the here and now and therefore did not believe that happiness was in any way connected to the understanding of the ultimate cause of creation. Although Rousseau admitted that total happiness is unattainable, he believed nevertheless, that the aim of society should be to work towards it, even if it meant having to change the world and human nature. His book *The Social Contract* outlined how society should be organised in order to give the maximum opportunity for all individuals to have access to happiness.[137]

When Nursi criticises western civilization or the literature of Europe, it is this 'misguided philosophy' of the Enlightenment which limits knowledge to only the sensible world that he finds corrupting. Nursi stresses that the expectation that ephemeral beings will satiate human beings' desire for eternal happiness would not be possible since due to their transient nature they would not be in a position to satisfy and therefore such expectation

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[133] Darrin, M. McMahon, 'What Does the Ideal of Happiness Mean?', *Social Research*, 77, 2 (2010), 476.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., 480.
[136] For a more detailed discussion on Rousseau's concept of happiness see Stephen, G. Salkever, *Rousseau and the Concept of Happiness*, Polity, 11, 1 (1978), 32-45.
[137] Ibid.

would ultimately end in pain:

> "all worldly happiness is but a fleeting flash of lightning in relation to an eternal sun."[138]

This is similar to Al-Rāzī's explanation that the idea of endless pleasure is a delusion since it cannot exist without pain, due to the fact that pleasure can only be perceived after its loss.[139] Nursi adds that the desire for eternal happiness is part of mankind's natural disposition and therefore possible, but that the quest for this has to go beyond the gratification of instinctive desires. He therefore defines happiness as being of two kinds – one which stimulates the self/ego, and the other which silences it:

> Joy (neṣ'e), too, is of two sorts. One stimulates the desires of the soul. This is the mark of civilization's literature in the fields of theatre, cinema, and the novel. While the other joy silences the soul, and is subtle and mannerly, innocently urging the spirit, heart, mind, and subtle faculties to attain to sublime matters, to their original home and eternal abode, and their companions of the hereafter; it is the joy the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition produces. It fills man with eagerness for Paradise and eternal happiness (neṣ'e) and the vision of God's beauty.[140]

As discussed previously, the key to happiness according to Nursi is to love what is reflected in the mirror of creation rather than look for eternal happiness in the mirror itself which is transient, or, as Nursi describes, an empty 'shell' to be thrown away after the truth within it has been uncovered.[141] His description of worldly enjoyment through reference to civilization's literature is similar to Al-Kīndī's boat analogy,[142] with both emphasizing that those who look for happiness in the ephemeral world will inevitably be faced with sorrow. However, while Al-Kīndī does not directly refer to the Quran as the source of happiness, Nursi's arguments are

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[138] Nursi, *The Words*, 247.
[139] See 4.9.3.
[140] Nursi, *The Words*, 424.
[141] Ibid., 229.
[142] See 4.5.7.

directly based on the verses in the Quran which he considers as a salve for every kind of spiritual illness and disease.[143]

While Al-Kīndī equates happiness only with the world of the intellect and therefore recommends total detachment from the worldly life,[144] Avicenna does not deny that some happiness can be attained by all even for those within the 'sensual rank'.[145] Mīskawayh takes the middle position, stating that apart from those who have reached the spiritual rank, happiness in this world can be achieved by those at the bodily rank, but they must have the intention and desire to reach the spiritual level.[146] Nursi approaches the interpretation of happiness in a somewhat different way. He does not deny that everyone experiences happiness in this world but stresses the quality of happiness itself, stating that happiness associated with the worldly life only gives a very brief feeling of joy and owing to its transient nature can never satiate hence causing much sorrow instead of happiness, whereas spiritual happiness is everlasting:

> O man who is addicted to enjoyment *[zevk]* and pleasure *[lezzet]!* I am seventy-five years old, and I know with utter certainty from thousands of experiences, proofs, and events that true enjoyment, pain-free pleasure, grief-free joy, and life's happiness are only to be found in belief and in the sphere of the truths of belief. While a single worldly pleasure yields numerous pains; as though dealing ten slaps for a single grape, it drives away all life's pleasure.[147]

6.8 Permanence versus transience

While Nursi concurs with the Quranic typology, the Izutsian analysis, the exegetes and the Muslim thinkers covered here with regard to recognition of ephemerality of the worldly life and the importance of spiritual

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[143] Nursi, *The Letters*, 41.
[144] For a discussion on Al-Kīndī's distinction between 'sensible' and 'intelligible objects' see Adamson, *Al-Kīndī*, 151-153.
[145] See 4.7.3.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Nursi, *The Words*, 163.

happiness, he differs with regard to the necessity of transitoriness and transient beings per se. The Muslim thinkers appear in the main to view the existence of ephemeral objects in a negative light, appearing to make a neat divide between the material and spiritual world and emphasising that in order to have a happier life one should get rid of as many worldly possessions as possible.[148] Nursi approaches the futility of attaching oneself to transient beings in a different way. He stresses that the existence of transience is in fact necessary, since without it one would not be able to see it for what it really is:

> If you want permanence in this transitory world, permanence comes from transitoriness. Find transience with regard to your evil-commanding soul so that you may be enduring.
>
> Divest yourself of bad morals, the basis of the worship of this world. Be transitory! Sacrifice your goods and property in the way of the True Beloved. See the ends of beings, which point to non-existence, for the way leading to permanence in this world starts from transitoriness.[149]

Nursi points out the contradictory state of human beings obsessed with externals and yet never totally satiated and expounds in much of his work the important role of creatures as sign posts to be read in the correct way, that is, not pointing to themselves but pointing to the One who is not ephemeral. In this way he shows how the creation should be read, stressing that it is in fact through the recognition of the impotence and transient nature of created beings that one can find a way to permanence. Therefore their existence as sign posts pointing to the Other is absolutely essential.

> O my ignorant soul! Know that the world and its beings are certainly ephemeral, but you may find a way leading to permanence in each ephemeral thing, and may see two flashes, two mysteries, of the manifestations of the Undying Beloved's Beauty.

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[148] See Chapter Four.

[149] Nursi, *The Words*, 229.

Yes, it is within the bounty that the bestowal is to be seen and the favour of the Most Merciful perceived. If you pass from bounty to bestowal, you will find the Bestower. Also, each work of the Eternally Besought One makes known the All-Glorious Maker's Names like a missive. If you pass from the decoration to the meaning, you will find the One signified by way of His Names. Since you can find the kernel, the essence, of these ephemeral beings, obtain it. Then without pity you can throw away their meaningless shells and externals onto the flood of ephemerality.[150]

According to Nursi therefore, the book of creation (macrocosm), has to be read, but in the correct way, and revelation is the means to read the book of creation correctly. The whole of the *Risale-i Nur* can be seen as a tool for understanding the Quranic interpretation of creation.

Nursi points to what he believes is the wrong belief held by some that the saints abandoned the world. He explains the subtle difference between being 'in the world' and 'of the world', opining that neither the companions nor the saints abandoned the world, nor did they through heedlessness look only to the transitory face of creation in order to satisfy their base animal desires; rather, they looked beyond externals and "loved the face of the world which looks to the hereafter", seeing all creatures as the mirrors of Divine Names.[151]

Nursi refers to the Quranic story of Abraham and his existential dilemma of searching for eternal love within an ephemeral realm, until he utters the words: "I love not those that set".[152] By examining the nature of created beings, Abraham realises that the Creator of the universe cannot be subject to the same conditions as His creatures and therefore must be outside of the realm of existence:

> And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham said to his father Azar, "Do you take idols as deities? Indeed, I see you and your people to be in

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[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., 510.
[152] Ibid., 229.

manifest error."

And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain [in faith].

So when the night covered him [with darkness], he saw a star. He said, "This is my lord." But when it set, he said, "I like not those that disappear."

And when he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my lord." But when it set, he said, "Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray."

And when he saw the sun rising, he said, "This is my lord; this is greater." But when it set, he said, "O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah.

Indeed, I have turned my face toward He who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah."[153]

Nursi elaborates on this verse explaining the futility of being attached to ephemeral beings and states that in order to be saved from the despair of transience everyone needs the assistance of this phrase. There is clearly a Sufi influence in Nursi's work. He quotes from Jāmī (1414-1492)[154] in order to express the idea that all beings in their different tongues cry out "there is no god but God" and so human beings as vicegerents of God should also detach from "the metaphorical beloved" in order to be able reach the "undying beloved":

Want only One (the rest are not worth wanting).

Call One (the others will not come to your assistance).

Seek One (the rest are not worth it).

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[153] See Quran, 6: 74-79.
[154] For more information on Nur ad-Dīn Abd ar-Rahmān Jāmī, famous Persian fifteenth century poet and historian see Hamid Algar, Jāmī and Sufism, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2008), XIV, 5, 475-479.

See One (the others are not seen all the time; they hide themselves behind the veil of ephemerality).

Know One (knowledge other than that which assists knowledge of Him is without benefit).

Say One (words not concerning Him may be considered meaningless).[155]

Nursi states that it is this attachment to 'metaphorical beloveds', that is, the hopeless and wretched condition of human beings who expect permanence within a transient world, which brings about pain and suffering. He explains that the heart which is created for eternal love cannot truly love ephemeral beings, and therefore in order to avoid regret followed by sorrow and grief one should not attach oneself to things which are 'lost on setting':

It made me weep, the verse I love not those that set, which was uttered by Abraham (PBWH), and which announces the universe's passing and death.

The eyes of my heart wept at it, pouring out bitter tear-drops. The verse causes others to weep, and it is as though it weeps itself. The following lines are my tear-drops: they are a sort of commentary of some words present within the Divine Word of God's Wise One, the Prophet Muhammad.

A beloved who is hidden through setting is not beautiful, for those doomed to decline cannot be truly beautiful. They may not love with the heart, which is created for eternal love and is the mirror of the Eternally Besought One, and should not be loved with it.

As for a desired one who is doomed to be lost on setting, such a one is worthy of neither the heart's attachment nor the mind's preoccupation. He may not be the object of desires. He is not worthy

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[155] See Nursi, *The Words*, 230. (The words in brackets are Nursi's explanation).

of being regretted with the sorrow and grief that follows. So why should the heart worship such a one and be bound to him?[156]

6.9 Denial of death: Sorrow due to misguidance, heedlessness and ungratefulness

Ernest Becker (1924-1974) in his book *The Denial of Death* explains that in a physical world where everything perishes, due to the fear of death, there is the tendency to attempt to transcend the dilemma of immortality by inventing some kind of 'immortality project' or *causa sui*. The desire for immortality pushes people to endeavour to be part of something which symbolizes immortality. This may be the wish for sons,[157] who will continue to carry their title or the creation of tall buildings or towers as a symbol of the desire for eternity. According to Becker, the failure to create such immortality projects leads only to two options, severe depression or drugging oneself out of awareness:

> Modern man is drinking and drugging himself out of awareness, or he
> spends his time shopping, which is the same thing. As awareness calls for
> types of heroic dedication that his culture no longer provides for him,
> society contrives to help him forget.[158]

Becker helps the reader to identify the so-called immortality projects as a lie, and nothing more than self-deception and a delusion in which society engages, but he fails to openly offer a solution for this ontological dilemma.[159]

Nursi describes human beings' need for eternity and the ephemerality of the world in a similar way but offers a solution for achieving this desire for eternity. The solution Nursi offers is belief and the understanding of the

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[156] Nursi, *The Words*, 228.
[157] This analogy of 'sons' and 'wealth' with the wish for eternity is also mentioned in the Quran. See 3:14, 9:24 and 26:88
[158] Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 47-66.
[159] For a discussion on Becker's 'immortality project' see Becker, *The Denial of Death* and C.Turner, Wealth as an Immortality Symbol in the Quran: A Reconstruction of the *māl/amwāl* Verses, *Journal of Quranic Studies*, 8, 58-83.

nature of beings and the importance of regarding them as sign posts not to themselves but to the Other. Addressing the caring professionals he states that the only solution to overcome sadness lies in belief:

> By analogy, the country is also a household, and the fatherland, the home of the national family. If belief in the hereafter rules in these broad homes, true respect, earnest compassion, disinterested love, mutual assistance, honest service and social relations, un-hypocritical charity, virtue, modest greatness, and excellence will all start to develop.
>
> It says to the children: "Give up messing around; there is Paradise to be won!", and teaches them self-control through instruction in the Qur'an.
>
> It says to the youth: "There is Hell-fire; give up your drunkenness!", and brings them to their senses.
>
> It says to the oppressor: "There is severe torment; you will receive a blow!", and makes them bow to justice.
>
> It says to the elderly: "Awaiting you is everlasting happiness in the hereafter far greater than all the happiness you have lost here, and immortal youth; try to win them!" It turns their tears into laughter.
>
> It shows its favourable effects in every group, particular and universal, and illuminates them. The sociologists and moralists, who are concerned with the social life of mankind, should take special note. If the rest of the thousands of benefits and advantages of belief in the hereafter are compared with the five or six we have alluded to, it will be understood that it is only belief that is the means of happiness in this world and the next, and in the lives of both.[160]

Nursi states that the negative view of creation is due to the disconnection of creation from the Creator, something which he experienced himself at times due to heedlessness, until the light of belief rescued him:

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[160] Nursi, *The Rays*, 247.

> Then I saw within the animal world another grievous *[ḥazīn]* world which
> was swathed in darkness and would make anyone feel pity and in which
> young were struggling in their need and powerlessness. I was sorry I had
> looked through the eyes of the people of misguidance. Suddenly, belief
> gave me other spectacles and I saw the Name of All-Compassionate rise
> in the sign of clemency; it transformed and lit up that pitiful world in
> joyous and beautiful fashion, changing my tears of complaint and sorrow
> *[ḥūzūn]* into tears of joy and thanks.[161]

The quotation above indicates that similar to the Izutsian and exegetes
Quranic analysis,[162] Nursi acknowledges the fact that *ḥuzn* can be a means
of guidance. Seen through the eyes of misguidance, the world became a
bleak and cruel place for Nursi but when seen through the eyes of belief
he was able to view the world differently. It is essential to point out here
that although Nursi was experiencing the negative kind of *ḥuzn* as
described by him since it was connected to seeing the world with the eyes
of misguidance, nevertheless it served as means of test and guidance for
him as it gave him the opportunity to throw away what he called the
spectacles of misguidance and instead view the world with the eyes of
belief. Therefore there is an indication here that either the existence of
negative *ḥuzn* may in fact not be negative if it does not endure, or through
God's compassion it was transformed to a positive *ḥuzn*, for in this case it
served as a means of guidance and had a positive outcome.

Also similar to the findings of Izutsian Quranic analysis Nursi connects
unbelief *(kufr)* to heedlessness, misguidance and ungratefulness.[163] In the
Izutsian analysis it was discovered that belief is very closely related to the
concept of *shukr* ('to give thanks') which is also connected to the meaning
of being grateful, and its opposite unbelief therefore is connected to the
idea of ungratefulness.[164] In the above quote Nursi admits that he was

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[161] Nursi,*The Rays*, 641.
[162] See Chapters Two and Three.
[163] Ibid.
[164] See 2.6.6 and 2.6.7.

looking at the world through the eyes of people of misguidance and by turning to God through submission and total impotence, God through his compassion transforms the negative view of the world for him, and understanding that God does not create anything without a reason, he offers thanks *(shukr)*.[165]

If 'worldly happiness' is nothing more than 'poisonous honey' as Nursi expresses,[166] then it can be understood that in fact the fleeting sweet taste can no longer be enjoyable with the knowledge that it will end. He explains further that through the eyes of misguidance, both the past and future are viewed as non-existent: the people that have passed away have gone to non-existence, while the future for them and everyone around them is bleak since without the concept of the hereafter the future will also be seen as a journey towards non-existence. Nursi states that when the past and future are viewed in this light, the whole universe becomes dark, resembling a kind of hell.[167] As discussed before, this is why Becker stresses that in order to survive death anxiety, people engage in immortality projects for themselves.[168] For Nursi, it is this view of creation – one that is seen through the eyes of misguidance – that cuts off the present from the past and future, whereas the light of belief connects the present to the past and future, giving the assurance that the manifestation of existence is everlasting, and in turn resulting in true and enduring happiness:

> For the people of misguidance, the world is full to overflowing with deaths, separations, and non-existence; for them, the universe becomes a sort of Hell. Having only a flash of existence, everything is surrounded by never-ending non-existence. The past and the future are filled with the darkness of non-existence; they may find a sad *[ḥazīn]* light of existence only in the fleeting present. While through the mystery of the Qur'an and

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<footnote>165 Nursi, *The Rays*, 641.</footnote>
<footnote>166 Nursi, *The Words*, 158.</footnote>
<footnote>167 Nursi, *The Letters*, 351.</footnote>
<footnote>168 See 6.9.</footnote>

the light of belief, a light of existence becomes apparent which shines from pre-eternity to post-eternity; they may become connected with that, and through it secure eternal happiness.[169]

Nursi explains further that in the realm of belief there is a kind of timelessness and a sense of permanence, whereas in the realm of misguidance and heedlessness life has only a brief existence and its enjoyments are as insubstantial and as illusory as a dream, and thus will, on account of its inability to satisfy, undoubtedly result in regret and sorrow. Nursi therefore reiterates that in order to satisfy one's needs for immortality, all one's actions should be for the sake of God:

> There is the famous saying: "A moment's separation lasts a year, and a year's union passes as swiftly as a moment." I say the complete opposite to this: a moment's union for God's sake within the bounds of the Enduring One of Glory's pleasure is a window of union, not of only a year, but a permanent window. While not one year, but perhaps a thousand years spent in heedlessness and misguidance are like a second.

> Since everyone strongly desires a long life and yearns for immortality; and since there is a means of transforming this fleeting life into perpetual life and it is possible to make it like a long life; for sure anyone who has not lost his humanity will seek out the means and try to transform the possibility into a reality and will act accordingly. Yes, the means is this: work for God's sake, meet with others for God's sake, labour for God's sake; act within the sphere of 'For God, for God's sake, on account of God.' Then all the moments of your life will become like years.[170]

Nursi also describes his own life time when he experienced sadness due to separation from his homeland and friends, particularly when he was in exile. He talks about five kinds of exile which he personally experienced namely:

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[169] Nursi, *The Letters*, 351.
[170] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 33.

1) Old age/loss of youth

2) Sad sense of separation and exile due to attachment to things he loved

3) Sadness due to separation from his native land and relations

4) Lonesomeness of the night and the mountains

5) Spiritual pain due to exile

Nursi's sense of alienation with regard to the above feelings of exile will be discussed below.

6.10 Nursi's experience of sadness due to loss of youth, separation, alienation and a sense of exile

Nursi states that the foremost reason he has written the *Rīsale* was to serve as a guide and reminder that would acknowledge his impotence and address his own shortcomings.[171] The whole of the *Rīsale* therefore is written in a reflectional and confessional style detailing his own personal experience.

Nursi talks about the hardships and difficult obstacles he had to endure particularly due to old age, separation from friends and the pain and loneliness he felt spiritually because of the treatment he received while imprisoned. He shares his own life experience in order to show that the pain and sorrow given by God had a purpose. For Nursi found that through recourse to belief, those experiences provided the opportunity for guidance for him. He lists those experiences under various hopes linked to the main pillars of Islam. Therefore while he associates his initial feelings with his description of the negative *ḥuzn*, he explains that through the light of belief his negative view changed, transforming his sorrow and sense of alienation into the positive, 'light-scattering' and 'guidance-giving' *ḥuzn*.

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[171] See Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 'Advice to the Elderly', 470.

> Respected elderly brothers and sisters who have reached the age of maturity! Like you, I am elderly. I am going to write the 'hopes' I have found in my old age and some of the things that have befallen me, out of the desire to share with you the lights of consolation they contain.[172]

Through the examples of sixteen hopes linked to the main pillars of Islam, namely belief in the Merciful God, the Prophet, the Quran, the hereafter and Divine Determining, Nursi explains how the light of belief changed his pessimistic view of the world and his difficult experiences into a positive one.[173] It is this light of belief given by the Merciful God that enabled him to realize that his initial negative view was due to heedlessness and to accept that the difficulties and calamities he experienced were given by God for a reason and therefore rather than feel sorry for his wretched state, he realized that the calamities which made him sad were there to serve as a means of guidance and thus he became thankful.[174]

6.10.1 Obviation of *ḥuzn* through belief in God's Mercy

Nursi attributes the sorrow he personally experienced to his own heedlessness, while seeing the guidance he received as coming not from external causes but directly from Divine Mercy. He enables the reader to share his inner most feelings by describing not just his thoughts but also the circumstances that attended when these thoughts occurred. He states that it was "at the time of the afternoon prayer" and "late autumn" when he was standing on top of a mountain and viewing the world that he began to experience negative feelings with regard to his 'old age'. The afternoon prayer appears to signify an end to the day and autumn the apparent death of life and the insignificance of everything when viewed from the top of a mountain. It is during that moment of 'heedlessness' that his mind began to be filled with dark thoughts and feelings of sorrow. Then Nursi describes how grateful he was when suddenly through God's

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[172] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 287.
[173] Ibid., 286-288.
[174] Ibid.

Divine Mercy these negative feelings of sadness and separation were transformed into a powerful sense of hope and reassurance:

> For I saw that I had become old. The day too had grown old, and so had the year; the world itself had aged. As the time of departure from the world and separation from those I loved drew ever closer, the realisation of my own old age shook me severely. But then all of a sudden, divine mercy unfolded in such a way that it transformed that plaintive sadness and separation into a powerful hope and shining light of solace.[175]

Nursi explains that God's mercy is manifested in all creation and open to all. But the only way the veil of darkness can be drawn is to acknowledge God as the All-Compassionate Lord and ask for His Mercy. Here Nursi explains that in order to build such a relationship with God sincere belief is needed which includes submission, such as the performance of the five daily prayers.

> To those who, like me, have grown old, I say this: the All-Compassionate Creator presents himself to us in a hundred places in the All-Wise Quran as the Most Merciful of the Merciful, and always sends His mercy to the assistance of living creatures on the face of the earth who seek it, and every year fills the spring with innumerable bounties and gifts from the Unseen, sending them to us who are needy for sustenance, and manifests His mercy in greater abundance relatively to our weakness and impotence. For us in our old age, therefore, His mercy is our greatest hope and most powerful light. It may be obtained by forming a relation with the Most Merciful One through belief, and performing the five daily prayers, by being obedient to Him.[176]

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[175] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 287.
[176] Ibid., 287-288.

Again it was on top of a high mountain, perched on a tree whilst in exile and in captivity that Nursi felt extremely sad and lonely. He expresses these in terms of five exiles intermingled with each other: the spiritual pain due to his exile, the loss of the people whom he loved and who had now passed away, separation from his native land and friends, the loneliness of the mountains, and his separation from the world.[177] Feeling the pangs of these sorrowful exiles, Nursi searched for a light of hope and through belief in God his negative view of the world changed:

> Elderly men and women! Since we have a Compassionate Creator, there can be no exile for us! Since He exists, everything exists for us. Since He exists, the angels exist too. The world is not empty. Lonely mountains and empty deserts are full of Almighty God's servants. Apart from His conscious servants, stones and trees also become like familiar friends when seen through His light and on His account. They may converse with us and give us enjoyment.[178]

> Yes, evidences and witnesses to the number of beings in the universe and to the number of the letters of this vast book of the world testify to the existence of our All-Compassionate, Munificent, Intimate, Loving Creator, Maker, and Protector; they show us His mercy to the number of living creatures' members, foods, and bounties, which may be the means to His compassion, mercy, and favour, and indicate His Court. The most acceptable intercessor at His Court is impotence and weakness. And precisely the time of impotence and weakness is old age. So one should not feel resentful at old age, which is thus an acceptable intercessor at a court, but love it.[179]

Therefore through the light of belief Nursi is able to feel a sense of oneness with the rest of the universe, connected even to stones and trees

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[177] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 292.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid., 292-293.

by the virtue of the fact that they just like everything else in creation are connected to God through their contingent and dependent existence and all are like signs or mirrors manifesting His Names.

Nursi seems to imply that if God is the Protector of all creatures in the world who are dependent on Him for their existence, then it no longer makes sense to feel lonely and sad or be frightened of anything except Him and to trust the fact that one's feelings of loneliness may have a reason; in this case for Nursi, his sorrow through feelings of detachment was a means of guidance, an opportunity for him to realise his weakness and impotence which acted as intercessor for his old age. If old age helps one to realize one's impotence and turn to God's court for mercy then Nursi opines, one should not be resentful about loss of youth; rather, one should relish it.[180]

Going back to the definition Nursi provides for negative and positive *ḥuzn*,[181] if this feeling of loneliness Nursi experienced was the means for him to realize his impotence, then these negative feelings of isolation and disconnectedness cannot be said to have been ultimately bad, as what may have started as a negative *ḥuzn*, through the light of belief and his recognition of impotence, was transformed into a positive view of creation. This seems to imply that, in the same way as the existence of the state of 'transitoriness' is necessary in order to be able to see it for what it really is,[182] the existence of apparently negative *ḥuzn* is also necessary in order to become aware of one's impotence which provides the opportunity to seek God's Mercy.

Nursi once again shares his personal experience of the time he was held as a prisoner in Kostuma in north-eastern Russia. He explains that due to his heedlessness he felt a kind of spiritual sadness with everything around him appearing melancholy and dark. And even though he was only forty

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[180] Ibid.
[181] Nursi, *The Words*, 424.
[182] Ibid., 229.

at that time the Great War made him feel old:

> And while I was forty years old, I felt myself to be eighty. In those long,
> dark nights and sorrowful exile and melancholic state, I despaired of life
> and of my homeland. I looked at my powerlessness and aloneness, and
> my hope failed.[183]

Here again, it is while Nursi is feeling physically impotent and admitting
verbally that he is powerless and weak, and then pleading for forgiveness,
that the light of the Quranic verse "*God is enough for us; and how
excellent a guardian is He*",[184] comes to his aid and his state of weakness
and impotence become intercessors for him at the Divine Court.[185] He
states subsequently, that it was through such Divine Mercy that he was
able to make a miraculous escape through Warsaw and Austria until he
reached Istanbul.[186] Nursi explains that in just the same way that infants
receive God's sustenance on account of their impotence, the sustenance of
the believing elderly will also be provided for them:

> I have had experiences which have given me the absolutely certain
> conviction that just as the sustenance of infants is sent to them in
> wondrous fashion by Divine mercy on account of their impotence,
> being made to flow forth from the springs of breasts, so too the
> sustenance of believing elderly, who acquire innocence, is sent in the
> form of plenty.[187]

Nursi therefore stresses that since so much Divine Mercy is open to
older people because of their needy and weak status, then old age
should be appreciated and not compared with the fleeting pleasures of
youth.

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[183] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 300.
[184] Quran, 3:173.
[185] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 300.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid., 301.

Nursi then describes another occasion when from the point of view of worldly needs he was comfortable, but this time his sadness was due to both the unfaithfulness of a friend whom he had once regarded as loyal and to loss of youth when witnessing grey hair on his head and beard. Again he links these feelings to 'heedlessness' resulting from attachment to the causal world. Nursi's search for hope enables him to re-examine his life and admit that philosophy and even the Islamic sciences had actually obstructed his spiritual growth and instead through God's mercy and munificence he was able to take guidance directly from the verses of Quran, in particular "There is No god but He" [188] – the latter, in order to diminish any causal factors or partnership in God's creation. This realisation that in fact he had been a 'student' of misguided philosophy enabled him to enter into debate with his soul which he states "resulted in the victory of my heart".[189] This victory of heart over reasoning appears to imply that reasoning has its limitations and needs revelation which corresponds with one's innate being through the heart. Before examining why Nursi appears to be linking the attribution to causes and the line of philosophy with his feelings of sadness, the role of the heart in affirming reality will be discussed.

6.10.2 The heart's journey of purification

Similar to those who favoured the spiritual path toward gnosis of God followed by the Sufi tradition, Nursi appears to be stressing the importance of the heart's journey of purification in order to go beyond the mere knowledge of God and become a mirror for the manifestation of His names. According to Nursi, this journey is the key to conquering loneliness, for it enables one to become intimate with God and as a result understand one's connection with the rest of creation and thus overcome one's loneliness.

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[188] Nursi, *The Letters*, 42-44.
[189] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 306.

> For such a person, true solace, intimacy and sweet pleasure are to be found in addressing his own heart in those distant places and desolate mountains and distressing valleys, in working it through remembrance of God and reflection. Calling on God Almighty, he may become intimate with Him in his heart, and by virtue of that intimacy think of the things around him, which were regarding him savagely, as smiling on him familiarly. He will say: "My Creator, whom I am recollecting, has innumerable servants here in my place of solitude, just as He has everywhere. I am not alone; loneliness has no meaning." Thanks to his faith, he receives pleasure from that sense of familiarity. He grasps the meaning of life's happiness, and he offers thanks to God.[190]

According to Ghazali the source of the light of pure knowledge *(ma'rīfa)* arrives through the world of the unseen *(malakūt)* to the inner heart *(qalb)*. However, the effects of this knowledge such as happiness or fear descend to the chest *(sadr)*, which pertains to the intermediate realm *(jabarūt)*. Unlike the physical corporeal world *(mulk)* which can be perceived by the senses, the *malakūt* world can only be perceived through inner vision since it is a realm where there is no gradation, it is the world of the 'Preserved Tablet' where God's decrees are recorded and the realm of Divine Determining. Therefore without revelation the *malakūt* realm cannot be fathomed. Although reason has the ability to accept it, due to its limitation, it cannot empirically demonstrate it in a corporeal world. The realm of *malakūt* is also a created realm but it is a different kind of creation to that of the realm of *mulk*, therefore the same 'laws of God' *(sunat-ullah)* do not apply to it. There is also a correspondence between the two realms. Both Ghazali and Nursi describe *mulk* as the place of manifestation or the mirror where *malakūt* is reflected.[191] Similar to the discussion on the necessity of transient beings[192] rather than abandoning the physical world (*mulk* side of creation) as most of the Muslim thinkers

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[190] Nursi, *The Letters,* 507-08.
[191] See Kojiro Nakamura, 'Imām Ghazālī's Cosmology Reconsidered with Special Reference to the Concept of "Jabarūt"' in *Studia Islamica*, 80 (1994) 32.
[192] See 6.8.

advised, one can conclude that one of the wisdoms of the existence of the physical world is that it is the means by which the *malakūt* ('the unseen realm') or the inner meaning of creation can be comprehended.

Nursi therefore, similar to the Sufi understanding of 'self-annihilation', which will be discussed briefly below, stresses the importance of understanding all creatures as merely sign posts to the realm of the unseen.

6.10.3 Sufi mysticism

As for Sufi mysticism, the most important factors to aim for are the attainment of direct knowledge *(ma'rīfa)* from God and the ability to live one's life in such a way to serve this purpose. This in turn would require asceticism which is the journey of self-purification. Al-Ghazali believed at that time that the Sufi method was the soundest way to reach God since the experiential journey of knowledge focusses on bringing about internal changes, in accordance with the saying attributed to Prophet Muhammad that "He who knows himself knows God", rather than looking for external shortcomings. In this way there is the potential to reach the highest station of being totally absorbed *(fanā)* in God.[193] Although there is much Sufi[194] influence in Nursi's work and the terminology he uses are very similar to Al-Ghazali's, he warns that the Sufi path for this day and age is not the safest route for everyone and recommends a more direct route through recourse to the Quran.[195]

Unlike the Muslim thinkers discussed in Chapter Four who make a neat divide between the transient world and the world of the 'intellect' or the

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[193] See Abū Ḥamīd Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *The Alchemy of Happiness* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991) xxx.

[194] For a discussion on Sufism see Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2010), 4-5; and ColinTurner, *The Quran Revealed*, 338-349.

[195] For a discussion on Nursi's evaluation of Susfism see Bilal Kuṣpinar, *Nursi's Evaluation of Sufism*. Paper delivered at the Third International Symposium of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. Paper downloaded on 6 November 2015: http://www.iikv.org/academy/index.php/sympeng/article/view/902/1229.

spiritual world, Nursi implores that one should 'be transitory'.[196] By this he means that rather than totally denounce possessions, an initial sense of imaginary ownership is necessary in order to enable the realization that in fact one does not own anything. Self-annihilation can only come about through the understanding of the self, or what Nursi calls 'I' (*Ana* in Arabic and *Ene* in Turkish).

According to the *ḥadīth*, the reason for the existence of human beings and jinn is to know, love and worship God; this is also implied in all the verses in the Quran.[197] In other words, human beings' innate nature is created purely for the purpose of being a mirror for the manifestation of God's Names. Nursi explains how this responsibility or trust *(amāna)* can be fulfilled in his discourse on the human 'I' *(Ene)*.

6.10.4 The 'trust': The human 'I'

It is Adam – who, by virtue of having been taught all the 'Names and Attributes' of God, was given the 'trust' in order to act consciously as God's vicegerent and, display these Names at the highest level in creation. As is implied in the Quran, the Angels only had a limited knowledge with regard to the Names of God, sufficient for their particular tasks and duties, whereas Adam was taught all the Names:

> And He taught Adam the names – all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.
>
> They said, "Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise."[198]

Thus Adam and, by extension, all human beings, are as God's representatives on earth, potentially able to consciously display God's

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[196] Nursi, *The Words*, 229.
[197] See Nursi, *Signs of Miraculousness*, 23-24.
[198] See Quran, 2:31-2.

Names. However, due to the possession of 'free will' one can choose to deceive oneself and lay claim to those attributes, in which case instead of attaining the highest position of vicegerent, one may sink to the position of the 'lowest of the low'.[199] Similar to the Sufi emphasis on the concept of the 'self',[200] Nursi stresses that the human 'I' is the key to the treasures of the universe and the riddle of creation, the task of which falls on the individual to solve by seeking answers to existential questions such as 'where did I come from?', 'what is my purpose here?' and 'what is my destination?' Nursi states that the reason the riddle of creation can only be solved through this immaterial entity called the 'I' is because – the 'indications' and 'samples' which hold the key to the knowledge of God's Names and attributes are contained within it:

> The All-Wise Maker gave to man as a Trust an 'I' which comprises indications and samples that show and cause to recognize the truths of the attributes and functions of His dominicality, so that the 'I' might be a unit of measurement and the attributes of dominicality and functions of Divinity might be known. However, it is not necessary for a unit of measurement to have actual existence; like hypothetical lines in geometry, a unit of measurement may be formed by hypothesis and supposition. It is not necessary for its actual existence to be established by concrete knowledge and proofs.

> For example, an endless light without darkness may not be known or perceived. But if a line of real or imaginary darkness is drawn, then it becomes known. Thus, since God Almighty's attributes like knowledge and power, and Names like All-Wise and All-Compassionate are all-encompassing, limitless, and without like, they may not be determined, and what they are may not be known or perceived. Therefore, since they do not have limits or an actual end, it is necessary to draw a hypothetical and imaginary limit. The 'I' does this. It imagines in itself a fictitious

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[199] Ibid.
[200] See Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 263-64.

dominicality, ownership, power, and knowledge: it draws a line. By doing this it places an imaginary limit on the all-encompassing attributes, saying, "Up to here, mine, after that, His;" it makes a division. With the tiny units of measurement in itself, it slowly understands the true nature of the attributes.[201]

The 'I' therefore, being familiar with all the Names, is able to act as a 'measuring unit' and make comparisons such as: just "as I made this house and arranged it, so someone else must have made the universe and arranged it and so on."[202] Therefore because human beings are created in the image of God and have been taught all the Names, they are able to potentially understand all God's attributes and as discussed previously, just as Ibrahim realized that all created beings are transient and dependent[203] and that therefore there must be an Absolute Creator who is not dependent, all individuals also have the potential to reach the final realization that human beings are also ephemeral and that therefore all those attributes, such as beauty, power, wisdom and so on, in fact belong to God. Therefore as Nursi states once having used the 'shells', in this case 'the measuring unit', one is able to reach the 'kernel' and hence abandon one's 'imaginary dominicality' and 'supposed ownership'.[204] Thus the Nursian 'purification of the soul' *(tazkiyya al-nafs)* begins by first owning and then disowning God's attributes, or returning them to Him. This is followed by what Nursi recommends as the 'fourfold way' based on certain themes in the Quran, which is: to acknowledge and submit to one's impotence, to acknowledge and submit to one's existential poverty, to view the cosmos in terms of Divine Compassion and to be engaged in constant reflection and self-examination:

The ways leading to Almighty God are truly numerous. While all true ways are taken from the Quran, some are shorter, safer and more

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[201] Nursi, *The Words*, 558.
[202] Ibid., 558-59.
[203] See 6.8.
[204] Nursi, *The Words*, 559.

general than others. Of these ways taken from the Quran is that of impotence *('ajz)*, poverty *(faqr)*, compassion *(shafaqa)*, and reflection *(tafakkur)*, from which, with my defective understanding, I have benefited.

Indeed, like ecstatic love, impotence is a path which, by way of worship, leads to winning God's love; but it is safer. Poverty too leads to the Divine Name of All-Merciful. And, like ecstatic love, compassion leads to the Name of All-Compassionate, but it is a swifter and broader path. Also like ecstatic love, reflection leads to the Name of All-Wise, but it is a richer, broader and more brilliant path. This path consists not of ten steps like the 'ten subtle faculties' of some of the Sufi paths employing silent recollection, nor of seven stages like the 'seven souls' of those practising public recitation, but of Four Steps. It is reality *(haqīqa)*, rather than a Sufi way *(tarīqa)*. It is the path of Divine precepts.

However, let it not be misunderstood. It means to see one's impotence, poverty and faults before Almighty God, not to fabricate them or display them to people. The method of this short path is to follow the Practices of the Prophet (PBWH), perform the religious obligations and give up serious sins. And it is especially to perform the prescribed prayers correctly and with attention, and following them to say the *tasbīhāt*.[205]

Nursi's binary definition of both *ḥuzn* and happiness has a whole series of ramifications which also fit in in with his use of other concept pairs in his writings. Table Three below will help to show the distinction Nursi makes between positive and negative *ḥuzn* as discussed so far, and can also be compared with the Izutsian Quranic analysis of 'belief' and 'unbelief' which were one of the main semantic categories of *ḥuzn*.[206]

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[205] Nursi, *The Letters*, 536. The *tasbīhat* are the supererogatory invocations offered after each canonical prayer.
[206] See Table Two, 2.6.8.

6.10.5 Table Three - *ḥuzn* as described by Nursi

Positive *ḥuzn*	Negative *ḥuzn*	
Other Indicative (*ma'nā-i ḥarfi*)	Self-referential (*ma'nā-i ismi*)	*The Words*, p. 757
Separation from friends	Lack of friends	*The Words*, p. 771
Guidance-giving	Misguidance/heedlessness/stirs up desire	*The Words*, p. 424
Yearning/elevated sorrow	Woebegone sadness	*The Words*, pp. 771-72
Light scattering/ hopeful sorrow	Dark sorrow/without hope	*The Words*, p. 423-24
Divine power and will	Nature/blind force	*The Words*, p. 771
Elevated lover	Dejected mournfulness	*The Words*, p. 423
Sorrow of love, not of orphans	Motherless orphan	*The Words*, p. 772
Connected	Disconnected/no Owner	*The Words*, p. 771
Divine art	World seen as desolate wasteland/a 'cruel slaughterhouse'/ an 'awesome house of sorrows'	*The Words*, p. 771 *The Rays*, pp. 173-74
Enduring	Transient	*The Rays*, p. 91
True love/undying beloved	Metaphorical love	*The Flashes*, p. 325
Eagerness – spirit stimulated	Eagerness – Ego (*nafs*) stimulated	*The Words*, p. 772
Thankful	Ungrateful	*The Words*, p. 172
Pain-free pleasure	Poisonous honey	*The Words*, p. 158

The examples of Nursi's life and the hardships he experienced all showed that when he looked at the events in his life through the eyes of misguidance he felt sad and alone, but when he tried to see those events from a Quranic perspective he was able to interpret them in a positive way. The question here arises as to whether in this case everything that

happens in creation is actually 'good' and the concept of 'evil' is only linked to the intention of individuals.

6.11 Obviation of *ḥuzn* through belief in revelation, prophethood, Hereafter and Divine determining

The thematic Quranic analysis showed that if human beings are not on what the Quran considers is the right path they will be in a state of loss and confusion.[207] This 'right' path of belief which requires belief in One God, the revelation, the hereafter and submission through prayer would be the only source of guidance and means of salvation.[208] As discussed above, Nursi through narration of his own life experiences also concurs that creation has to be read in accordance to the above criteria.

Nursi opines that creation seen in terms of cause and effect or 'blind nature', that is, when disconnected from Divine Sovereignty appears dark and meaningless, hence resulting in anxiety. However, if everything is seen ultimately as good and if all human beings are required to do is to submit to the conditions they find themselves, then in this case the question arises, firstly as to how Nursi reconciles human free will with Absolute Divine Sovereignty, and secondly if such a thing as 'evil' actually exists. In the next section Nursi's position on Divine Determining will be compared with the Jabrīyya and Mu'tazīlite.

6.11.1 The Jabrīyya and Mu'tazīlite stance on Divine Determining

According to the Jabrīyya stance, individuals do not have a free will at all and therefore all their actions are predetermined. On the other side of the scale the Mu'tazīlites believed that individuals are free to act and therefore are able to determine good and evil through the use of reason.[209] As discussed in Chapter Four, Al-Kīndī followed the Mu'tazīlite argument and

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[207] See 2.4.7.3.
[208] See 2.6.6.
[209] For a discussion on the Jabrī and Mu'tazīlite view on free will see James Pavlin in Nasr and Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 108-109 and 131-35.

therefore held the individual responsible for bringing about their own sorrow which he considered as evil.[210]

Following the Ash'arite position on the issue of Divine Determining, Nursi takes the middle position and expresses that there is no incompatibility between Divine Determining and human free will and that in fact there is perfect harmony between them. He describes Divine Determining as a 'plan' in God's knowledge, in the same way as an architect would have a plan of a house before building it. Therefore all existence, inclusive of present, past and future comes from God's knowledge (unseen realm) to the realm of existence through Divine Will and Power. The concept of Divine Unity and God's Absolute existence is important here, as God is not within a spatial and temporal world, therefore the present, future and past are all the same for Him. Nursi argues that just because God has knowledge of everything because He is outside time, it does not mean that individuals are coerced to carry out actions which they do not wish to do.[211] Individuals are given the choice to either cover the truth or accept it and it is this choice which gives the potential for individuals to reach either the highest rank of *ahsan al-taqwīm* ('on the most excellent of patterns') as God's vicegerent on earth or the lowest rank of *asfal al-sāfilīn* ('lowest of the low'). However, as will be discussed below according to Nursi, from a creational aspect, evil does not exist.

6.11.2 Nursian theodicy

Many explanations of theodicy exist, mostly in an attempt to exempt God from creation of so-called 'evil'. One such theodicy is St. Augustine's (354-430) explanation of evil as *privatio boni* meaning that evil does not have an actual existence but is defined simply as the absence of goodness, in the same way as darkness is the absence of light. Seen from this view then all creation is considered to be good and it is only the human will

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[210] See 4.4.2.
[211] Nursi, *The Words*, 481-487.

(improba voluntas) that is evil.[212] The Irenaean theodicy named after Saint Irenaeus, the second century philosopher and theologian, viewed suffering and evil as necessary since it enables human beings to develop and progress. Therefore while Augustine believed that God did not create evil as it was not part of His plan, and its existence is purely due to human choice, Irenaeus believed that evil is actually necessary and part of God's plan as it plays an important role for human moral development.[213]

Nursi also believed that evil does not have an external existence *(wūjūd-ī khārijī)* as it is similar to the concept of darkness which is merely lesser degrees of light. The question then arises as to how something which does not have a real existence can be evil. According to Nursi all creation because it is brought into being by God is good, what is evil is human beings' intention to bring about evil and it is for this that individuals are punished. Human beings therefore cannot create evil, since firstly because they cannot create anything and secondly because evil does not have an external existence, but just as darkness has an external reality evil also has an external reality *(ḥaqīqat-ī khārijī)*. Human beings have only the potential to cover the light of truth, which is a state of denial, and at the creational level God makes good of bad intentions even though it is difficult for human beings to accept some occurrences as ultimately good because it is created by God.[214] Therefore Nursi concurs with the Quranic verse that:

> *it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But God knoweth, and ye know not.*[215]

While Irenean theodicy attributes evil to God, in the sense that it has a positive role to play, Nursi does not believe that in fact evil exists, as all

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[212] For further discussion on theodicy see John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and Walter, E. Wyman, Jr., 'Rethinking the Christian Doctrine of Sin: Friedrich Schleiermacher and Hick's "Irenaean Type"', *The Journal of Religion*, 74, 2 (1994), 199-217.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Nursi, *The Words*, 487.
[215] Quran, 12:1-2.

existence in its creational sense is good. What Nursi means by stating that non-existence is pure evil as quoted below is that the intention of wanting to cover the truth, that is, the modality or state of darkness is pure evil. What Nursi has in common with Irenean theodicy is the idea of moral development of human beings. However, for Nursi, evil does not have an external existence, only the potential to choose to do wrong or to cover the truth exists, and it is this free will, given to human beings as part of God's plan which has the potential for moral development. Human beings therefore have the potential to reach a higher station than angels and all other beings through the ability to choose not to cover the truth.

> The facts that all virtues and perfections return to existence and that the basis of all rebellion, calamities and defects is non-existence are a proof that existence is pure good and non-existence is pure evil. Since non-existence is pure evil, circumstances that either result in non-existence or give an inkling of it also comprise evil. Therefore life, the most brilliant light of existence, proceeding through different circumstances, finds strength; it encounters varying situations and is purified; it takes on numerous qualities and produces the desired results, and enters many stages and displays comprehensively the impresses of the Bestower of Life's Names. It is on account of this fact that certain things happen to living creatures in the form of griefs, calamities, difficulties and tribulations, whereby the lights of existence are renewed in their lives and the darkness of non-existence draws distant and their lives are purified.[216]

From the above quote it appears that Nursi's understanding of calamities and tribulations *(balā)* concurs with the Izutsian Quranic analyses. The Izutsian Quranic analyses located *gham*, meaning distress and anguish, in the semantic field of *ḥuzn*. While *ḥuzn* is more specific and is related to sorrow due to loss of possessions and loved ones, *gham* was defined as a more general distress due to harm which has already taken place and is often given by God in the form of *balā* ('tribulation'), a trial and temporary suffering as a part of test of faith. *Balā* (Turkish *belā*) is often linked to

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[216] Nursi, *The Words*, 487.

objects of attachments and as well as it being a test it also provides the opportunity for guidance through recognition that God is the real Owner of all possessions.[217]

The example of Moses' mother in the Quranic analysis where God restores Moses to her in order that she does not grieve *(ḥuzn)* shows that while *gham* potentially occurs after an action, *ḥuzn* here is used for distress that may happen in the future, in this case if Moses' mother had not been given the opportunity to be a wet nurse for her son.[218] The Quranic analysis also showed that stress *(gham)* is given by God as a lesson not to grieve (have *ḥuzn*). The example of the story of the *Quraysh* tribe is given where through negligence the battle of Uḥūd is lost.[219] It demonstrated the fact that *gham* given by God can serve as Divine Mercy, for firstly the series of stresses *(gham)* given by God would serve to reduce the first great anxiety which resulted from the loss of the battle of Uḥūd, and secondly it would serve as a lesson or guidance not to have *ḥuzn*. In other words to have trust in God in the same way as Moses' mother had trust in God and was rewarded by ensuring that she does not experience *ḥuzn* through creating the circumstances in such a way that she would be near her son. Although Al-Kīndī's discussion is similar to the Quranic analysis when he argues that if *ḥuzn* is due to the actions of others and it is not possible for us to change those actions, we should not have *ḥuzn* before they have actually occurred, for it may be dispelled before it reaches us, he does not point to the positive role *ḥuzn* can play.[220]

The Muslim thinkers generally appear to represent *ḥuzn* in a negative light and do not directly point to the positive role it may play as a test, trial and means of guidance.[221] However, Nursi in the above quote[222] shows that

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[217] See verses 76:2; 89:15; 11:7; 18:7 5:48 for *balā* as test. Also Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, 238 for a discussion on Rumi's views on the necessity of *balā* for detachment from worldly life and purification of the heart.
[218] See 2.3.7.3.
[219] See 2.6.2.
[220] See 4.5.6.
[221] See Chapter Four.

the hardships and tribulations experienced, from their creational aspect, are not evil and in fact have a Divine purpose. Also as has been discussed, Nursi through the various narratives of his personal life demonstrates that what presented initially as negative *ḥuzn* through heedlessness, by having recourse to belief and revelation, God through his Compassion and Mercy transformed it into a means of guidance. Nursi then offered thanks for the apparent calamitous situations he found himself, possibly on the realisation that calamities and disasters were occasioned through Divine Determining as a remedy for despair and grief.[223] Nursi's positive outlook towards calamities is very similar to the Sufi conception of calamities and sorrow in particular Rūmī, who not only considered tribulations and sorrow as positive but believed that they are to be welcomed as they are sent by God. According to Rūmī therefore sorrow is not something to be endured with patience but to be loved and be thankful for, as sorrow and tribulations are in fact happiness disguised as agony:

> When new worries and calamities come to your heart, do not run away from them either. Instead run toward them and welcome them as a dear guest. Thank God for sending them to you and say: "O my Creator, O God, protect me from the evil of the calamities you have given to me. Do not deprive me of the bounties that will come because of these calamities and make me attain them."[224]

6.12 Does Nursi's 'negative *ḥuzn*' have a positive role to play?

Horwitz and Wakefield state that in this era, sadness is viewed as a serious medical condition – an abnormal state requiring medical treatment.[225]

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[222] See 6.11.2.
[223] Nursi, *The Words*, 478.
[224] For a discussion on Rūmī's perspective on sorrow and calamities see Şefik Can, *Fundamentals of Rumi's thought: A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective* (New Jersey, USA: The Light, Inc., 2005), 212-216.
[225] Alan V. Horwitz and Jerome C. Wakefield, *The Loss of Sadness, How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow Into Depressive Disorder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

They point to the fact that treatment of depression in outpatient settings in the United States increased by 300% between 1987 and 199 and the use of antidepressant drugs such as Prozac among adults almost tripled between 1988 and 2000. Also according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) projection, by 2020 depression will be 'the second leading cause of disability'.[226] Although the above authors agree that depression is a widespread phenomenon, they disagree that 'normal sadness' due to a cause, normally associated with experiences of painful loss, should be lumped together with sadness without an apparent cause such as *melancholia*. They opine that the *DSM* definition of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) apart from endogenous depression which is due to internal processes, includes conditions which are part of normal human nature, that is sadness which is due to reaction to external painful events,[227] whereas it is absolutely crucial to make a distinction between these two conditions.[228] As discussed in Chapter Four, the ninth century Muslim thinker Abū Zayd al-Balkhī, who is possibly the first to have made clear differentiation between neuroses and psychoses, expressed similar sentiments, indicating that reactive depression needs a different approach to endogenous depression.[229]

According to Horwitz and Wakefield what they term as 'normal sadness' which is due to social problems such as loss is a natural reaction and therefore therapy and medication are not appropriate treatments.[230] They conclude that there must be a reason for the intense sadness that human beings sometimes feel, and that the experience of transient, non-enduring sadness is not a medical condition and therefore instead of masking the symptoms it presents with medication, questions should be asked as to whether it has a positive role to play, for it may well have reparative

[226] Ibid., 4-5.
[227] For a definition of reactive and endogenous depression see Jamsari Alias and others, 'Managing Bipolar Disorder and Manic-Depressive Psychosis (MDP) According to Western and Islamic Approaches', *Research Journal of Applied Sciences*, 7, 7 (2012), 329-333.
[228] Horwitz and Wakefield, *The Loss of Sadness*, 6-18.
[229] See Badri, *Sustenance of the Soul*, 50-51.
[230] Horwitz and Wakefield, *The Loss of Sadness*, 20-25.

functions that are still not understood.[231] As discussed previously Nursi also addresses the caring professionals, warning that a temporary salve does not address the root of the problem. This has huge implications for therapists and social workers whose efforts lie in integrating their patients suffering from reactive depression back to the very society in which they wished to escape from.[232]

Shuman and Meador also question authors such as Koenig[233] who appears to be competing with secular means of treating sadness by offering 'belief' as an alternative treatment.[234] Shuman and Meador agree that it is natural to desire good physical and mental health and that for maintaining and restoring health, medicine and especially religion have an important role to play. What they object to is the desiring for health and happiness for its own sake which they describe as 'subjective', 'instrumental', 'reductive' and 'utilitarian'.[235] Similar to Nursi's definition of positive *ḥuzn* [236] where there is a longing for the true home, they also opine that complete satisfaction cannot be obtained in this transient world and that all our longings are ultimately longing for God and therefore to love anything, including health and happiness for its own sake, is not only wrong but it is also a kind of 'idolatry' and 'injustice'.[237] Thus according to Horwitz and Wakefield, sadness due to loss may well have a positive role to play and according to Shuman and Meador, the longing for God cannot be totally satiated in a material realm and therefore it is wrong to attempt to distort its existence.

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[231] Ibid., 51-52.

[232] For a discussion on the social control function of psychotherapists and social workers see Stephen Joseph, Agents of Control, *The British Psychological Society*, July 2007, V20, 429-431.

[233] See H.G. Koenig, *Faith and Mental Health Religious Resources for Healing* (Philadelphia and London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2005), 43-81.

[234] J.J. Shuman and K.G. Meador, *Heal Thyself, Spirituality, Medicine, and the Distortion of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 34.

[235] Ibid., 33 and 36.

[236] Nursi, *The Words*, 424.

[237] Shuman and Meador, *Heal Thyself*, 12-14.

As discussed above,[238] Nursi is also of the opinion that loss due to calamities and disasters has a positive role to play, but it is necessary to question whether from its creational aspect, Nursi's definition of negative *ḥuzn* also has a positive role to play. The narratives of Nursi's personal life show that although he points to his initial sense of sadness and isolation as a negative kind of *ḥuzn* since his feelings were due to the momentary disconnection of his experiences from the Creator of the cosmos, nevertheless ultimately he believed that the creation of those events served as a means of test, to become self-aware and also provided the opportunity for him to seek God's Mercy and guidance which resulted in the realisation that ultimately all situations are created by God and should not be attributed to causes.[239] These 'negative' episodes which Nursi experienced seem to culminate in a kind of breakthrough, generated by feelings of impotence, in which Divine Mercy saves him from this negative state. It is at this point, that is, through the recognition of his own total impotence that by the grace of God he realises that the face value picture is not the true reality. Therefore in response to Horwitz and Wakefield's question, it appears that sadness does have a positive role to play.

Nursi attributes the negative kind of *ḥuzn* which he experienced, to his own state of heedlessness and misguidance.[240] But since *ḥuzn* and its opposite are given directly by God then those particular experiences, including the negative feelings, must have had a positive role to play. If those negative experiences were given in order to be fought against and culminated in a positive experience then from their creational aspect they were not in fact negative, but a necessary obstacle put there in order to be surmounted. In other words it is possible that the obstacle and the surmounting of the obstacle were both part of the Divine Plan.

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[238] See 6.11.2.
[239] Nursi, *The Words*, 478.
[240] Nursi, *The Rays*, 641.

The idea that *ḥuzn* from its creational aspect is given by God is not too dissimilar to the Irenean theodicy discussed previously and the concept of the 'happy fall' or 'happy fault' *(felix culpa)*.[241] The Latin phrase *felix culpa* is used by St. Augustine, who believed that Adam and Eve were created in a perfect state, but having being tempted by Satan to eat the forbidden fruit, fell from paradise. Their disobedience to God resulted in the origin of sin, not only for Adam and Eve but also for the entire human race. It is considered to be a 'happy fault' since without it meaningful redemption would not be possible.[242] John Hick (1922-2012),[243] opines that God created humankind with the ability to sin and that temptations are necessary in order that they may be overcome.[244] According to Hick if the inclination to sin had not been given to Adam and Eve they would not have been able to sin. However, he states that although the inclination to sin is given by God, it is created beings that are responsible for actualising evil.[245]

Similarly one could conclude that Nursi's experiences of negative *ḥuzn*, from their creational aspect, were in fact 'positive' as they served as a means for guidance. In other words they were created to be fought against. Similar to Abraham's journey through creation and Adam's fall, these experiences were possibly necessary as a test and means of guidance. Therefore unlike Al-Kīndī who appears to attribute the creation of happiness to God but appears to attribute the creation of sorrow to individuals themselves,[246] the Qur'anic interpretation attributes the creation of both sadness and happiness directly to God and therefore the apparent negative feelings of sadness are there to serve a purpose. For example, if Nursi had not witnessed his village in ruins and had not

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[241] See Wyman, Rethinking the Christian Doctrine of Sin, 199-217.
[242] Ibid.
[243] John Hick was a twentieth century British Philosopher of religion and theology. For more information on his life and works see Encyclopedia of Philosophy http://www.rep.utm.edu/hick/ accessed 23 April 2015.
[244] See 'Dr. Hick and the Problem of Evil', 413, http://jts.oxfordjournals.org/ downloaded 20 April 2015.
[245] See Wyman, Rethinking the Christian Doctrine of Sin, 412.
[246] See Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 127.

experienced the emptiness and sense of alienation he felt, he might not have realised his utter impotence and thus might not have taken refuge in God's Mercy.

Therefore similar to the Quranic binary opposites of of belief and unbelief, light and darkness and so on,[247] Nursi's binary approach is a useful way of understanding Quranic concepts, in particular the association between the negative *ḥuzn* and the concept of *man'nā-i ismī* ('self-referential'), that is seeing everything in creation as pointing to itself rather than *ma'nā-i ḥarfī* ('other-indicative'), in which everything is seen as pointing to its Creator.[248] While the former obscures the connection to the transcendent, giving rise to the sense of 'weeping orphans' and powerlessness Nursi describes,[249] the latter opens the door, offering the opportunity to detach oneself from "the metaphorical beloved" in order to reach the "undying beloved."[250]

However, just as without apparent darkness there could be no understanding of light, or as Nursi asserts, without the understanding of transitoriness there could be no understanding of permanence, or without the imaginary ownership of *ene* ('I') one could not conclude that all belongs to God, one could also conclude that without the experience of apparent negative *ḥuzn* there could be no true happiness.

Edinger's (1922-1998)[251] emphasis on the necessity of sense of alienation for the realization of one's impotence, which is a necessary corollary for self-development, can be compared to Nursi's personal experience of alienation, as discussed previously.[252] Edinger points to the importance of the ego to become at one with the self,[253] and also describes the positive

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[247] See Table Two, 2.6.8.
[248] See Table Three, 6.10.5.
[249] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 652.
[250] Table Three, 6.10.5.
[251] Edward F. Edinger (1922-1998) was a supervising psychiatrist at Rockland State hospital in New York and later became a founding member of the C.G. Jung Foundation.
[252] See 6.10.
[253] For more information on Edinger's discussion on the relation of the ego with the self, see Edward F. Edinger, *Ego and Archetype, Individuation and the Religious Function of the Psyche* (Boston: Shamhala, 1992), 48-50.

or even the necessity of the sense of alienation as a means of becoming aware of one's impotence:

> The classic symbol of alienation is the image of the wilderness. And it is here, characteristically, that some manifestation of God is encountered. When the wanderer lost in the desert is about to perish, a source of divine nourishment appears. The Israelites in the wilderness are fed by manna from heaven (Exodus 16:4) [Picture 9]. Elijah in the wilderness is fed by ravens (Kings 17: 2-6) [Picture 10]. According to the legend, the desert hermit St. Paul was likewise fed by a raven [Picture 11]. Psychologically this means that the experience of the supporting aspect of the archetypal psyche is most likely to occur when the ego has exhausted its own resources and is aware of its essential impotence by itself. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity.[254]"

It can be understood therefore, that the negative *ḥuzn* and all its definitions as shown in Table Three,[255] can be said to serve as Nursi opines a 'shell' for understanding the 'kernel', since from its creational aspect one can conclude that it is not negative, since so long as it does not endure, it provides the perfect opportunity to seek the truth. It can be concluded therefore that all God sends to his servants as trials and tribulations, together with the feelings of sadness, are actually positive as they can serve as a means of guidance.

This leads us conveniently to the discussion about the experiences of the Prophets, most of who, visited by such trials and tribulations, were also commanded not to be sad.[256]

6.12.1 The sadness of the Prophets

In Chapter Four, the exegetes studied appeared generally to be unable to adequately discuss the negative *ḥuzn* of the prophets and appeared not to

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[254] Ibid., 50.
[255] See Table Three, 6.10.5.
[256] See for example Quran: 36:76 and 5:41.

link their experiences to 'heedlessness', possibly because to posit heedlessness on the part of the prophets would be tantamount to questioning their fallibility. However, the fact that God tells prophets not to have *ḥuzn* is an argument in favour of the notion that prophets can lapse. For if prophets were perfect or infallible, why would they be chastised for negative sadness? Also when Prophet Muhammad was commanded to be patient, this possibly implied a lack, a fault, or a lapse.

The concept of the 'fall' *(hubūṭ)* began with the first prophet Adam. But the Quran makes an important distinction between the fall *(hubūṭ)* of İblīs[257] and the fall of Adam.[258] While Adam was in a state of forgetfulness when he tasted the forbidden fruit and thus fell from heaven, İblīs relied on his own limited reasoning to disobey God, stating that he was better than human beings since he was made from fire, wheras human beings were made of mere clay.[259] What is more, while Adam repented for his momentarily lapse, İblīs remained proud and failed to submit to God's will. Although both Adam (and by extension all human beings) and İblīs fell from heaven, through repentence Adam was given the potential to consciously reach the highest level in creation, whereas İblīs continued to rely on his own judgement/self *(ana).*[260]

Before referring to the experiences of prophetic *ḥuzn*, the concept of prophetic infallibility will be discussed.

The doctrine of the prophetic infallibility came to the fore mainly out of the discussions between Shīa and Sunni schools, the earliest having been recorded in Kulayni's (864-941) *al-Kāfī*.[261] Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī (1149-1209), a prominent Sunni theologian from the Ashari School has dealt with the controversy over the question of infallibility of prophets from the

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[257] See Quran, 7:11-18.
[258] See Quran, 7: 18-25.
[259] See Quran, 7:12.
[260] The Nursian concept of *ana* (the human 'I') has been discussed in 6.10.4.
[261] See Ahmad Hasan, The Concept of Infallibility in Islam, *Islamic Studies*, 11, 1 (1972), 1-11.

perspective of different Schools in detail, a summary of which is provided below.[262]

According to al-Rāzī the disputes regarding the question of infallibility of the prophets centres on belief, religious work/mission and personal character. With regard to the Prophets' belief, the general consensus is that they are immune from unbelief *(kufr)* and heretical innovation *(bīd'ah)*. As regards their Prophetic mission, with regard to religious matters there are different opinions as to whether Prophets may or may not unintentionally give the wrong verdict. As for the personal character of prophets, again there are different opinions as to whether they are able to commit minor or major sins, or are indeed incapable of committing any sin at all.

The Sunni Traditionalist view *(Hashwiyah)* [263] due to its emphasis on the literal understanding of the Quran, holds that Prophets can commit both minor and major sins. In contrast, with the exception of a few Muslim thinkers, the view of the majority of the Mu'tazilah was that the Prophets are able to potentially commit very minor sins but not major ones. Exceptions included Ali Muhammad Jubbā'i (849-916), a tenth century Persian Mu'tazīlite theologian and philosopher, who believed that although Prophets can err in their interpretation they cannot commit either major or minor sins;[264] another was Ibrahim ibn Sayyar Al-Naẓẓām[265] (775-845), another Mu'tazīlite theologian, who held a slightly different view, agreeing

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[262] For a detailed discussion on the Infallibility of the Prophets see: Mohammad Saeedimehr, The Infallibility of Prophets from the Viewpoint of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Philosophical Investigations*, 6, 17,125-143.

[263] The literal meaning of Hashwiyah is 'stuffers'. It is a derisive term used for radical Sunni traditionalists who preferred to dismiss reason and take a literal understanding of the Quran which resulted in an anthropomorphic interpretation. For more information on the roots of Hashwiyah see Karim Douglas Crow, *Roots of Sunni Traditionalism, Fear of Reason and the Hashwiyah* (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2008), 1-55.

[264] For more information on Al-Jubbā'i see Encyclopedia of Islam 1999 (Leiden: Brill), Islamic Philosophy online: www.muslimphilosophy.com/ei2/Jubai.htm).

[265] For further information on Al-Nazzām see Mir Valiuddin, Mu'tazīlīsm, in M.M. Sharif, A History of Muslim Philosophy, Book Three, Chapter Ten, *Islamic Philosophy on-line* (2004), accessed 9 May 2015 http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/hmp/index.html

that Prophets cannot commit major or minor sins either deliberately or by mistake but that it is possible for them to obliviously slip into error. The Shi'ite belief proposes complete infallibility of prophets as well as Imams, stating that Prophets cannot commit any sin at all, be it major or minor, delibrate or in a state of forgetfulness. Having taken all these opinions into account al-Rāzī concludes that the general orthodox opinion is that although Prophets are immune from deliberate acts of major and minor sins, they may however make mistakes or commit sin inadvertently.[266]

Despite the general orthodox opinion that, discounting their Prophetic mission, but from their personal life as human beings, Prophets can inadvertently slip into error, the exegetes in this study tend to shy away from stating overtly that the Prophets experienced unintentional momentarily lapses. This general reluctance to discuss the unintentional momentarily lapses of Prophets may be due to fear of being accused of showing a weakness in Prophets' characters or following the belief that Prophets are in fact infallible, as is the case for the Shi'ite exegete Ṭabātabāī. However, it is ironic that only Ṭabātabāī in this study interprets verse 10:65 – when Muhammad is told 'Let not their speech grieve thee' – as a case of "sympathetic chastisement".[267] The question then arises as to why Muhammad should be reprimanded if he is infallible.

In verse 18:6 Muhammad is so distraught because people are not heeding his message that a verse is revealed to him not only as a consolation and guidance but also, as Ṭabātabāī puts it, a gentle chastisement, being warned that if he does not put a stop to his sorrow he will end up killing himself:

> Thou wouldst only, perchance, fret thyself to death, following after them, in grief, if they believe not in this message.[268]

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[266] See Ahmad Hasan,The Concept of Infallibility in Islam, 5.
[267] See 3.7.3.
[268] Quran, 18:6.

When Muhammad had to witness his followers going hungry due to trade sanctions while unbelieving tribes were enjoying luxuries,[269] he is, assured, guided and reminded to accept Divine Destiny and to believe that the task of a Prophet is to give the message without any expectations or outcomes.[270] In verse 5:44 it is explained to Muhammad that if people choose to ignore God's signs – in this case Divine tribulation given as a warning – then they do not deserve to be guided and therefore God will not purify their hearts:

> If any one's trial [fitna] is intended by God, thou hast no authority in the least for him against God. For such – it is not God's will to purify their hearts. For them there is disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter a heavy punishment.[271]

The above verse appears to confirm that Divine trials and tribulations are a test and a form of guidance and if those who through their own volition choose to ignore God's signs, then their hearts will not be purified, in which case Muhammad should accept Divine Destiny and not be sorrowful because of people's state of unbelief.

Also in verse 12:85 Jacob is warned that if he does not get Joseph out of his mind he will grieve himself to death:

> They said: "By Allah! [never] wilt thou cease to remember Joseph until thou reach the last extremity of illness, or until thou die!"[272]

The above verses show that sadness, especially to such an extent that it causes physical and mental health is not desired and God warns against it. Yet at the same time sadness is given by God in order to remind us of our impotence and thus serve as a form of guidance.[273] We know that Jacob was aware of this as he spoke openly about his weakness, stating that he

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[269] See Turner, *Islam the Basics*, 20-21.
[270] Quran, 15:88.
[271] Quran, 5:44.
[272] Quran, 12:85.
[273] See discussion in 2.7.

was targeting his complaint only to his Lord and no one else. Thus Jacob was not attributing the circumstances to causes and must have realised that this situation was given to him as a test – in his case his attachment to Joseph.

Joseph himself also experienced many trials and tribulations: his separation from his family at a young age; his abandonment in a dark well; his enslavement and the many years he spent in prison. And yet when he becomes ruler of Egypt and is finally reunited with his family and experiences the happiest time in his life, he longs to return to his true home.

> *Take my soul [at death] as one submitting to Your will [as a Muslim], and unite me with the righteous* [274]

According to Nursi, despite his worldly happiness Joseph is ready to face death as he was aware that the happiness of the next world was much greater than worldly happiness. This state of awareness appears to be how Nursi defines the positive *ḥuzn*, that is, not feeling totally detached as in an 'orphan-like' state, and yet experiencing a sense of longing for the One beyond the material realm:

> That is to say, there is beyond the grave a happiness and joy greater than the pleasurable happiness of this world, so that while in that most pleasurable worldly situation, a truth-seeing person like Joseph (Upon whom be peace) wished for bitter death, so as to receive that other happiness.

> So see this eloquence of the All-Wise Qur'an; in what way it announces the end of the story of Joseph. It causes not sorrow and regret to those listening to it, but gives good tidings and adds further joy. It also gives guidance, saying: Work for beyond the grave, for it is there that true happiness and pleasure will be found. It also points out Joseph's exalted veraciousness, saying: even the most brilliant and joyful situation of this

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[274] Quran, 12:101.

world did not cause him to become heedless; it did not captivate him; he still wanted the hereafter.[275]

It can be understood therefore that the 'calamities' and 'sorrows' Joseph experienced in his life were a necessary pathway for him to reach the level of understanding whereby he became totally aware that in this transitory world, one's needs could never be totally satiated and thus wished to return to his 'true home'. One can conclude therefore that akin to the doctrine of the 'happy fall' *('felix culpa')*, the apparent negative *ḥuzn* from its creational aspect, as a test, a lesson and a means of guidance is a necessary journey towards spiritual development and therefore is in fact positive. Without the experiences of calamities and the ensuing sorrows that the Prophets experienced, they could not have reached such a high level of manifestation of God's Names and attributes. The fact that there is no negativity from its creational aspect in the sadness or other such 'weaknesses' of the Prophets should open up the discourse in the area of the fallibility of Prophets as human beings.

Therefore just as the fall of Adam was necessary in order to consciously manifest the Names of God, in a sense the forbidden fruit or, in Nursi's terminology, the shell, is necessary in order to reach the kernel. Therefore just as apparent darkness is necessary in order to conceptualize light, Nursi's binary definitions helps us to understand the positive aspect of *ḥuzn* and discourage the denigration of the position of prophets by placing them on par with angels when in fact their apparent lapse was the means for them to reach such high level of belief.

6.13 Conclusion

The findings from the typology and from Izutsu and the exegetes all show that *ḥuzn* has the potential of guidance or misguidance depending whether one follows the path of belief or unbelief. Nursi seems to concur with

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[275] Nursi, *The Letters*, 335.

these findings, but what he adds to the discussion is his definition of two kinds of *ḥuzn* from the outset, one positive and the other negative. Most of the Muslim thinkers in this study however, appear to define *ḥuzn* as only negative and emphasize that through reasoning and the training of one's thought processes, *ḥuzn* has to be eliminated.[276] While Nursi does not reject the importance of human reasoning, unlike the majority of the Muslim thinkers he bases his arguments directly on the verses in the Quran which he considers as the only salve for all spiritual illnesses.[277]

The differentiation Nursi makes between negative and positive *ḥuzn* is very subtle, for while they both appear to be similar, in fact they share the same opposing poles as belief and unbelief.[278] The 'orphan-like' state associated with the negative *ḥuzn* is linked to the state of unbelief, the grief brought about by disconnecting creation from its Creator. Nursi refers to the negative sorrow connected to moral decadence of 'Literature from Europe' as 'worldly sorrow', while he describes the positive *ḥuzn* which is produced by revelation as the 'sorrow of love'.[279]

Nursi's definition of positive *ḥuzn* seems to imply that although there is a sense of separation as opposed to total disconnectedness, and while the sorrow is one of love rather than total dejectedness, nevertheless total happiness cannot be obtained in this transient world. His explanation of the story of Joseph, who despite being happily reunited with his family after all of the trials and tribulations he suffered, still longed for the world of permanence, serves to support this idea. Also his definition of positive happiness which he states, can only be attained by preparing the subtle faculties for the 'eternal abode', also implies that total happiness is unattainable in this world.[280]

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[276] See Chapter Four.
[277] Nursi, *The Letters*, 41.
[278] See Table Two, 2.6.8 and Table Three, 6.10.5.
[279] See 6.4.2.
[280] See 6.7.

Nursi links the negative sorrow to the 'literature of civilization' arising from the Enlightenment ideas, which limit knowledge to the sensible world. Apart from its apparent 'glamour' the biggest deception for Nursi is its false claim on 'scientific advancement' as opposed to so-called 'backwardness' of religion.[281] Nursi opines that it is the 'literature of Europe', which attributes creation to 'deaf' and 'blind' nature, that is responsible for this sense of alienation and disconnectedness. And thus without an ultimate purpose it opens up the way to heedlessness and misguidance.

Similar to Nursi who points out that the quest for happiness cannot be found in the physical realm, Ernest Becker also points to the existential dilemma between the ephemerality of the physical world and the desire for immortality.[282] He stresses that the desire for immortality is so great that people deceive themselves by creating 'immortality projects' and those who are unable to achieve this false status suffer badly as a result.[283] It is important to question here, as Nursi does,[284] as to whether the professionals and institutions which give social support that is not based on belief are merely offering another form of 'immortality project'. While Becker concurs with Nursi in portraying the transient nature of this world as one which cannot satisfy human beings' needs for permanence, he does not offer any concrete solutions as to how and where permanence can be obtained.

Nursi's solution is to understand the nature of the self *(ana)* as it holds the key, he believes, to the 'treasures of the universe'. He explains that because human beings have a sample of all God's attributes within them, they are potentially able to manifest those at the highest level. However, while Becker implies that all the problems of humans lie in their falsely laying claim to those attributes, he does not unpack this and does not

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[281] See 6.4.2.
[282] Ibid.
[283] See 6.9.
[284] See Nursi, *The Rays*, 247.

offer the solution that Nursi offers, namely that the key to happiness is to use the human 'I' *(ana)* as a unit of measurement for understanding God's Names, and with the realization of one's own ephemerality to give up one's imaginary ownership and dominicality.

Through narrating his own personal experiences, Nursi demonstrates the difference between concept pairs such as *man'nā-i ismī* ('self-referential') and *ma'nā-i ḥarfī* ('other-indicative'),[285] *mulk* ('corporeal or visible realm') and *malakūt* ('the hidden realm').[286] He blames his temporary lapses on viewing the world in a negative way, and on his own 'heedlessness' and 'ungratefulness' for failing to link his feelings in those instances beyond the *mulk*. However, during these instances, he says that his terrifying and grievous state enables him to be aware of his own impotence and existential poverty, and thus pushes him to seek God's Mercy. Nursi's experiences accord with Edinger' discussion, where he argues that the feelings of alienation has a positive role to play, since it serves as a means to realize one's impotence, thus providing the perfect state for seeking the One who is not impotent.[287]

Nursi explains that it is because of Divine compassion that his sense of loneliness and detachment from the world changed, to the extent that the petrifying images he beheld now disappeared, allowing him once again to feel connected to everything around him, including apparent life-less objects such as 'stones', for he was now able to see everything in creation as signs pointing to their Creator. Nursi's remedy therefore for the obviation of *ḥuzn* is four-fold: to submit to one's impotence, to acknowledge one's existential poverty, to view the cosmos in terms of

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[285] Nursi, *The Words*, 757.
[286] For discussion on limitation of reason and the two concept pairs of *mulk* and *malakūt* see Turner, The Quran Revealed, 84-94.
[287] Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, 48-50.

Divine Compassion and to be engaged in constant reflection and self-examination.[288]

As has been discussed, Nursi attributes the negative kind of *ḥuzn* he experienced to his own heedlessness. However, if from its creational aspect *ḥuzn* is given directly by God, then it must ultimately have a positive role to play. In Nursi's case, by following the four-fold way he recommends for the obviation of *ḥuzn*, his negative feelings culminated in a positive experience. The discourse that the obstacles in life and the surmounting of obstacles are both part of Divine Plan can be compared to the concept of *felix culpa*, whereby without the metaphorical 'fall' moral development could not be achieved.

Therefore Nursi's binary definitions have served as an excellent tool in understanding the hypothetical nature of negative *ḥuzn*. This has led to the understanding that the apparent negative *ḥuzn* from its creational aspect is in fact positive and therefore can be a means of guidance. It is hoped that this conclusion will contribute not only to a greater understanding of the concept of sadness *(ḥuzn)* from both Quranic and Nursian perspective, but because the findings highlight the positive aspect of *ḥuzn*, it will open up the discourse on the infallibility of prophets.

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[288] Nursi, *The Letters,* 536.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The main aim of this study has been to explore the concept of *ḥuzn* from the point of view of the contemporary Muslim theologian Said Nursi. The typology and the exegetes' and Muslim thinkers' interpretation of the narrative of *ḥuzn*, the study of which forms the first part of this thesis – has identified similarities as well as differences in the understanding of this concept and how it should be approached. The Nursian interpretation of *ḥuzn* has enabled a more coherent synthesis of these discussions, adding a new dimension to its understanding.

This conclusion will begin with summarizing the main findings of each chapter on the concept of *ḥuzn*, followed by a discussion of these findings and how they can contribute to further research.

7.2 Chapter Two

7.2.1 Part OneTypology & Thematic analysis

Since Nursi's work is based on the major themes in the Quran, it was deemed necessary to begin with Nursi's source of inspiration and obtain a typology of the concept of *ḥuzn* from the Quran itself. There are forty-two verses in the Quran in which the word *ḥuzn* and its derivatives are mentioned. All the verses which related to the kind of people who will not have *ḥuzn* were grouped together in order to obtain a general picture of the 'type' of people who are able to avoid *ḥuzn*.

7.2.1.1 Findings

The textual analysis of these verses provided a portrayal of the notion of *ḥuzn* as a feeling strongly related to grief as a result of loss, be it of possessions or loved ones. The findings of the typology indicate that in

order to avoid *ḥuzn*, submission to, as well as belief in, God is necessary. This much is demonstrated by the words 'submission of one's whole self',[289] which necessitates belief in the hereafter, following God's guidance, carrying out righteous acts, and spending one's substance *(amwāl)* in the cause of God.

The remaining verses which were not linked directly to how *ḥuzn* can be obviated were grouped together according to matching themes. The synthesis of the verses enabled a composite view rather than a narrow, atomistic or literal understanding of individual verses. The thematic analysis comprised three categories which fitted in with the contextual structure of the Quran, namely: *ḥuzn* as test/trial; *ḥuzn* as a reminder, comfort and reassurance to prophets and believers; and *ḥuzn* which obtains on account of separation and loss. The thematic analysis revealed the fact that although all believers, including prophets, are commanded not to be sad, with sadness being a quality associated with lack of hope and trust, and thus apparently a negative concept, sadness also had a positive aspect from the point of view of its creation, since it served as a form of trial and Divine guidance, thus offering a real opportunity for moral development. The conclusion of the thematic analysis was that although we are commanded not to be in a state of *ḥuzn*, the experience of sadness itself can serve as a reminder that all possessions, including loved ones, belong ultimately to God, and that the obviation of *ḥuzn* therefore can happen only through trust and acceptance of this fact.

7.2.2 Part Two – Izutsian analysis

The Izutsian methodology proved to be an excellent tool for the analytical study of the concept of *ḥuzn*. As discussed in Chapter Two, there are many words in the Quran which have been translated as 'sorrow', 'grief' or 'sadness' and yet they all have different meanings and nuances depending on the context. Although complete objectivity is not possible, this

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[289] See Quran, 2:272.

scientific and inductive methodology decreased the likelihood of bias by concentrating on context rather than the literal meaning of this word. It also reduced the likelihood of the meaning of this concept being politically, historically and culturally polluted as well as being influenced through pre-set understandings, such as those of jurisprudence, theology and philosophy.

The Izutsian analysis began by selecting all the verses where *ḥuzn* was mentioned, gathering them together and comparing and contrasting them against each other as well as with other verses where synonyms and antonyms of this word were mentioned, in order to obtain what Izutsu describes as 'a word-thing' interpretation as opposed to a word-for-word interpretation. Thus some of the main concepts which had a strong relational meaning with the central term *ḥuzn* were identified, enabling a more contextual understanding of the meaning of this concept and why people become sad and what is the key to its obviation from the Quranic *Weltanschauung,* a world-view upon which the whole of Nursi's work is based.

7.2.2.1 Findings

The semantic field of words synonymous with the concept of *ḥuzn*, translated variously as 'sadness', 'distress', 'grief', 'wretchedness', 'anxiety' and 'sorrow', were looked at in order to obtain a contextual meaning of these words. Sometimes a number of these words for sadness were found in the same verse. For example, in the verse below, three different words are used for grief or anguish, all with different nuances:

> And when Our messenger came to Lot, he was distressed [sīa] for them and felt for them great discomfort ['ḍaqa']. They said, 'Fear not [lā takhaf], nor grieve [lā tahzan]. Indeed we will save you and your family"
> (29:33)

In the above verse, the first word *sīa* translated as distress describes Lot's anguish with regard to what might happen in the future. The second word for distress, translated as discomfort *(ḍaqa)* is linked to Lot's hopeless, uncomfortable and anxious state at that time due to not being able to do anything about the situation. And then the words fear *(khawf)* and grief *(ḥuzn)* are used, with the former linked to the future and the latter linked to his thoughts of loss, even though the loss had not yet occurred. Lot therefore is reassured not to be frightened with regard to the future and not to think and be anguished about loss as he and his family would be saved.[290]

By examining the synonyms and antonyms of the word *ḥuzn* it was shown that it had a strong connection with the concept pair of 'belief' *(īmān)* and its opposite 'unbelief' *(kufr)*. These concepts, in turn, were related to a large number of other strings of concept pairs. For example, it was found that the concept of belief is almost synonymous with the concept of gratefulness *(shukr)* which is connected to a happy state as opposed to a state of ungratefulness (*kufr* from the verb *kafara* meaning to 'cover the truth'), which is connected to a state of loss and unhappiness.[291]The Izutsian analysis showed that those who refuse to follow God's guidance and choose to cover the truth and are ungrateful *(kāfir)*, actively rebelling against the truth *(fāsīq),* will also end up as *zālimūn* ('wrong-doers') since through their own choice they remain in darkness. The key to the obviation of *ḥuzn* and the attainment of true happiness therefore is to have sincere belief *(īmān)*, which translates into: belief in only One God by not ascribing partners to Him; fearing and trusting Him alone; following His guidance only, as laid down in the Quran; carrying out acts of righteousness purely for His sake; and showing patience and perseverance at the time of hardship.

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[290] See Quran, 29:33.
[291] See Table Two, 2.6.8.

Since the word *khawf* ('fear') and its derivatives occurred at least seventeen times with the word *ḥuzn*, the semantic field of this word was also analysed.[292] Although other words such as *rahība* and *taqwā* (from the verb *waqaya*), are also translated as fear, in fact there can be a total difference in meaning depending on which word is used. Whereas *khawf* tends to have a negative connotation, both *rahība* and *taqwā* convey a positive meaning of fear. However, in the verse below both the words *taqwā* and *khawf* have been translated as 'fear':

> *O children of Adam, if there come to you messengers from among you relating to you My verses, then whoever fears [attaqā] Allah and reforms – there will be no fear [khawf] concerning them, nor will they grieve [Yaḥzanūna].*[293]

The verb *rahība,* meaning 'fear,' is closely connected with the word *taqwa* as it is used mainly in the context of not fearing or taking guidance from anyone except God.[294] The analysis of the word *taqwā* showed that it is strongly linked to the state of 'righteousness'. This state of 'righteousness' is described in the Quran in terms of both belief and submission. That is, belief in One God, the last day, the angels, the book and the prophets, and submission by establishing regular prayers; paying *zakah* ('obligatory alms'); giving of one's wealth to the needy, and being patient when experiencing poverty and hardship.[295] In this context the word *taqwā* in the above verse can be understood in such a way that for those who trust God and attribute everything to Him and thus only fear Him and are 'righteous' there shall be no cause for them to fear *(khawf)* what will happen to them in the future and no reason for them to grieve (*ḥuzn*) over anything or anyone that they have lost. As such, it suggests that positive fear (*taqwā*) which is an outcome of belief in the hereafter, should replace negative fear *(khawf)*, which is fear as an outcome of attribution of things

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[292] For a discussion on the semantic field of *khawf* see 2.6.5 and 2.6.5.1.
[293] Quran, 7:35.
[294] See 2.6.5.1.
[295] See Quran, 2:177.

to secondary causes and a disconnection with ultimate justice in the hereafter.

The analysis of the seventeen verses where the word *khawf* occurs with the word *ḥuzn*, also showed that nine of these verses were revealed in Mecca, thus linking them mainly to principles of belief, and eight in Medina, where the focus is also on the laws of Islam which pertain to external acts of the faith. These findings further support the notion that for the obviation of *ḥuzn* and *khawf* both belief and submission are required.

7.3 Chapter Three – The concept of *ḥuzn* in Quranic exegesis

In this chapter the Quranic interpretation of the concept of *ḥuzn* by a selection of both Shiite and Sunni Muslim exegetes from the classical and modern periods were studied. The aim of this chapter was to obtain a hermeneutical understanding of this concept from an exegetical point of view.

Out of the forty-two narratives of *ḥuzn*, twenty-five were selected; this was considered to be an adequate representation of both the categories which came under 'obviation of *ḥuzn*' and 'thematic analysis', thus avoiding too much repetition of the same themes. All of the exegetes appeared to concur with regard to the meaning of both *ḥuzn* and *khawf*, interpreting the former as loss, in terms of both possessions and loved ones, and the latter as fear relating to the future generally and to the hereafter in particular.

7.3.1 Findings

7.3.1.1 Obviation of *ḥuzn*

All of the exegetes under discussion concur that the obviation of *ḥuzn* and *khawf* necessitates: belief in God; belief in the hereafter; carrying out

good deeds; and giving in charity with total sincerity. They define total sincerity as something done purely for the sake of God and in accordance with the doctrine of *tawḥīd* ('God's Unity') and the laws of jurisprudence.

The thematic analysis of the concept of *ḥuzn* has also shown that all of the exegetes are in agreement that *ḥuzn* given by God serves as a test, punishment or guidance. With the exception of Tabātabāī, they also concur that the three categories of believers mentioned in the Quran, namely: "he who wrongs himself"; "he who is moderate" and the third category "he who is foremost in good deeds by permission of Allah",[296] are potentially able to obviate *ḥuzn* in accordance with their different degrees of understanding and submission. However, according to Ṭabātabāī the removal of sorrow does not have any relevance to the third category, since believers in this category do not have any sins in their book to be grieved about in the first place. It seems here that Tabātabāī is hinting at the Shiite doctrine of infallibility linked to those ranked as 'foremost in good deeds'.[297] Therefore while the Sunni exegetes generally agree that for believers, fear and sadness is normal since it is a route to perfection, the Shi'ite Tabātabāī makes a differentiation between ordinary people and those who have reached a high spiritual station, such as the *muwaḥḥīd*, who attribute all causes to God and have thus reached the station of *taqwā*. However, the Quran points to the fact that even prophets experienced sorrow and were commanded by God not to have sadness or fear.

7.3.1.2 The *ḥuzn* of prophets and believers
It can be argued that even prophets were not totally infallible, for

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[296] See Quran, 35:32, 35:33 and 35:34.
[297] While the general orthodox Sunni opinion is that although Prophets are immune from deliberate acts of major and minor sins, they may nevertheless inadvertently make mistakes or commit sin, the Shi'ite belief proposes complete infallibility of prophets as well as Imams, stating that Prophets cannot commit any sin at all, be it major or minor, deliberate or in a state of forgetfulness. For a greater discussion on infallibility of Prophets see 6.12.1.

according to Ṭabātabāī himself, Adam's fall was due to his forgetting about the covenant of total submission he had made with God by tasting the fruit of the forbidden tree. Ṭabātabāī's own explanation shows that even though Adam's misdemeanour was one of a single instant, and was followed by repentance and promise of salvation, he was nevertheless in a state of forgetfulness which precipitated his fall from paradise.

Also in the case of Jacob, his sorrow due to the loss of Joseph was to such an extent that "*his eyes became white with sorrow [ḥuzn]*".[298] Ṭabātabāī explains that when Jacob lost his sight, he kept his grief (*asaf*) to himself. He interprets the word *asaf* as meaning sadness together with anger, which for anyone else would have spilled over; however, Jacob's suppression of his anger resulted in his melancholic (*kazīm*) state. Ṭabātabāī does not discuss the fact that although ultimately it is God who creates both feelings of happiness and sadness, at a causal level Jacob's melancholy may be down to his attachment to Joseph.

The other exegetes also simply elaborate on the Quranic verses without giving adequate explanations as to why Jacob was so saddened by Joseph's loss, to the extent that his sons were worried that he would 'end up dead from grief.'[299] While they explain away Jacob's loss of sight as being due to his suppression of sadness, they do not explain why he should be so attached to Joseph in the first place. Tustarī appears to provide an apologetic explanation for Jacob's excessive attachment to Joseph, opining that his deep sorrow was not on account of loss of Joseph but rather because of the fear that his son may lose his faith.[300] However, one could argue that the fact that just as Jacob attributed Joseph's loss to Divine Decree and thus only complained to God, as a prophet he would also trust and turn to God to protect Joseph's faith.

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[298] Quran, 12:84.
[299] Ibid.
[300] See 3.7.2.

All of the exegetes concur that the concept of *ḥuzn* is linked to loss and can have a positive aspect, i.e. of serving as a test, guidance and reassurance. However, although unlike Ṭabātabāī – the Sunni exegetes do not directly point to the infallibility of Prophets, nevertheless it appears that they try to somehow justify the extent of their sorrow, which implies that when related to Prophets, they also appear to regard *ḥuzn* in a negative light, since they are reluctant to attribute any lack, momentary lapse or even an instance of forgetfulness to the messengers of God.

7.4 Chapter Four - *Ḥuzn* in the Muslim scholarly tradition

The aim of Chapter Four was to compare Al-Kīndī's understanding of *ḥuzn* with a selection of Muslim thinkers who have specifically written about this topic, in order to capture the philosophical aspect of the notion of *ḥuzn* as conveyed by the generality of Muslim thinkers. Although Al-Kīndī's epistle is considered to be based on ideas and analogies attributed to the Stoics, the analysis of his work has shown that he has engaged with and developed only those ideas which accord with the Islamic revelation.

Al-Kīndī's definition of *ḥuzn* as "psychological pain occurring on account of the loss of an object of love or the missing of things desired",[301] falls in line with the Quranic definition offered by the exegetes as well as most of the Muslim thinkers. There is also consensus among the exegetes, and Muslim thinkers in support of Al-Kīndī's ideas that that the inclination towards permanence is a natural disposition, as well as his description of this world as one of 'generation and corruption.'[302] Although Al-Kīndī does not directly refer to revelation, he argues that to become attached to what is ephemeral is bound to lead to disappointment, and therefore one must think logically and seek what is permanent, namely the soul.

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[301] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 122.
[302] Ibid., 127.

7.4.1 Findings

Al-Kīndī therefore points to the attachment to this world as being responsible for the tarnishing of souls and offers ten remedies for the denormalisation of one's immoral habits and the rectification of one's character. While the Quranic analysis showed that *ḥuzn* is from God and can have a positive role as a source of direction, guidance and remembrance,[303] Al-Kīndī, as well as most of the Muslim thinkers studied here, tend to convey this concept in a negative light. It seems that on the one hand Al-Kīndī suggests that *ḥuzn* is a universal condition and yet on the other hand, he stresses that it is a negative attribute which is not part of human nature and is self-inflicted.[304]

Moreover, unlike the Quranic analysis which showed that from its creational aspect, sadness is given by God as a means of guidance and opportunity for purification of the soul, Al-Kīndī appears to attribute sadness to human beings, thus apparently indicating that it is not God-given and therefore serves no purpose.[305]

To conclude, the Quranic analysis of *ḥuzn* has shown that its source is ultimately God and since it can serve as a reminder and guidance, it has a positive role to play. However, although the Muslim thinkers in the main concur with the Quranic analysis that the obviation of *ḥuzn* can only come about through detachment from the worldly life, and offer logical reasons and ways of training the mind and body to accept this fact, there is no discourse on why sorrow exists in the first place and whether from its creational aspect it has a positive role to play.

7.5 Chapter Five – Said Nursi's life and works

An account of Nursi's life and works was given in this Chapter, in order to provide a contextual backdrop for his teachings and also provide a

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[303] See Chapter Two.
[304] Ghada Jayyusi-Lehn, 126-127.
[305] Ibid., 127.

background for Chapter Six which focuses on the concept of *ḥuzn* in Nursi's work.

The downfall of the Ottoman Empire and the beginnings of the secular regime of Mustafa Kemal Atatūrk concerned Nursi greatly. On the one hand he was not totally satisfied with the teachings of religious schools which focused mainly on the externals of religion, and on the other hand, he was alarmed that many young people were being attracted to western secularization and the association of Islam with 'backwardness'. Nursi felt strongly that it was necessary to respond to these new materialistic trends through educational reform. However, his plans for educational reform did not come to fruition, and discontented with political life, he experienced a profound spiritual turmoil which led to his transformation from the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said'. In spite of the fact that Nursi stayed out of politics and avoided all disputes and confrontations, he suffered considerably at the hands of the authorities throughout his life. Nursi nevertheless blamed himself for the suffering he experienced and relates how through recourse to the Quran and acknowledgement of his impotence these apparent negative experiences were transformed into sources of guidance.

The 'New Said' now believed that the only way society could be influenced towards change would be through the exposition of Quranic truths. This inspired him to write his magnum opus, The *Rīsale-ī Nur*, a modern interpretation or commentary on the Quran, which he believed would serve as an antidote for what he believed were the sicknesses of today's so-called 'civilised' societies.

7.6 Chapter Six – The concept of *ḥuzn* in Nursi's work

The typology and the Izutsian analysis of the concept of *ḥuzn* in the Quran have shown that sadness has the potential of being a source of guidance or misguidance depending on whether the path of belief or unbelief is followed. Most of the Muslim thinkers analysed in this study appear to

define *ḥuzn* as only negative, emphasizing that through human reasoning and training of one's thought processes it has to be eliminated. While the exegetes generally concur with the idea that although *ḥuzn* is essentially a sign of lack or lapse, it nevertheless offers the opportunity for guidance, there is reluctance on their part to attach what is an apparently negative attribute to prophets. What makes Nursi stand out from the other expositors of *ḥuzn* right from the outset is his binary definition of *ḥuzn*.

7.6.1 Findings

Nursi describes the first kind of sorrow in terms of 'lack of friends' or having 'no owner' and points to the 'literature of civilization' which deceptively invites its readers to attribute everything to nature as opposed to Divine Art, as being responsible for the feeling of alienation and consequent misguidance and heedlessness. His second definition describes *ḥuzn* in terms of an 'elevated sorrow', a "guidance-giving" and "light-scattering" sorrow which is produced by the Quran,[306] one which acknowledges that friends exist and that it is only their absence which causes 'a yearning sorrow' *(ḥūzn-ū mūṣtakane)*. This second definition of *ḥuzn* seems to resonate with the Sufi understanding, which welcomes all forms of sorrow as a totally positive experience since it provides the means for union with God.[307] Therefore while Nursi makes a clear distinction between *ḥuzn* as an outcome of heedlessness linked to disconnection from belief, and *ḥuzn* as an outcome of yearning for permanence, this distinction is not made in classical Sufism, since it appears that all forms of sorrow are considered by the Sufis to be positive.

Nursi points to an example of this 'yearning sorrow' in the Quran where Joseph after all the difficult trials he had experienced in his life, asks to be united with God at a time when he no longer experienced any great difficulties – he was no longer separated from his family and had a high

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[306] See 6.4.1.
[307] See 1.4.

position as ruler of Egypt – and yet he was ready to return to his 'true home'. Nursi explains that Joseph's understanding and belief was such that he realised that this ephemeral world could never satiate his need for permanence, and this is why he asked to be united with his Lord.[308]

Therefore it appears that according to Nursi's explanation, total happiness is not possible in this world, since sadness, be it negative or positive [309] is inevitable in this ephemeral realm. It can be argued that the whole of the *Risale* is devoted to the notion of belief and submission to One God, the outcome of which would be the positive *ḥuzn*, whereas attachment to the ephemeral world would result in the kind of alienation Nursi describes in terms of his first definition.

Nursi therefore agrees with Al-Kīndī's description of this ephemeral world in terms of 'generation and corruption' and the innate need for permanence, which is also corroborated by the typology, the exegetes and the Izutsian analysis. At first glance, Nursi's description of negative *ḥuzn* appeared to accord with the Muslim thinkers, from the point of view that both link the sense of alienation and hopelessness to attachment to the world rather than seeing the world as a collection of signs pointing to the One who is not ephemeral. However, while initially it appeared that Nursi's depiction of his first kind of *ḥuzn* was in accord with the Muslim thinkers' description of this concept as something attributable to individuals' own heedlessness and therefore to be avoided; on further analysis, however, it was found that Nursi adds another important dimension to the understanding of this apparently negative *ḥuzn*.

Nursi explains that it is the attachment to 'metaphorical beloveds,' which cannot satiate the desire for permanence that is responsible for the pain and suffering of human beings.[310] Therefore, similar to the findings of the

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[308] See Quran, 12:101 and discussion in 6.12.1.
[309] It should be noted that 'positive' and 'negative' *ḥuzn* are my terms and not Nursi's, which are used for easy reference to Nursi's categories.
[310] See 6.8.

Quranic analysis, Nursi attributes heedlessness, misguidance and ungratefulness to unbelief *(kurfr)* and gives examples of his own painful experiences in this regard. However, while he associates his initial sorrowful state with the negative *ḥuzn*, he goes on to describe how the light of belief transformed his sorrow and sense of alienation into the positive 'light-scattering' and 'guidance-giving' *ḥuzn*.[311] Nursi's remedy therefore, for the transformation of negative *ḥuzn* into positive *ḥuzn* is to reconnect with the Creator by reading the creation in a *ma'nā-i ḥarfī* ('Other-indicative') rather than a *ma'nā-i ismī* ('self-referential') way, thus recognising one's impotence, acknowledging one's existential poverty, viewing the cosmos in terms of Divine Compassion, and being engaged in constant reflection and self-examination.[312]

However, while the Muslim thinkers appear in the main to make a neat divide between the material and spiritual world and recommend that in order to decrease the likelihood of sorrow one should absolve oneself of as many worldly possessions as possible, Nursi stresses that in fact permanence 'comes from transitoriness'.[313] Nursi also talks about the correspondence between the unseen realm *(malakūt)* and the corporeal world (*mulk)*, stressing that without the existence of the physical world it would be impossible to comprehend the inner meaning of creation.

Therefore unlike the majority of the Muslim thinkers, who appear to totally denounce possessions, Nursi opines that an initial sense of imaginary ownership is necessary in order to be able to realize that one does not in fact own anything. He points to the human 'I' or *'Ana'* (*Ene* in Turkish) as holding the key to the riddle of creation since without it, it would not be possible to know God.[314] *Ana* therefore is the immaterial entity through which the samples of reflections of all Divine attributes, deposited within individuals' innate being can be understood. It does not have a real

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[311] See 6.10.
[312] See 6.10.4.
[313] See 6.8.
[314] For a discussion on Nursi's concept of 'I-ness' see 6.10.4.

existence as such but rather serves as a measuring unit for understanding God's attributes. Similar to Abraham's journey through creation and his initial attribution of God's attributes to causes until he realised that the Creator of all ephemeral beings must be Absolute, the Nursian purification of the *nafs* ('self/ego') also begins by first owning and then disowning God's attributes. Therefore it serves as an important measuring unit, without which it would not be possible to abandon one's 'imaginary dominicality' and 'supposed ownership'.

Therefore similar to Edinger, who emphasizes the necessity of the sense of alienation as a means of becoming aware of one's impotence,[315] it can be understood that although Nursi blames his personal experiences of *ḥuzn* and sense of alienation on his own heedlessness, in fact from their creational aspect they were necessary, since as he himself acknowledges, without those feelings and experiences he would not have been able to recognize his impotence and seek guidance.[316]

7.7 Contribution in the field and further research

This research has shown that the typology, the Izutsian analysis, the Muslim thinkers, the exegetes and Nursi himself all place *ḥuzn* in the category of reactive depression and all accord with the idea that *ḥuzn* is due to how one interprets events in one's life and that therefore the mind can be trained to see things differently.

While the Muslim thinkers appear to define *ḥuzn* in a negative light and offer devices for its denormalization, the Quranic analysis has shown that *ḥuzn* can be a means of guidance, therefore indicating that its existence is necessary. However, the position of the exegetes is affected by the paradox that on the one hand *ḥuzn* is given to believers and especially prophets as a form of test and guidance, and on the other hand that they are commanded not to have *ḥuzn*, since it is associated with a state of

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[315] See Edinger, *Ego and Archetype,* 50.
[316] See 6.11.2.

ungratefulness. At the other end of the spectrum, the Sufi understanding is that all forms of sorrow, including *ḥuzn* should be welcomed as it signals God's attention to His servants. However, the Sufi explanation does not clearly explain why, as well as being linked to guidance, *ḥuzn* is also associated with unbelief and the rest of the negative words in its semantic category.

Nursi alludes to the fact that complete happiness cannot be obtained in this world by defining two kinds of sorrow: a positive sorrow and an apparently negative one, with the former as a state of grateful yearning for the Beloved and the latter as a state of alienation and loss resulting from a disconnection from the Creator. However, on closer analysis of Nursi's arguments, similar to Ghazali's emphasis that imperfection is necessary in order that perfection may be known[317], Nursi also stresses that just as darkness is necessary to understand the concept of light, one cannot understand the concept of permanence without recognizing the ephemeral and transient nature of creation. Therefore akin to the doctrine of *felix culpa*, the apparent negative *ḥuzn* from its creational aspect, as a test, a lesson and a means of guidance, is a necessary step in the journey towards spiritual development and therefore is in fact positive. Hence just as the fall of Adam was necessary in order for the Names of God to be manifested consciously, from its creational aspect the sorrow experienced by the prophets was also necessary in order for them to be able to manifest God's Names and Attributes at such a high level. Nursi's binary classification of Quranic concepts has helped us to understand the positive aspect of *ḥuzn* and thus discourage the denigration of the position of prophets by placing them on a par with angels when in fact their apparent lapse was the means by which they reached such high levels of belief.[318]

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[317] See Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb Al-Tawhīd Wa' L-Tawakkul,* 46.
[318] Human beings as God's vicegerents on earth have the potential to reach a higher rank in belief than both jinn and angels. See Quran, 95:4.

The analysis of Nursi's work has shown that *ḥuzn* is inevitable, and therefore it is not something that has to be obliterated but, rather, changed or transformed to a positive *ḥuzn* by attributing God's Names to their rightful Owner (*ma'nā-i ḥarfī* 'other indicative') rather than attributing them to oneself or to nature (*ma'nā-i īsmī* 'self-referential').[319] In other words Nursi's whole argument is that it is important to understand the nature of 'the mirror' which is, itself ephemeral and insubstantial, in order to be able to love the One who is reflected in it.

The discussions on *ḥuzn* in this study, particularly Nursi's arguments on the importance of understanding the nature of transitoriness in order to understand permanence, have clarified that without the apparently negative *ḥuzn* and its transformation to positive *ḥuzn*, personal development is not possible. It is hoped that the findings in this research will encourage a model of care for Muslims who suffer from reactive depression which incorporates the idea that ultimately everything in creation has a purpose. Although full discussion of this would require further work, nevertheless this thesis will be compatible with a model of care that was not dismissive of experiences of *ḥuzn* but would aim to transform those experiences to a positive one.

As Nursi has shown through the examples of his own life experiences, everything that happens to human beings is a test, a form of guidance from God, a sign to be read and interpreted in accordance to the criteria of the Quran. Nursi found the antidote for all the misfortunes in his life in the different verses in the Quran, and applied them as salve in order to cure his spiritual injuries. This research paves the way for an understanding for a new approach which uses Quranic antidotes for empowering individuals in order to see beyond the *mulk* ('material realm') and reach the *malakūt* ('spiritual realm'). It is hoped therefore that these findings will encourage further research on how to apply these

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[319] SeeTable Three, 6.10.5.

understandings to behaviour change techniques from a Muslim perspective.

The analysis of *ḥuzn* generally and the binary classification of this concept by Nursi in particular has also shown that although this concept is essentially associated with a lack or a wrong judgment, it serves nevertheless as an important, if not essential means for prophets to receive not only comfort and reassurance but also guidance. It is hoped therefore that by demonstrating that the *ḥuzn* of the prophets was also a necessary experience for their moral development, it will open up more discussion and debate in this area.

Appendix A

8. Ibn Sina's (Avicenna) manuscript on *ḥuzn* in Arabic

Ibn Sina's (Avicenna) original manuscript: *Rīsāla fī al-ḥuzn.* Arabic PDF
obtained on line from: http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/sina/
On 15 April 2014

8.1 Translation of manuscript

Ibn Sina – Above manuscript rough translation into English – with the help of Abed Al-Zuweiri 18 March 2014

We verify what is *Al-ḥuzn* and its reasons, so that it will be known. Then we say grief is a psychological pain *(nafsanī)*. It happens for the reason of losing the things one loves and also not obtaining 'what one wishes' *(talab)*. There is no one who does not have these reasons and no one can be found that does not lose the things that they like or desire. If human beings want the things in this world which is subject to loss and not fixed, both their worldly attachments and the things that they seek for the hereafter, will be obliterated. Contrary to that, the things related to the intellect ('*aql)* are fixed and persist and cannot be lost, since no hand can touch them, no can they be touched by any harmful things. This is Contrary to worldly matters which cannot be protected and their corruption *(fīsad)* cannot be prevented. There should be no fear of losing the things related to the intellect *('aql)*. This applies to the person who does not want grief to touch him. This person must imagine his worldly things which he loves in this life and his immediate wishes, to be as they really are, that is, they may come to an end, or be corrupted or be lost. Therefore, one must not expect things one loves to behave contrary to their nature. If you keep this idea in your mind that these things have the innate nature of being lost, changed and corrupted, you will not find it strange when you see how they become corrupted. In this way, you will not despair *(ya's)* for not obtaining what you would like nor will you grieve for not getting what you wish for. Instead, you will take what is essential, and when they are lost, you will keep yourself occupied, without making extreme effort to regain them. The mind should not be preoccupied with this loss. If anyone follows this guide, then this is indeed, from the morals of the kings *(muluk)*. The kings do not give importance to what comes to them, and they don't care about what they lose. And against this example, is the morals of the common people ('*ām)*, who become very

happy gaining things and sad when they lose them. Also it is important for people to imagine (keep in mind) that they should never be sad for anything that they love and that sadness (grief) will never be continuous. This is because it is impossible during one's life not to lose anything that one likes, or obtain whatever one wishes. Therefore one should be satisfied with all situations in order to be safe from the pain of grief.

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