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INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME TWO OF
ABDULLAH BOŠNJAK'S COMMENTARY ON IBN 'ARABI'S *FUSŪS AL-HIKAM*

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It is almost thirteen years since we published our first translation of Ibn 'Arabi's *Fusūs Al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, which could now be described as an *interpretative* translation from the original Arabic. This was not only because it was dictated by the specific academic assignment of my mentor, Professor Vladimir Premec, who wanted me to translate the seminal work of the author whose thought was the subject of my doctoral dissertation at the same time as writing the dissertation itself, but also because Ibn 'Arabi wrote part of this work on parchment but retained part of it in his head, so that my first translation, all those years ago, necessarily followed the interpretations of his most famous students and commentators as regards the parts that remained unpublished.

We are now offering a new translation, following Ibn 'Arabi's thinking step by step in his great work, but this time we are also providing, alongside it, one of the finest, perhaps the very finest, commentary on the *Fusūs* of the many such writings published in the past eight centuries in the former Muslim empire. This commentary was composed by a man from Bosnia, a Bosniak, the illustrious Abdullah-effendi Bošnjak – Abdi or Gaibi (*al-Ghaibi*), as he was often known. Like his work, he belonged to a period in the history of Muslim thought that many ill-disposed Western historians and scholars writing on Islam and various cultural, academic and civilizational aspects of Muslim thinking, especially in the Balkans, dubbed the “dark vilayet” or realm of darkness, though it was in reality a time of enlightenment and progress not previously known in the history of the human race. There is barely a spiritual horizon with which the reflective Muslim spirit did not express and realize itself, and this is especially true of the Bosniak spirit in the vast Ottoman Empire, the torchbearers and protagonists of which spirit committed the profusion of their thoughts to paper not only in their mother tongue but also in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish and Persian. Now, as we are only just beginning to reach out to the limits of the immense spiritual culture of the thoughtful “Bosniak spirit” of that time, the

times in which we live seem to be an age of thickening gloom, from which the now largely captive Bosnian spirit can only gaze from afar, down the history of our own self-inflicted failure of thought, at remote, unattainable horizons, illumined by the light of that once so wide-ranging and powerful Bosniak interpretative genius.

The cultural public now has the opportunity, therefore, to read the second volume of the great commentary by Abdullah-effendi Bošnjak on a seminal work of Sufi literature, composed by the celebrated Andalusian, Ibn ‘Arabi. This covers six *prophetic logoi*.

I. The first logos of this volume deals with the fundamental wisdom of the “Sethian logos.” This is known as “Divine Spirit” wisdom, because the Sethian receptacle was inspired and imbued with it by the Divine Exhalation, the Spirit or Breath of the Merciful (*Nafas Al-Rahmān*). The fundamental spiritual gifts fulfilled in the metaphysical perspectives of this wisdom are wider-ranging than those that radiate from the very idea of the transcendent unity of Being (*Wahdat Al-Wujād*), which throughout Sufi writings symbolizes the most sublime interpretative testimony to God as the sole Source of Being as such. The “Sethian wisdom” or Sethian aspect of the Divine wisdom is in a sense the first declaration of the “personality” of the Divine Being, appearing at the very source, at the crack of dawn of the self-disclosing Being in its entire creative states and stations. The wisdom with which the Sethian logos is imbued is self-bestowing Divine wisdom, as is plain to see from the two fundamental terms that define it: one is *Wahb*, or the “gracious gift” of God, a gift bestowed without being earned and without charge, for it is the spiritual gift grounded in the merciful, light-giving revelation of Being (*Al-Wujūd*) in existence (*Al-Mawjūd*), symbolizing the “individuality” of each of God’s creatures; the other is *Fayd*, or the light of the Divine Reality that flows into the different and diverse existential receptacles of that Reality as the inextinguishable luminous Being from which surge the spiritual gifts of the Sethian nature or the gifts of the self-bestowing Divine Mystery.¹ These are the gifts of the Essence, the gifts that come from the Names of God. The reciprocal relationship between these gifts, those of the Divine Essence and those of the Names of God, is analogous to the relationship between Adam (a.s.) and Seth (a.s.), that of father and son. Adam (a.s.), as the first man

¹ Abdullah-effendi Bošnjak, *Sharh Al-Fusūs Al-Hikam*, fol. 1032-082b.

and first bearer of the word of God, symbolizes unicity in its essential, synthetic aspect, and Seth (a.s.), as a derivative human being, and second in the sequence of messengers of God, symbolizes unicity expressed in that it is at the very beginning of the multiplicity of essential individuations (*Al-Ta'ayyunāt*). Just as the spiritual gifts of the Names of God are the gifts of the Divine Mystery itself, so Seth (a.s.) is “God’s gift” to Adam (a.s.), as his name itself suggests, with whom God comforts Adam (a.s.) after the loss of his son Abel. But Seth (a.s.) is not only a consolatory gift from God to Adam, he is also the secret of Adam’s (a.s.) being, “his father’s secret,” for he derives from the centre of his innermost being. He is the principle and first gift from which all others derive, for some of Ibn ‘Arabi’s interpreters regard Seth (a.s.) as the “first soul” or “universal soul” from which all others emanate. He is also defined as the “first movement” in the logical and principial, but not in the physical, order of things, from which all other movements follow.² His two elder brothers, Abel and Cain, are imbued with entirely different symbolism: Abel symbolizes space, and Cain, time. In symbolizing the first movement, Seth (a.s.) also denotes the cyclical role that founds and introduces the temporal cycle of existence. Thus, in reference to Ibn ‘Arabi’s text, Abdullah effendi Bošnjak concludes that in consequence of these meanings and symbolisms, Seth (a.s.) holds the “key to all gifts,” and that as a result a “Seal” will follow in his footsteps and “set the seal” of the Adamic human race on this earth.³ As the principal receptacle of the spiritual deposits and mysteries in the vertical and horizontal, temporal and spatial sense, Seth (a.s.) is not only the “son of Adam” (a.s.) *par excellence*, he is also the “teacher of Idrīs” (a.s.), whom Sufi literature often refers to as the “Pole of the human soul,” while Nabulusi also calls him the “Teacher of the first sacred pages” (*Sāhib Al-Sahā’if*).⁴ He is thus the inheritor of sacred knowledge, the knowledge of the spiritual readiness to seek and receive spiritual gifts (*‘Ilm Al-Isti’dād*), and the knowledge of Divine predestination (*‘Ilm fi’l-Qadar*).

All three forms of knowledge are knowledge of the Essence that enters the silence of the spiritual heart, with no verbal question and without the mediation of the First

² Nabulusi calls him the “perfect first-born,” and René Guénon claims he is the “first movement” not only in the logical and principial but also in the physical order of things. See René Guénon, *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée*, Ch. XX.

³ Abdullah effendi Bošnjak, *ibid.*, fol. 1032-086b.

⁴ See R. Guénon, *Le Tombeau d’Hermès*, p. 143 in *Formes traditionnelles et cycles cosmiques*.

Intellect, by virtue of the theophany or luminous rays of the Essence Itself (*Tajallī Dhātī*). The receipt of this spiritual gift is a sign of the realization of the most sublime aspect of the Perfect Man (*Al-Insān Al-Kāmil*) who stands, in his spiritual state, in direct relationship to the plenitude of the Ipseity/Essence. This is the end of the mystical journey, the top of the *scala perfectionis*, the return to the primordial, ancestral home, the entry to *Nā-kojā-abād* or no-place, to placelessness and timelessness. Ibn ‘Arabi has one word for this: *Lā Maqām*, from the Qur’anic ayat *O people of Yathrib, there is no abiding here for you (Lā muqāma lakum), therefore return.* (XXXIII:13). Ibn ‘Arabi regards this spiritual station or spiritual gift of essential cognition, symbolizing the acme of the initiatory journey to the summit of the mystical Sinai, as belonging exclusively to the “Muhammadiyyun,” not only because they belong to the time of sacrohistorical maturity of the Divine revelation, but also because they gain their knowledge from the niche of the all-encompassing Muhammadan seal of prophethood (*Mishkāt Al-Nubuwwa Al-Khātemiya*) and friendship with God (*Mishkāt Al-Walāya Al-Khātemiya*). Both niches are symbolized by the notion of the spiritual heart as the burnished mirror in which God reveals the inner splendour of His Names, and as the true pastor who, in the sense of the perfectly realized spiritual authority of the Caliphate, guards and wakes over all the realms of the inner, luminous, theomorphic human physiognomy (*Insān Nūrānī, Photeinos anthrôpos*).⁵ In the primordial meaning of the phrase, the “niches of the seal of prophethood and friendship” with God are intimately linked with the Prophet of Islam (a.s.), the first created of all creation, the First Individuation (*Al-Ta’ayyun Al-Awwal*), the Most Praised (*Ahmad*) in the entire order of God’s creation, the most moral of creatures (*Khuluq ‘Azīm*, LXVIII:4) and, in keeping with Sufi tradition, the reason for the Divine creative act (*Law Lāke-Law Lāke. . .*). For this reason his spiritual station, too, is the most sublime, and he is oriented most directly towards the Divine Essence or the Supreme Centre in his existential, sacrohistorical and hierohistorical plenitude, as his spiritual title *‘Abdullāh* explicitly reveals. Ibn ‘Arabi calls this spiritual station, which is equally valid and paradigmatic for the spiritual authority of the *Nubuwwat*, the *Risālat* and the *Walāyat*, the most glorious and most praiseworthy spiritual station (*Maqām*

⁵. Ibn ‘Arabi, *Fusūs Al-Hikam*, chapter on Seth (a.s.); cf. Abdullah effendi Bošnjak, *Sharh. . .*, fol. 1032-069a-074a; Michael Valsan, *Études Traditionnelles*, p. 261, 1966; R. Guénon, *Les États multiples de l’Être*, pagl. III.

Mahmūd). This spiritual station of the Messenger of Islam (a.s.) is the symbol of the Niche of niches, the sign of the “Muhammadan reality” that circulates in the hidden nature of every creature and the symbol of the metahistorical Muhammadan light of which the prophets of God who blazed the trail for his sacrohistorical coming receive only certain luminous aspects, while he is also sealed, with this light, with the spirit of every rational creature. It is from this spiritual station that Seth (a.s.) too received his deposit and mysterious portion of the *Traditio primordialis* of which the spiritual seed has largely dispersed into sacrohistorical times to come.

II. This is followed by an account of the transcendental wisdom in the “Noachian/Nuhian logos” in Ibn ‘Arabi’s *Fusūs* and in the context of Abdullah effendi Bošnjak’s *Commentary*. Unlike the Divine wisdom in the “Adamic logos,” which is the wisdom of the primordial, unread emanation of the Divine Names, the transcendent wisdom in the Noachian logos is congruent with the real wisdom of the Divine Names of which the creative *theurgy* and appearance in their locus of manifestation (*Mazhar*) is mediated by an angel for each individual, while the places or receptacles of their principial locus of manifestation represent the spiritual stations of the transcendent spiritual realities. Noah (a.s.) is the first man to whom the title of Messenger of God (*Rasūl*) of his temporal cycle is attributed. In fact, in this context he features as the prototype of the messengers of God and as the one who explicitly announces the coming of Muhammad (a.s.) who is not only the Seal of all prophets but also the Prophet *par excellence* (*Verus propheta*) among them, he who was crowned in pre-eternity with that role in its plenitude and perfection. The prophetic mission of each of the Messengers of God, including Noah’s (a.s.), is circumscribed by that of Muhammad (a.s.), whose prophetic mission is universal, for all times and for all civilizations, unlike the missions of other messengers which announce only the individual aspects of the Divine Mercy the essence of which is deposited in the person of the Messenger of Islam (a.s.) as the universal sign of Divine Mercy (XXI:107). It is through him that the Divine Mercy is offered to all the worlds and universes and to all three civilizations: the angelic, luminous civilization, the fiery civilization of the *jinns* and the human civilization of clay, where the latter is synthetic, bearing in its fundamental nature the symbols of the first two. On the other hand, while the prophet mission of all the other messengers of God is realized

under the auspices of one of the multitude of Divine Names, the universal prophetic mission of Muhammad (a.s.) is realized under the direct spiritual influx of all ninety-nine beautiful Names of God, including the supreme Name, *Allāh*, the semantic base of which is all the essential relations (*Nusub Dhātiya*) of the Names of the Divine Essence and the Names of the Divine Being. By analogy, the Divine wisdom revealed by previous prophetic *logoi* is disclosed in its individual aspects, only as transcendent or only as immanent, only as esoteric or only as exoteric, and so on, while the Divine wisdom of the Messenger of Islam (a.s.) is revealed in all its aspects, which is why he was able to say, “I was given the all-comprehensive words of God” or “I am the plenitude of all the words of God,” and why Ibn ‘Arabi called the wisdom of the “Muhammadan logos” the incomparable, peerless wisdom (*Al-Hikma Al-Fardiya*). Since the zenithal light itself of the Word of God flowed into the receptacle of his heart, the Messenger of Islam (a.s.) is not only the Messenger *par excellence* (*Verus propheta*), but also the paragon of the universal, perfect, full or ideal human person, not only the universal locus of the theophanization of all the Divine Names, but also the embodiment of the supreme virtue instilled in him by the “Divine upbringing” itself: “I was raised by my Lord, so mine was the most excellent upbringing.” Consequently, the messengers of the Word of God who blazed the trail for the Messenger of Islam (a.s.) brought *furqan* revelations, partial, circumscribed by comparison with the universal message of the Messenger of Islam (a.s.), whereas his was a *Qur’anic* revelation, complete and comprehensive, in which all previous Divine revelations had substantially survived, and which is the final sacrohistorical witness of everything that God has ever spoken to the human race. As a result, it became possible to speak of the Universal Human Being (*Insān Kāmil*) and the transcendental unity of Being, or theomonism (*Wahdat Al-Wujūd*), as Ibn ‘Arabi and Abdullah effendi Bošnjak himself were to observe, only with the zenithal, consummative age of Revelation and with the messenger of whom God himself would say that his was “the finest morality” ever manifested to the worlds.

III. The “Idrisian logos” bears the features of the supremely holy Divine wisdom, for as this prophetic figure drew nearer to God and internalized the Divine message which he received in his own life, by understanding and realizing it by virtue of so strict an ascetic discipline that his spiritual self-realization was complete by the standards of

the message he had received, so God raised him to a high place, the very place attained by the ultimate purposes of the righteous deeds of the Children of Adam (a.s.), and spared him the experience of physical death. Most scholars of *tasawwuf* teachings believe this high place to be the Lote-tree of the Furthest Boundary (*Al-Sidra Al-Muntehā*), which only the Messenger of Islam (a.s.) was able to reach during his *Mi'rāj*. It should be noted, in regard to the high place, that “high,” in the sense of the sublime that it bears here, may denote place (*Makān*), spiritual degree (*Makāna*), and essential ascension by virtue of special Divine dispensation. This last sublimity and ascension are reserved for the Universal Man. As regards the Idrisian logos, the wisdom that Ibn ‘Arabi considers in that regard clearly reveals the figure of Idris (a.s.) as a *hermeneutic figure* among the messengers of God, one who, in the earlier times of sacred history, disclosed to us the mystery of *interpretation* and of *induction* into the most profound luminous depths of the message he brings to humankind. He also introduces us to the mysterious wisdom of the Khalifa of God to whom belongs the most elevated place by virtue of his quintessential service to God, serving God by virtue of the spirit (*Al-'Ubūda*). The symbolism of this service is ritually expressed by prostration (*Sajda*) before Almighty God, in which one adopts the foetal position and adumbrates the closed circle of the microcosmic being by which the realm of the intellect, the apex of the human vertical, is connected with the mineral kingdom in us as the existential base of the human being. This image of the Divine microcosmos, the mental template of our individual, lifelong *mi'rāj* which begins and realizes itself in the span from embryo to intellect, from the mineral kingdom to the realm of the intellect, is the only one worthy, in such entirety, of serving the Almighty, and of having bestowed upon itself the luminous civilization of the angels and the fiery civilization of the *jinns*.⁶

IV. The lofty wisdom in the “logos of Abraham/Ibrahim” reveals the aspect of the Divine wisdom that symbolizes the ultimate, most elevated degree of love (*Al-Khulla*) which exists in the spiritual state of saturation of two intimate friends.⁷ The paradigm of such love is the perpetual interrelation in which the *Al-Muhayyamūn* angels are so enraptured by the beauty of the Face of God that they neither see nor feel anything but

⁶ Abdullah effendi Bošnjak, *Sharh*. . . , fol. 1032-115a-117a; René Guénon, *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, Paris, 1983, pp. 20-24.

⁷ Michael Valsan, *L'Islam et la fonction de René Guénon*, Paris 1967, p. 128.

that Face.⁸ The paradigmatic sacrohistorical example of attaining this spiritual state is that of the prophet Abraham (a.s.), who resolved, as his testimony of faith, to sacrifice everything and thereby to gain everything, by donning the spiritual garment of the fundamental virtues of the Divine Attributes (*Takhalluq*) and the fundamental spiritual dignities of the Names of God (*Tahaqquq*). This spiritual state of Abraham's (a.s.) is not merely the expression of mutual love and friendship, a state that can connect God and His messengers who serve Him with the pure strength of the spirit, but also the symbol of a spiritual state characterized by the highest degree of monotheism affirmed by the absolute, boundless virtue of the essential metaphysical Truth. This is the state of those known as *Hanīf* – those whose zenithal vertical is not for a single instant obscured by the consciousness of an idol – and of those known as *Khalīl* – intimate, “family” Friends of God who do not hesitate to sacrifice everything so as keep faith with the One and not to be deprived of the One Friend who loves us unreservedly and so lose consciousness of Him. Abraham (a.s.) encompassed both states in his spiritually wholly realized being. By realizing in his being these two spiritual states, the figure of Abraham (a.s.) appears at the level of the sacrohistorical as the Friend of God who fuses within himself both individual and communitarian identity, in keeping with the Qur'anic testimony itself, since he was both an individual and an entire people, while at the level of the hierohistorical, he manifests himself within the spiritual dramaturgy of his personality as “two persons:” that of the Universal or Transcendental Man and that of the Universal Spirit. Both these persons are *theomorphic*, and in fact there is only one, the Person of the One Who is in origin, as Prototype-Figure and Mirror-Figure, in the burnished mirror of the loyal Friend of God (*Khalīlullāh*) who is thoroughly permeated with the very After-image of the Divine. As a result, the Abrahamic logos stands on the sacrohistorical divide itself, linking the youth of sacrohistorical monotheism, up to his times, and the zenithal maturity and adulthood of that same monotheism in the final sacrohistorical, Qur'anic or Muhammadan age of the Word of God.⁹

V. The true wisdom in the “logos of Isaac/Ishaq” does not bear this name only because it springs from the spiritual station of prophethood, but because it is intimately

⁸ Ibn 'Arabi, *Futūhāt*, ch. 45, trans. M. Valsan in *Études Traditionnelles*, 1953, p. 132.

⁹ . Ibn 'Arabi, *Futūhāt*, ch. 179; cf. *L'Esprit universel de l'Islam*.

linked with the true vision that this prophetic logos accepts unconditionally, whatever it symbolizes and whatever it demands of him. In the case of the logos of Isaac, this vision calls on the father to sacrifice his own son so as to bear irrefutable, albeit paradoxical, witness to his belief in the One and to preserve the most intimate, sincere friendship between Abraham (a.s.), the friend of God, and God Himself. True visions, however, require interpretation, especially when they disclose God in an after-image that the human intellect is incapable of accepting and associating with God, or when they manifest a Divine commandment in a manner outside the customary logical order of things. God puts Abraham (a.s.) to the test with the illusion that he must without question sacrifice his son, for whose redemption he had in fact prepared the *qurban sacrifice*, whereas Abraham (a.s.) saw in his vision only the imperative command to sacrifice his son and felt no need to interpret his dream in the way that was required by the true visions of Joseph (a.s.) and Muhammad (a.s.). On the other hand, this vision was evoked above all in the memory of the interconnectedness of the esoteric caliphate and the spiritual realization of the absolute essential service of God by evincing the initiatory hierarchy of the realms of nature in which serving God is more perfect in the mineral and animal kingdoms than in the realm of the human and rational.

Taking his vision literally, in his desire to realize his intimate connection with the Divine Principle by sacrificing his son, Abraham (a.s.) in fact sacrificed his own soul, demonstrated or symbolized by the figure of his son, for “a child is its father’s secret,” the soul itself of its father. But this was not what God had asked or expected of Abraham (a.s.), that caliph of God the Merciful; on the contrary, he required of him to sacrifice the *qurban* to save the caliph and prophet within him, that crowning creation of God which is the essence of the Divine Names and which bears the virtual power of the Divine presencing in this world – a world which, in Ibn ‘Arabi’s view,¹⁰ based on a sound tradition of the Messenger of Islam (a.s.),¹¹ is a world of sleep or dream-visions (*‘Ālam Wahmī*) that conveys its imaginal nature as prototype through the proper interpretation of the events that occur here, in this world, as visions, and their realization in conformity

¹⁰ Ibn ‘Arabi, *Futūhāt*, ch. 32, vol 3, p. 386, ed. O. Yahya.

¹¹ “People are asleep, and when they die, they awaken.” In other words, after the Messenger (a.s.) had left this world, the world remained in a state of sleep and unawareness from which it will awaken on the Day of Resurrection into eternal life.

with the demands and laws of the imaginal world as the world of true symbols and prototypes (*'Ālam Khiyālī*). But every event associated with any of God's messengers, including this vision associated with Abraham (a.s.) and his son, has an inexhaustible symbolic meaning and paradigmatic validity according to which, after God's messengers have left this world, the memory of that event is to be retained in us, that crowning creation of God, awakening the dormant consciousness of the vice-gerents of God on Earth and giving the dreams and illusions of this world the meaning of the spiritual events that were played out in the "drama in heaven," in the act of the pre-existent covenant between God and the souls of all creatures. As long as we, as God's crowning creation on Earth, retain the memory of the paradigmatic events of sacred history and the lives of the messengers of God, and as long as we interpret those events congruently with the true meaning of those spiritual events that preceded us, occurring in metahistory, in the drama in heaven, bearing witness to this interpretation in genuine and absolute service of the One, this world will possess within itself the *universal man*, its caliph and its pancosmic axis, and by virtue of all this will bear in its mundane dreams and illusions a foretaste of the sempiternal life to come in full sobriety and spiritual wakefulness.

VI. The sublime wisdom in the "logos of Ishmael/Isma'il" is characterized by the two Qur'anic determinants attributed to it: essential Unicity (*Tawhīd Dhātī*) and the multiplicity of Names. The first attribute also constitutes the fundamental reason why this logos is described as sublime wisdom. Another reason is that, according to the Qur'an, Isma'il (a.s.) was "pleasing to his Lord" (Maryam, 55), and one who dwelt in God's pleasure, for he was absolutely sincere in word and deed. By virtue of the essential unicity, he displayed sincerity towards the universal Lordship (*Al-Rubūbiya Al-Kullīya*) which represents the "active perfection" of Allāh as Supreme Principle, while by virtue of the multiplicity of Divine Names he displayed obedience, sincerity and satisfaction in his relation to the metaphysical truths of each of the Divine Names which symbolize, in their apotheosis or individual metaphysical truths, the "personal lord" of that creation, while the totality of the Divine Names symbolizes the "passive perfection" of the Supreme Principle. The contingent existence of every being or creation is, in its entirety, the object of the Lord's love and pleasure, on the one hand because Allāh alone, as Lord of lords, is the only true Reality, and on the other because the contingent

existence of every creation is a receptacle, instrument or locus in which one of the hidden realities of a Divine Name is made manifest. Every contingent creation must be congruent with its “personal Lord,” and this correspondence depends solely on the aspiration and spiritual willingness or unwillingness to receive spiritually the gifts of the hidden potentiality of every individual servant in its relationship to its “personal Lord.” The congruity between the “personal Lord” (*Rabb Khāss*) of one of the Divine Names and its servant, who is interconnected with it and who represents the apotheosis of that “personal Lord” (*Marbūb*), varies in proportion to the differences in spiritual readiness (*Isti’dād*) or unreadiness to receive, or in obedience to the hidden reality of each and every creature or existent. Absolute obedience to the Absolute Lord is displayed only by God’s elect, one of whom is Isma’il (a.s.), who dwelt in God’s absolute pleasure and who, by virtue of genuine servitude or by using the power of pure spirit, responded to each of the Divine Names congruently with the sincere promise by which he had sworn and which he made in metahistory in the primordial, pre-existent Covenant (*Al-Mīthāq*) between Allāh and the souls of all creatures. The paradigmatic testimony of fidelity of the promised came from the messengers of God who bore sincere witness and sincerely fulfilled their promise.