**THE TWENTY -FOURTH WORD**

**Love, worship, and thanksgiving**

**FIFTH BRANCH:** This fifth branch has five fruits.

*FIRST FRUIT:* O my selfish soul! O worldly friend! Love is the cause of the universe’s existence, the bond between all things, and the light and life of the universe. Since we are the most comprehensive fruit of existence, a love so overflowing that it can invade the universe has been included in that fruit’s heart (its seed or core). One who deserves such an infinite love can only be one with infinite perfection.

Therefore, O soul and friend, our nature contains two faculties: the means of fear and the means of love. Such love and fear is felt for either the created or the Creator. Fear of the created is a painful affliction, and love of the created is a troublesome pain, for you fear such things or persons that they show you no mercy or reject your request. If this is so, fear of the created is a painful affliction. As for love of the created, those you love either do not care for you and, like your youth and possessions, leave you without saying farewell. Or they disdain you because of your love. Ninety-nine percent of lovers complain of their beloved ones, for love of the idol-like worldly beloved from the bottom of one’s heart, which is the mirror of the Eternally Besought One, is unbearable in the beloved’s view. And so it is rejected, for human nature rejects and repels what is unnatural and unde- served. (Animal love is out of question here.)

In short, those you love either do not care for you, or they despise you, or they do not accompany you. Contrary to your desire, they leave you. So turn your fear and love toward such a One that your fear will be a pleasant humility and your love a happiness free of humiliation. Fearing the All- Majestic Creator means finding a way to His Compassion and taking refuge in Him. In fact, fear is a whip; it drives one into the embrace of His Compassion. A mother frightens her child away from something or someone and attracts him into her arms. That fear is very pleasurable for children, for it draws them into the arms of care and compassion. However, the care and compassion of all mothers is only a ray from His Compassion. This means there is a great pleasure in fear of God. Given this, you can understand what infinite pleasure can be found by loving Him. Furthermore, those who fear God are freed from the worrying, troublesome fear of others, and their love of created beings in God’s Name causes no pain or separation.

We, first of all, love our own selves, and then our families and relatives, then our nation, then living beings, then the world or the universe. We have relations with all of these spheres, feel pleasure in their satisfaction and happiness, and pain at their pain. But since everything is impermanent in this tumultuous and ever-changing world, our heart is wounded continuously. What we cling to slips out of our hands, scratching and cutting them on the way. We remain in pain or throw ourselves into the drunkenness of heedlessness.

Since this is so, O soul, if you have sense, give all the love you divide among beings to the One Who truly deserves it and thereby save yourself from all pain and trouble. Only One Who owns infinite perfection and beauty deserves infinite love. Only when you can assign that love to its rightful owner can you love, for His sake and in respect of their being mirrors to Him, all things without pain or trouble. Such love must not be assigned directly to existence for the sake of existence itself. Otherwise, while being a most pleasurable Divine grace, love becomes a most painful ailment.

Another, more important, aspect of the matter, my soul, is that you assign your love to yourself. You idolize yourself and see it as worthy of ado- ration. You sacrifice everything for yourself and revere it as though it were the Lord. However, something is loved either for its perfection (which is loved because of itself), or for the benefit or pleasure it gives, the good it brings, or for another, similar reason. Now, O soul! I have presented convincing arguments in some of the Words that your nature is “kneaded together” out of defect and deficiency, as well as destitution and impotence. As darkness shows light’s strength in proportion to its density, by way of contrast, you are a mirror through those essential elements of your nature to the All-Majestic Originator’s Perfection, Grace, Beauty, Power, and Mercy.

So, O soul, you should cherish enmity for yourself or have pity on it. Or you should treat it with care and mercy after it has full conviction of the truth of the principles of belief and satisfaction in worship.

If you love your (carnal) self, which is addicted to pleasure and always looks after its own interest, you have been captivated by pleasure and self- interest. Do not prefer such insignificant pleasure and self-interest over boundless true pleasure and advantage. Do not be like a firefly, which drowns its friends and everything it loves in the fright and solitude of darkness and contents itself with its own tiny glow. Love the Eternally Beloved One in Whose favor originate, along with your animal pleasures and interests, the interests of all beings with whom you have relations, from whom you receive benefit, and whose happiness makes you happy. This will enable you to take pleasure in their happiness and to receive the same infinite pleasure as you receive from the Absolutely Perfect One.

Your intense self-love is in fact nothing but your innate love for His “Essence,” which you unconsciously carry in yourself and wrongly appropriate for yourself. Tear apart the “I” in yourself and show the “He.” All the love you divide among other beings is nothing but the love implanted in your being for His Names and Attributes. But you misuse it and so suffer pain and trouble, for the return of an illicit love cherished for those who are unworthy of it is pitiless ailment.

An atom of love for the Eternal, Beloved One, Who through His Names the All-Merciful and All-Compassionate has created a Paradise full of *houri*s to satisfy all your bodily desires, Who through His other Names has prepared there for you eternal favors to meet all the needs of your immaterial faculties (e.g., your spirit, heart, intellect, and innermost senses), and in each of Whose Names are numerous immaterial treasuries of favor and munificence, may compensate for the universe. However, the universe cannot compensate for even one particular manifestation of His love. Given this, listen and obey the following eternal decree, which the Eternal, Beloved One made His beloved, His Messenger, declare: *If you really love God, follow me [so] that God may love you* (3:31).

***SECOND FRUIT:***O soul! Worship of God is not an act through which to demand a Divine reward in the future, but rather the necessary result of a past Divine favor. We have received our wages and, in return, are charged with serving and worshipping Him. For, O soul, the All-Majestic Creator Who clothed you in existence, which is purely good, has given you a hungry stomach and, through His Name the All-Providing, has laid before you all edible things as a table of favors. Also, He has given you a life decked out with senses. It too demands its own particular sustenance like a stomach. All your senses like eyes and ears are like hands before which He has laid a particular table of favors as vast as the earth. In addition, as He has made you human, which demands numerous immaterial favors, He has laid before you a table of favors within reason’s grasp and as multidimensional as the mate- rial and immaterial worlds. As He has also granted you belief and Islam, which is the greatest humanity and thus demands endless favors and is nourished by the fruits of infinite Mercy, He has opened up for you a table of favors, happiness, and pleasures which encompasses, together with the Sphere of Contingencies, the Sphere of His All-Beautiful Names and sacred Attributes. Moreover, by bestowed on you love, which is a light of belief, He has granted to you still another table of favors, bliss, and pleasures.

In physical terms you are a small, insignificant, impotent, wretched, and restricted particular being. But through His grace and favors you have become a universal, enlightened, and enlightening being. He has endowed you with life and thereby promoted you to the rank of a particular kind of universality. By endowing you with humanity, He has raised you to the rank of true universality, and by granting to you Islam, to the the rank of a sublime and luminous universality; and by bestowing on you love and knowledge of God, He has made you attain an all-encompassing light.

O soul! As you have received these wages already, you are charged with worship, which is an easy, pleasant, and rewarding Divine gift. But you are lazy when it comes to performing it. When you carry it out defectively, as though you consider the advance wages insufficient, you arrogantly demand more. You also put on airs and complain that your prayers are not accepted. Your due is not complaint but offering petitions and supplications to God Almighty. He bestows Paradise and eternal happiness purely out of His Grace and Kindness. Therefore, always seek refugee in His Mercy and Grace, rely on Him, and heed the following Divine declaration: *Say: “Out of His Grace and Mercy,” and at that let them rejoice. It is better than what they have been accumulating* (10:58).

If you ask: “How can I respond to those universal, infinite favors through my restricted, particular thankfulness?”, the answer will what follows: Through a universal intention and infinitely profound belief and devotion. Suppose a poor man enters the king’s presence with a cheap (in materialistic terms) present. There he sees expensive gifts sent by the king’s favorites. He thinks: “My present means nothing, but this is what I can afford.” Then suddenly he addresses the king, saying: “My lord! I offer all these precious gifts in my name, for you deserve them. If I could, I would offer a double of these.”

The king, who needs nothing but accepts his subjects’ gifts as tokens of respect and loyalty, accepts the poor man’s universal intention, desire, and deep feelings of devotion as though they were the greatest gift. Similarly, a poor servant says in his daily prescribed Prayers: “All worship and veneration is for God,” by which he means: “In my name, I offer You all the gifts of worship that all beings present to you through their lives. You deserve all of them, and in reality far more than them.” This belief and intention is a most comprehensive and universal thankfulness.

The seeds and stones of plants are their intentions to grow into elaborate plants. For example, with its hundreds of seeds, a melon intends: “O my Creator! I want to exhibit the inscriptions of Your All-Beautiful Names in many places of the earth.” Having full knowledge of the future, Almighty God accepts its intentions as worship in deeds. The Prophetic saying: “A believer’s intention is better than his action,”[[1]](#footnote-1) expresses this reality. This is also why we glorify and praise Him with phrases expressing infinitude, like: “Glory be to You, and praise be to You to the number of Your creatures, the things pleasing to You, the decorations of Your Supreme Throne, to the amount of the ink of Your words. We glorify You with the sum of all the glorifications of Your Prophets, saints, and angels.”

Just as a commander offers the king, in his name, all of his soldiers’ services, humanity, the commander of all earthly creatures (including plants and animals) and acting in its own private world as if in the name of everyone, says: *You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help* (1:5), and offers the All-Worshipped One of Majesty in humanity’s name all of the creation’s worship and entreaties for help. Saying: “Glory be to You with the sum of all the glorifications of all Your creatures and with the tongues of all things You have made,” humanity makes all creatures speak in its own name.

Also, humanity says: “O God! Bestow blessings on Muhammad to the number of atoms and compounds in the universe.” He calls God’s blessing on Prophet Muhammad in the name of everything, for everything is connected with the light of Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, Understand from all this the wisdom in glorifying God and calling His blessings on Muhammad to the extent of infinity.

***THIRD FRUIT:***O soul! If you want endless accomplishments with regard to your afterlife during your short life here, if you want to see each minute of your life as fruitful as a whole life, and if you want to transform your ordinary deeds into acts of worship and your heedlessness into constant awareness of being in God’s Presence, follow the Prophet’s exalted Sunna. For obeying the rules of the Shari‘a affords some sort of awareness of God’s presence, and becomes a kind of worship that yields many fruits for the Hereafter.

For example, when you follow the principle which the Shari‘a requires in a buy-and-sell transaction, this ordinary transaction becomes an act of worship, for remembering the Shari‘a reminds you of the Divine Revelation, which causes you to think of the Revealer of the Shari‘a and to turn your attention to Him. This produces awareness of His presence. That means, obeying the Sunna can make one’s transient life produce eternal fruits to be the means of an eternal life. Therefore, heed the following Divine decree: *So believe in God and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in God and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided* (7:158). Try to be a comprehensive object to be enlightened by each Divine Beautiful Name manifested in the rules of the Shari‘a and the exalted Sunna.

*FOURTH FRUIT:* O soul! Do not be deluded by the apparent glitter and illicit pleasure of worldly people, particularly of those leading a dissolute life and, even more particularly, unbelievers. For you will not able to be like them by imitating them. You will fall too low. You cannot be like animals either, for your intellect will be an inauspicious “tool” that will give you endless trouble.

Suppose there is a palace the central room of which has a large electric light.

All other rooms have small lights connected to it. If someone turns off that large light, the palace is left in darkness. Another palace has small electric lights in each room that are not connected to its central light. If that palace owner turns off the central light, the other rooms remain illuminated. This allows its inhabitants to do their work and deter thieves.

O soul! The first palace represents Muslims. Our Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, is the large central light in the Muslims’ heart. If they forget him or discard him from their heart, they will be unable to believe in any other Prophet. Moreover, their spirit will have no room for any kind of perfection. They will not recognize their Lord, all their inner senses and faculties will be left in darkness, and their hearts will be ruined and invaded by despair and gloom. What will be able to find to replace the resulting void with and find consolation in?

Christians and Jews are like the other palace. Even if they are not illuminated by the Prophet’s light, they can manage with the “light” they think they have. Their form of belief in the Creator and Moses or Jesus, upon them be peace, can still be the means of some sort of moral perfection.

O evil-commanding soul! You can never be like an animal either, for your intellect troubles you continuously with pains of the past and anxieties for the future. It blends one pleasure with a thousand pains. But an animal enjoys itself without pain. So if you want to live like an animal, first discard your intellect and then be an animal. Also, be attentive to the Divine warning: *They are like cattle, rather, more astray (and in need of being led)* (7:179).

*FIFTH FRUIT:* O soul! Since we are the fruit of the Tree of Creation, we are a most comprehensive being and are related to all creation. We have within ourselves a heart that, like a fruit’s pit, is the center in which all parts end and join together. We are mortal and inclined toward the world of multiplicity. But the worship of God is a line of union that turns us from mortality toward permanence, from the created toward the Creator, and from multiplicity toward unity. It is also a point of juncture between the beginning and the end.

If a seed-bearing fruit looks down at those under the tree and, priding itself on its beauty, throws itself into their hands or heedlessly leaps off the tree, it is quickly lost. However, if it is not heedless of its point of support, its seed (in which the tree’s whole life is included) will enable the tree to perpetuate its meaning and life. This also enables it to gain a comprehensive reality in a perpetual life.

Similarly, if you are drowned in the multiplicity of things and, deluded with the smiles of mortals in drunkenness with love of the world, leave yourself in their arms, you will certainly suffer utter loss and find yourself in the darkness of eternal execution after a transient life. This will also bring about your spiritual death. But if you listen to the lessons of belief from the Qur’an with the ear of your heart and coming to your senses, turn toward unity, you will be able to reach the summit of perfections through worship and servanthood to God, and gain eternal existence.

O soul! Since this is the reality and since you are from Abraham’s nation, say, like he did: “I love not those that set.” Turn your face toward the Eternal Beloved One, and weep, saying:

(The verses to be included here have been included in the Second

Station of the Seventeenth Word, and have not been repeated here.)

**SECOND STATION**

**O helpless one, stop wailing over misfortune and trust God, For know this wailing is an error that causes trouble after trouble;**

**If you have found Him Who makes you suffer, then know this suffering is a gift bringing peace and happiness.**

**So, stop wailing and thank God, like nightingales: their touching songs on roses are in fact heartfelt thanks offered for all flowers.**

**But if you do not find Him, know that the whole world**

**is a place of suffering, misfortune, and loss.**

**Why wail over a small misfortune**

**when you bear a worldwide responsibility,**

**Come, put your trust in God and smile at the face of misfortune so that it may also smile, for as it smiles, it lessens and changes.**

**Know, O selfish one: happiness in this world lies in forsaking it.**

**If you know and seek God, this is enough, for then all things will be for you even if you abandon them.**

**If you are selfish, this is total loss, for**

**whatever you do, all things will be against you.**

**So, in either case, forsake the world.**

**Forsaking the world means considering it God’s property and dealing with it with His permission, in His name...**

**The only profitable business here is to make your mortal life eternal.**

1. al-Munawi, *Faydu’l-Qadir*, 6:291. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)