

Civilisation of Virtues

Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ





With Compliments

from

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About the author

Osman Nuri Topbaş was born in 1942 in Erenkoy, Istanbul, Turkey to Musa Topbaş and Fatma Feride Hanim, H. Fahri Kigili's daughter. He went to Erenkoy Zihni Pasa Primary School and, in 1953, Istanbul Imam Hatip High School, one of the leading secondary educational institutions with highly respected teachers such as M. Celeleddin Ökten, Mahir İz, and Nureddin Topçu. During that time, he studied under the supervision of M. Zekai-Konrapa, Yaman Dede (Abdülkadir Keçeoğlu), Ahmet Davutoğlu, Mahmud Bayram, and Ali Rızâ Sağman. He also became acquainted with famous poet and thinker Necip Fazil. He joined the latter's circle of friends, attended his speeches, followed his magazine *Büyük Doğu*, and became an ardent supporter of his ideas. Both Osman and his uncle Abidin Topbaş graduated from high school in 1960.

After graduation, Topbaş engaged in trade and industry for some time. In 1962 he performed his military service in Tillo, Siirt as a reserve officer teacher. He loved teaching and being involved with people when he was in the army.

Having completed military service, Topbaş went back to trade but he never severed himself from learning and philanthropy. He was an active member of İlim Yayma Cemiyeti (Association for the Promulgation of Knowledge). His business site operated like a charitable organization and foundation; it was a center for giving scholarships to students and assistance to the poor. He was also in charge of his family's philanthropic services. He continued his charitable activities under the roof of Hüdâyi endowment after its foundation in 1985. He was instrumental not only in its foundation but also in spreading its services to students from neighboring countries.

Topbaş began to write in the early 1990s as a result of his interest in religious studies and poetry. Among his works published in Istanbul:

1. Tears of the Heart. (2008)
2. The Prophet of Mercy Muhammad. (2008)
3. Islam: Spirit and Form. (2008)
4. The Secret in the Love for God. (2009)
5. Last Breath. (2009)
6. The Story of the Reed. (2009)
7. Civilisation of Virtues 1. (2009)
8. İkhlas and Taqwâ. (2009)
9. The Exemplar Beyond Compare Muhammad Mustafa (r). (2009)

Topbaş's books have been translated into several languages. He has shared his vision also through teaching seminars, speaking at conferences and chairing panels in many different countries.

He is married and has four children.



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*Civilisation
of Virtues*

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Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ

PUSTAKA PERDANA



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PROLOGUE

Eternal thanks and praise be to Allah Most High for making the worth of all creatures, and in particular that of mankind, reach its peak with the Blessed Prophet, and Who, in swearing by the life of that Eternal Pride of the Universe, made Him a source of dignity and honor and who gave us the good fortune to be from his community.

Eternal peace and blessings be upon the Sultan of Prophets, Muhammad Mustafa, the mercy of all the worlds and the source of blessings, the one who crowned good character, displaying innumerable examples of virtuous behaviour and who was given an everlasting and unique model character for all of mankind.

Everything to be found in the heavens and the earth has been prepared especially for mankind. As such he should consequently live in a state worthy of and grateful for this divine favour. The way to do this is by serving Him as a virtuous and noble servant. The essence of this servanthood is '*makarim-i akhlak*' a character praised and adorned with the best of behavior...

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (saw)¹ has said:

"I was sent for no other reason than to complete good character". (Muwatta, Good Character, 8)

Thus he expressed the fundamental wisdom in his duty and he stressed the importance of good character. It is indeed so, that

1. SAW in Arabic is short for "*sallallahu alayhi wa sallam*" and means "peace and blessings be upon him". It is pronounced whenever the name of the Prophet is mentioned. (translator's note).



from whichever aspect we look, the entire life of the Prophet ﷺ is like an exhibition of ultimate ideals, traits and merits.

Almighty Allah confirmed this truth by stating:

“O My Messenger. Indeed you are truly vast in character”.

(Qalam, 68:4)

Consequently the Prophet was not just a teacher teaching the Qur’an in word only. Rather he practiced what he preached and was thus a living Qur’an and a guide, who taught the divine truths through his actions. This is why his dignified and blessed life is the best of examples for future generations to come until the Day of Judgement.

With the appearance of the Prophet, that Light of Creation, the dark horizons of the world were enveloped in light, a new morning of bliss awaited by mankind was born, hearts were enlightened, reflection became deeper, and discernment broadened. In short, it was he ﷺ who allowed the human being to attain to his true nobility and dignity, and to goodness and merit, to the truth, to justice and to virtue. It was he ﷺ who taught the secret of life and eternity.

Because no other prophet would come until the Day of Judgment, whatever beauty and virtue it is that mankind is in need of, have all been bestowed upon His superior person. From this point of view then, all goodness has reached its peak in him. Consequently:

He is the peak of love. He is the peak of courage. He is the peak of patience and perseverance. He is the peak of generosity, sacrifice, and putting others first. He is the peak of abstinence, scrupulousness, contentedness and humility even though great booty and worldly bounties were laid out before him. He is the peak of mercy and compassion and helping the needy. He is the peak of sincerity and piety. He is the peak of gaining Allah’s plea-



sure and he is the peak of gratitude. He is the peak of knowledge of Allah and wisdom, and grace and favour. He is the peak of prophet hood. He is the peak of teaching and education of divine etiquette and good manners. He is the peak of being the physician of wounded hearts. He is the peak of righteousness and trust. He is the peak of being the friend of Allah and His beloved. He is the leader of all people on the Day of Judgement. He is the intercessor of the offenders. He is the peak of all manner of virtues, character and service. In other words, only He can be at the peak of the most perfect servanthood.

Every characteristic, behavior and virtue that constitutes good character of which Allah is well pleased, has been revealed to mankind through the blessed tongue and application of the Prophet.

Almighty Allah displayed the model of the 'perfect human' in the person of the Prophet ﷺ. This was what He intended with Islam and so He made him a model person for all of mankind.

In this way the words and principles of the Prophet constitute a collection of the most perfect examples lived in his own life and also lived by action in the lives of his community which will continue on until the end of time.

In contrast to this, those philosophers whose minds have not been trained by revelation, and their ideas, – both positive and negative - about social peace and tranquility and character have been left in the books on the dusty shelves of libraries. And the lives of those who have applied them have been rather short. At any rate, these philosophers have not been able to practice what they have preached, neither have they been able to show examples from other people's lives. Their ideas have remained mere theories.



For instance Aristotle laid down the foundations for certain rules and regulations of moral philosophy, but these were removed from divine revelation. Consequently we do not see even one person who has applied this philosophy to his own life, having attained to happiness. Even the most important book of Farabi, which includes his hypothetical ideas on a city of virtues and the ideal republic have never had the chance to be applied and those ideas have not been able to emerge out of the lines of the book. Because these truths were not written down and spoken from experience, neither have they been applicable after being written down.

Whereas the Prophet ﷺ had endeared himself to everyone even before his duty of prophethood had begun and his personality was of such perfection that it caused the people to say "You are the trustworthy and loyal one". Thus he began his duty of preaching after this open confirmation of his identity and character.

And thus it was through his elevated character and spiritual training that centuries and generations were reshaped; and humanity was presented with an 'era of bliss'. One of the most important names in Islamic legal methodology, Karafi (v. 684), has the following to say:

"If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had no other miracle, the generation of noble companions that he reared would have been enough to prove that he was a prophet".

The essence of the Prophet, his words and his every state, from beginning to end, are a personified account of the beautiful character that is hidden in the Holy Qur'an. The most perfect and ultimate examples of all virtues were displayed in his life.

The greatest artwork of almighty Allah is mankind himself. And the peak of spiritual perfection of mankind is the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. This is the case to such a degree that Almighty Allah



accepts, and proclaims as such, that obedience to the Prophet is on a par with obedience to His own Being and rebellion against the Prophet is equal to rebellion against Allah Himself.

It is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

'Say, "If you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you for your wrong actions. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful' (Al'i Imran, 3:31)

Accordingly, all praise of the Blessed Prophet is permissible as long as one does not go so far as to commit *shirk*, or associating partners with Allah. Nevertheless our praise of him will reflect on our tongues only to the degree that we truly comprehend him.

At the head of the list of those who were able to comprehend in the best possible way – and within the limits of human ability – the Messenger of Allah, are his Blessed Companions. It is they who have transmitted traces of him to us. It was these blessed people who had the duty of transmitting to subsequent generations the beauty in the worship, social relations, and dealings of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. They had the honour of conversing with him. The Blessed Prophet spoke of them as being 'like the stars in the heavens'.

Because they received a share of the prophetic character of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, his Companions understood that the true wealth one possesses was relative to how much of good deeds one sent to the afterlife. Thus they were able to display unrivalled virtues such as generosity, thinking of others, and sacrifice for the sake of gaining the pleasure of Allah. They concentrated their lives on gaining Allah's pleasure and, by acting with compassion and mercy, they reached the peak of justice.

The most pleasurable and meaningful moments in the lives of that blessed generation were the moments when they were able



to spread, with great enthusiasm in their faith, the message of the unity of Allah to mankind.

After the generation of Companions, all of the *awliyaullah* (friends of Allah) that will continue on until the end of time, have followed beautifully their principles of virtue. Thus they have and will be exalted due to the blessings that come from prospering in the Sun of Virtue that is the Messenger of Allah.

How beautifully Jalaladdin Rumi expressed this state:

“Come o heart! The true celebration is the union with the Blessed Muhammad. For the enlightenment of the world has come from the light of the beauty of that blessed person”.

The scholars and Gnostics who are the friends of Allah, and who have attained to the honour of being the heirs of the prophets, are paramount in terms of prophetic guidance and perfect behaviour manifested throughout the ages. That is, they too are virtuous guides, real and embodied for the rest of mankind who have not had the honour of seeing the Blessed Prophet and his Companions.

In short, it is without a doubt that the prophets exemplify the virtues that give life to hearts. As their leader we find the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) at the altar. In the next lot of rows and chains of virtue are those sincere scholars, righteous slaves, gnostics, and lovers etc, according to the degree of their attachment to him. They are the elite personalities due to their servanthood and beautiful lives of goodness. Because they too have lived beautifully with sincerity, they have presented to those around them rare memories of beauty that will never depart. In this way they have formed a ‘civilisation of virtues’. The stories of virtue that are transmitted from them give peace of mind to the spirit and bestow healing upon ailing hearts.



Consequently Abu Hanifa has the following to say about mentioning stories about virtue, a method that the Qur'an uses.

"Stories that tell of the beauties of the righteous scholars are more pleasing to me than most of jurisprudence. Because these stories teach us the etiquette and character of those who have become close to Allah".

It is true that it is impossible for a person to truly comprehend a matter without being given an example. Good and evil are only made clear in the light of examples. Love becomes more lively and exuberant. Imbibing oneself in the character of one's beloved can only be realized through the beautiful example that they project. In this respect good examples are divine favours that allow one to reach true nobility and dignity.

Along the same vein, Malik bin Dinar رضي الله عنه has the following to say:

"The beautiful stories of righteous slaves are like gifts from heaven".

Consequently each story of virtue is like a priceless pearl that has been presented to us as a gift.

In short, it is most important that we build good character and virtues. To this end the Prophet ﷺ has the following to say:

"On the Day of Judgement there will weigh nothing heavier in the scales of the believer than good character. Allah Most High is displeased with the one who commits ugly acts and who speaks ugly words". (Tirmidhi, Birr, 62/2002)

The essence of good character emerges, undoubtedly by befriending the Blessed Prophet and those righteous slaves who walked in his footsteps. This is the first condition in holding on to the chain of virtues. What constitutes the essence of ugly character is to lose their friendship and to destroy oneself in the cur-

rent of ignorance. On the basis of this truth, Almighty Allah has the following to say in a *hadith qudsi*² :

“I have waged war against the one who is hostile to those whom I have befriended (who serve Me in all sincerity). My servant draws nearer to Me with nothing more pleasing to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him, and then continues to draw nearer to Me with supererogatory devotions until I love him; and when I love him I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks, so that by Me he hears, by Me he sees, by Me he strikes, and by Me he walks. Should he ask Me I should surely grant him his request; should he ask Me for protection I shall surely protect him. Never do I hesitate³ in anything as I hesitate in taking the soul of my believing servant; he dislikes death and I dislike to displease him... (See Bukhari, Rikak, 38; Ahmad, VI, 256; Haysami, II, 248).

In order for us to attain to the superior virtues that will make us acceptable to Allah, we must nourish heartfelt love for the friends of Allah and the Blessed Prophet ﷺ to whom they are devoted. And it is him that we must follow.

For this reason it is hoped that, as we become truly acquainted with the Prophet ﷺ and take as our model his superior characteristics, which have been praised by Allah, we will have the honour of being amongst those ‘brothers’ that the Prophet gave glad tidings of.

If we recognize him today, he ﷺ will recognize us tomorrow in that great gathering on the last Day. If we reach a state in which

2. A *hadith qudsi* is a *hadith* whose words are from the Prophet but whose meaning has been either revealed or inspired to him (Translators note)
3. Almighty Allah is certainly above human characteristics such as hesitation. This expression has been used here to show the attention and care that He shows the slaves that He loves and to allow comprehension for human perception.



we see him in reality then he will see us. If we listen to him and do as he says, then he will hear our cries and take us by the hand. In this way we will become for others, an exhibition of his beautiful example. This is the greatest virtue of all!



This book was written as a modest attempt to show these examples of virtue in this framework. The examples given consist primarily of the sublime examples from the exalted personality of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and then His Companions, the saints, the scholars and the righteous who are like smooth mirrors, reflecting his beautiful example.

In addition, we have not been restricted to the examples solely from the Prophet nor from those friends of Allah who have walked in the path of piety. We have also attempted to occasionally cite examples from historical figures, shaped and formed by political and social events and heroes who have had a role to play in the direction of the world. This is in order that those who find themselves involved in such situations can find models of ideal behavior they may be in need of.

To properly convey that Sultan of both worlds ﷺ in whom all of the chains of virtue gather and from whose elevated personality a share has been distributed to other masters of virtue is obviously very difficult for us incapable ones. In any case, we know that we are incapable of portraying him completely. Rather our aim is to taste a droplet of that ocean of enlightenment, to move a few more steps closer to Him, to recharge our ardor and love for Him, to express our devotion to Him, to run to His endless Mercy, and to seek refuge in His intercession...

We thank almighty Allah that he has honoured us helpless and feeble servants with being from amongst the community of the Beloved Prophet ﷺ. Having grasped the truth of this divine



favour, the only way to be worthy of the Messenger of Allah's love and to fulfill the compliment of being from amongst his 'brothers' is to embrace his practices and, like his heirs, the saints, to adopt his prophetic character to the best of our ability.

This is why we need today to imbue ourselves with love for the Messenger of Allah and be seekers in training for his exalted character just like the Companions and friends of Allah. We must strive to live and make live their beauty which will never fade nor grow old, no matter how many centuries pass. This is the price to pay in order to be worthy of the fortune and honour of being one of the true community of the Pride of the Universe ﷺ.

I would like to thank all of my academic brothers, particularly Murat Kaya, who have had a role to play in the preparation of this work. I pray that their efforts will be accepted as ongoing charity by Allah.

May Almighty Allah bestow on us a life illuminated by beautiful behavior and samples of virtue which will be a source of gaining His good pleasure. May He render us a close friend in every respect of His Messenger in both worlds. And may he allow us to attain to his great intercession....

Amen...

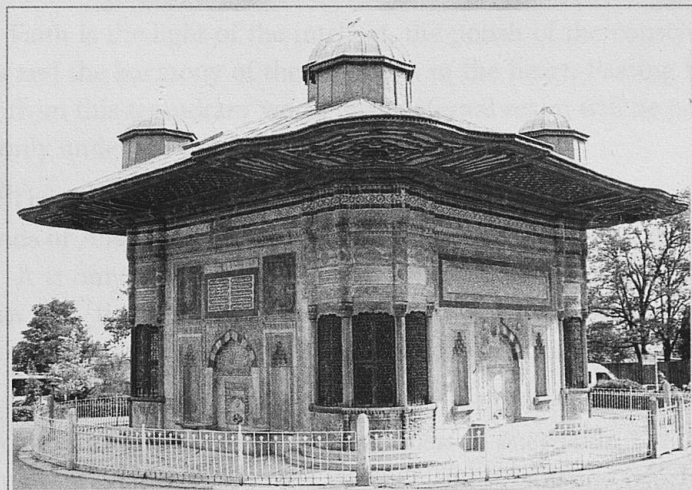
Osman Nuri Topbas

May 2006

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Part 1



Faith and Worship

1. To Live one's faith with a passion

Faith is the light of the intellect, the polish of the consciousness and the harmony of the emotions in the heart. Passing happily from this temporary world to the eternal realm will be possible only under the guidance of faith.

The guides of faith are the Prophets, the divine books and the friends of Allah who have ordered their lives according to the first two. It is only through the fervour of faith that the prophets, the saints and the righteous throughout history have been able to become living examples of the manifestation of achievable virtues.

Faith is a divine favour; trials in this life are a standard by which to measure the degree of soundness of one's faith. The preservation of one's faith with the patience and submission which are to be expected from a believer is the price to pay for the attainment of divine rewards. That is, Allah Most High desires that a price be paid by his servants in order for them to perceive the loftiness and value of the bounty of faith that he has bestowed upon them.

'Allah has bought from the believers their selves [lives] and their wealth in return for the Garden'. (Tawba, 9:111).

This verse is an evident expression of this truth.

Consequently the means to perfecting one's faith is the willing sacrifice in His path of the price desired by Allah (one's life, property, belongings etc) in order to gain His pleasure.

Overcoming all of the difficulties and struggles that the trials of life have to offer with contentedness and submission and following in the path of Allah and His Messenger is the most important sign of the believers.

Each believer is obliged to pay a price to Allah Most High for the bounty of faith. To assume ownership or to expect recompense for something which one has not paid the price for is to pass one's time in triviality.

The rise towards the peak of faith is dependent on performing good deeds, living with good intention, worship and beautiful behaviour that aims to please Allah. This is why in the Holy Qur'an and in the *ahadith*⁴, faith and good deeds have generally been mentioned together. Faith can be lived not with dry facts and theory but rather with truths that are felt and perceived, embroidered onto the heart and then reflected in one's behavior. Pondering and reflecting on the flow of divine power throughout the universe results in a heart that is suitable for worship and renders the believers able to taste true faith and become subject to endless manifestations of virtue throughout their lives.

Faith is the greatest of all forms of worship because worship is possible only through faith. Worship is carried out at specific times. The prayer too, the most virtuous of all deeds, is obligatory five times a day. Faith, however, is required constantly and thus it is necessary to keep it alive in our hearts at every instant. This is why we must avoid the trap of all manner of sins that lead the heart into heedlessness, and keep our faith protected by good deeds (which are like spiritual armour).

The jewel of faith is the most precious of assets for the believer. Satan, who in the Qur'an is proclaimed to be our open enemy,

4. *Ahadith* is the plural form of *hadith* which are the collection of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (Translators note)

together with his accomplices, tries at every opportunity to steal that jewel of faith from the hearts of the believers with various tricks and whisperings. From this perspective then, it is a most crucial duty to be constantly vigilant of our hearts and embrace our faith with great love and zeal. We must strive to protect it and render it unshakeable with good deeds.

In order for our jewel of faith to reflect the manifestations of Allah like a pure and bright mirror we need ‘*zikrullah*’ (remembrance of Allah). *Zikrullah* is like embroidering the word ‘*Allah*’ on our hearts with love and yearning. In this way, the rust of sins and heedlessness will be erased from the heart and it will taste the true pleasure of faith due to it having attained to complete peace and contentedness.

The joy that arises out of the faith of those blessed and special servants who have attained to such a spiritual maturity is above all other fleeting pleasures and enjoyment. Moreover, all of the burning pain and suffering of this world is virtually non-existent in their eyes.

Let us now peruse some of the innumerable examples of patience, forbearance, fortitude, insight, sacrifice and aspiration displayed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who taught us our faith, and those righteous believers whose service has made it possible for this bounty to reach our day:

Scenes of virtue

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a child of a mere 12 years, Bahira the Monk said to him:

“Dear child, I am asking you in the name of Lat and Uzza⁵ to answer me”.

5. Lat and Uzza were two of the main idols in Mecca. (Translators note)



He replied: "Do not ask me anything in the name of Lat and Uzza. By Allah! I abhor nothing as much as I abhor those two idols".

Even at such a young age the Prophet distanced himself from idols and unbelief with the sound nature that he carried within him. The exceptional resolution and effort that he showed in living his faith with a passion, and spreading and teaching it, after becoming a prophet is a fact every believer is aware of.



The sorcerers at the time of the Pharaoh rejected his claim to divinity and as a result were subject to unbearable torture. However they were able to challenge him due to the courage that came from their faith:

"Your oppression is in this world only. You are free to judge and do as you wish. In any case we will be returned to our Lord".

At the command of the Pharaoh their hands and legs were cut off diagonally. Before they were hung onto the branches of palm trees, they raised their hands to the heavens in a display of human weakness. Anxious that they would be weak in faith they prayed:

"...O our Sustainer! Shower us with patience in adversity, and make us die as men who have surrendered themselves unto Thee". (A'raf 7:126)

Thus they sought refuge in Almighty Allah and were reunited with their Lord in the boundless pleasure to be found in martyrdom.



The first Christians who were sincere Muslims preserved their faith amongst the jaws of circus lions and they too tasted martyrdom with a passion.





Another group at the head of the list of heroes who lived their faith with a passion, were believers who were burned alive by the 'People of Ukhdud'. The Jew, Dhu Nawas, who was the King of Yemen in the 4th century AD, forced the people of Najran, Christians devoted to the faith of monotheism (the Oneness of Allah), to change their beliefs. When they resisted, many of them were burned alive, having been thrown into pits of fire. It is reported that the number of people who died in this way reached 20 thousand.

These oppressors were named the 'People of the Pits' after the pits (called '*ukhdud*') that they dug in order to burn the believers. But those who tried to destroy the faith that had become unyielding and which was engraved upon the hearts, failed and instead became subject to the vengeance and punishment of Allah. They were thus overcome and ruined, damned for eternity. Almighty Allah states:

'They destroy (but) themselves, they who would ready a pit of fire fiercely burning (for all who have attained to faith' (al-Buruj, 85:4-5)



Sumayya , a female Companion, who lived her faith with a passion in the Era of Bliss, was fortunate in attaining to the title of 'the first female martyr of Islam'. Sumayya  (ra)⁶ used to be very afraid of the mere prick of a needle. However, after she had tasted the sublime pleasure to be found in faith, she displayed great tolerance in the face of the red hot rods of iron that the polytheists⁷

6. *ra* short for *radiyallahu anhu* (for males) and *anha* (for females). It means 'may Allah be pleased with him or her' and is used as a term of respect for the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (translator's note).
7. In arabic '*mushrik*', a person who commits the greatest sin, namely that of '*shirk*', which means to associate partners with Allah. Many of the Quraysh, the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad were polytheists (Translator's note).





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