# The World We Long For

In many different eras, in many different parts of the world, many have stepped forward with claims of reformations and reconstructions under different names and titles. Such claims have always been controversial, with one exception which embraces the whole of creation, the veiled reality beyond, humanity, and life. This is undoubtedly our world, especially across the wide span of its lifetime.

After long ages of crises and depressions, despite all odds, this nation is still capable of such a regeneration; it still has the potential to realize a new resurrection, and it has accumulated sufficient knowledge to guide all the new formations around it. Moreover, it has the advantage of the subconscious acceptance by the peoples which shared history, a leadership which may possibly be of use again in the future. It is complete and sufficient with all it represents, as long as it can use once more the driving forces which were the soul and life-blood of such a long and magnificent past, in the proper time and place.

Once, in almost all the sciences, both natural and religious, our nation walked far ahead of its age. These sciences ranged from Sufism (tasawwuf) to logic, from urban planning to aesthetics, and were embodied in the geniuses who studied phenomena minutely, such as Khwarizmi, Biruni, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Zahrawi; in masters of law and Islamic jurisprudence, such as Abu Hanifa, Imam Muhammad, Sarakhsi, and Marginani; in the talents who surpassed human norms and defeated logic with logic and heart and lived their lives conscientiously, such as Imam Ghazali, Razi, Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, Shaykh-Naqshband; in the heroes of reasoning and intelligence, such as Imam Maturidi, Taftazani, Sayyid Sharif and Dawwani; and in artistic geniuses, such as the architects Hayreddin and Sinan, Itri and Dede Efendi. Now, by mobilizing all its bright minds and souls, our nation may shortly realize a second or third renaissance. Starting from the recognition of the soul and essence of Islam, and by reaching toward the re-interpretation of all existence, from the boundless divine climates of the Sufi path to universal metaphysics; from Islamic self-accounting and self-supervision to the vigilance, circumspection, and self-possession which make man gain lofty values; from the cities and urbanization, in which our inner world takes repose and where we can breathe, to the aesthetics which will be the property of all; from the art which embroiders the essence and reality everywhere and seeks infinity in all it embroiders to the true pleasures of aesthetics, which becomes more and more other-worldly, more and more refined and integrates with the beyond, by all these means, this nation can open a new chapter. However, such a great task is not accomplished lightly…

For so many years, our spiritual life has to a great extent been extinguished; our religious world has become dysfunctional; the tongues of our hearts have been tied by making people forget intense love (ashq) and ecstasy (wajd); we have perverted all minds which read and think into a hard positivism; bigotry has been installed in the place of firmness of character, strength of religion, and perseverance in truth; even in asking for the Hereafter and paradise, with a distorted mentality, petitioners have in mind some continuation of the ordinary happiness in this world. It is therefore impossible to open a new chapter without ripping such misdirected, deep-rooted thoughts and ideas out of ourselves.

This does not mean that the foulness that have sullied our souls for ages cannot be eradicated. However, without ridding ourselves of the urges and sentiments which are the true reasons for the fall and dissolution of our people, such as greed, laziness, ambition for fame, yearning for status, selfishness, and worldly-mindedness, without establishing in their place the spirit of abstinence, courage, modesty and humility, altruism, spirituality, piety and godliness—which are all of the essence and truth of Islam— without directing people to truth, without purifying and reforming them with the sense of truth, and without causing such an understanding to permeate and prevail in society, it will be well-nigh impossible to reach the straight path and calm days.

It is not completely impossible, though. If we have heroes left among us who are loyal to the essential reality of Islam and have the willpower to embrace the age we live in and fulfill its requirements, this renewal and change will certainly take place. In fact there are such heroes present among us, and it will be a transformation that is shaped by the Qur'an and tempered by the natural disposition. This will happen in such a manner that even those who are closed to such understanding, and the masses who insist on being closed to it, will not be able to prevent it. To date all renaissances worldwide have been the result of the efforts and work of the few individual geniuses who are regarded as their architects; they did not arise from the effort and movement of the masses. Just as in the years immediately following the advent of Islam, some renewals and changes were the result of not more than a dozen exceptional souls and their intelligence and ideas, souls who were raised during the time of the Umayyads and Abbasids, so too were those vast thoughts, profound souls, and bright dispositions behind the centrifugal movements and revivals during the later periods of the Ilkhanids, Karakhanids, Seljuks and Ottomans. The ways opened by such guiding souls, who emerged with a complete spiritual awareness in almost every age, became over time schools of thought which breathed the spirit of reconstruction and reformation into the masses. Those who succeeded them also followed those guides and their thoughts, and the masses followed them and sheltered in their enlightened climate too. Such great guides became the life-blood and soul of the people and lived with them like a spirit. However, during the periods when such great minds were gone, wiped out, and when people of good standing were not raised to take their place, the whole of society became a corpse, thoughts became charred remains, and dreams of renewal became impossibilities.

Now, as the days turn to spring and dawn chases dawn, we are becoming hopeful, expectant, and praying to our Lord, *“Grant us willpower supported by your Will, which will erect the statue of our souls, make our hearts as green as the slopes of the hills of Paradise, and make our souls reach the secrets of the innermost part of Your Divinity. Show our people the ways to revival in the Muhammadi line.”*

To ask for and expect this is our right, duty, and the natural consequence of our faith. However, while exercising this right and fulfilling this duty, we must make frequent reference to our glorious past and shelter in the values that made our past magnificent. This is the way that other civilizations have renewed themselves. As Western Europe proceeded through its Renaissance toward its present civilization, it took refuge in Christianity, took the Greeks as a model and espoused the values of ancient Rome. Provided that the same course of direction is followed, development is possible for any civilization. So, too, will we shelter in our own past and the roots of our essence and take our examples from the vastness of Divinity which time can never obscure. From philosophical thinking to the truth of Sufism, from the established view of religion to its moral dimension, we will take our models from the most enlightened, the brightest eras, of which we are always proud, and which we consider to be the golden slice of time, and we will weave the tapestry of our future, thread by thread, on the canvas of time. In this tapestry Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi will come together with Taftazani, Yunus Emre will sit on the same prayer mat with Mahdumguli, Fuzuli will embrace Mehmed Akif, Uluð Bey will salute Abu Hanifa, Hodja Dehhani will sit knee to knee with Imam Ghazali, Muhy al-Din ibn Arabi will throw roses to Ibn Sina, Imam Rabbani will be thrilled by the glad tidings for Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. From such a great past, with its wide panorama, the men of stature will come together and whisper to us the charm of salvation and revival.

As long as we can recover our thoughts, feelings, methods, and philosophy, it will suffice to bring them together to find that heavenly and immortal style of ours. That is why, as I see it, we should first of all re-examine all the roads that we are going to take and repair and reinforce them once again. Quintessential to our renaissance are the inspiration and fruitfulness of religious zeal, a reassuring atmosphere, firmness, gravity, sobriety, and wisdom in our reasoning and logic; stability and humanism that give us the freedom to be ourselves; philosophical depth, refinement and contemplative abstraction in our arts and philosophy; and that all these should have the quality of being logical at the core and inspired by revelation.

In this renewal, the pleasure of God is the ultimate goal. The soul is positioned ahead of the body. The self (nafs) is an essential dynamic which will ignite the consciousness of duty under the rule of heart. The love of humanity and country is an indispensable passion. Morality, which will never be abandoned, is a vital provision for the journey. Humanity, life and the universe are a mysterious book with different chapters, whose leaves we frequently scrutinize through the lens of the Qur'an. Humanity is a significant source of power with its character and true human values. Goals and objectives must be just, fair, and sacred, and the ways leading to the goals and objectives should be indicated by the Qur'an and Sunna. These are all safeguards against error.

That which we might call a *“prescription”* for our salvation consists of particular points: focusing effort on the future of our people and country; expending energy on changing our unfortunate fate of the last few centuries; making the soul which will mold and form our society into the life of our corpses; turning a new page in the history of our people. These are only a few essential elements of our dream of civilization and renewal that far excels any utopia.