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SAADIA GAON  
THE BOOK OF BELIEFS  
AND OPINIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

*Saadia Ben Joseph*

SAADIA BEN JOSEPH, the greatest of the Geonim, as the heads of the celebrated Babylonian Talmudical academies of Sura and Pumbeditha during the post-Saburaic period were called, was born in the spring of the year 882 C.E. in the village of Dilaz located in the Fayyum district of Upper Egypt. Next to nothing is now known about his immediate forebears, his youth, or his education. All that can be stated with certainty is that the Egypt in which the future leader of Jewry grew up was by no means a spiritual desert, lying midway, as it did, between the two cultural centers of Babylonia and Kairuan; and that by the time he left his native land at the age of twenty-three he already had to his credit the composition of a Hebrew dictionary and a refutation of the views of the founder of the Karaitic sect, Anan.

From the time of his departure from Egypt until the fall of 921 C.E. the young scholar moved between Palestine, Aleppo, and Bagdad, separated from his wife and children and his pupils. The outbreak in the autumn of the latter year of a violent controversy between the Jewish religious authorities of Palestine and Babylonia over the right to fix the calendar, upon which depended the dates of the holidays, gave Saadia an opportunity to display both his erudition and his ability as a polemist. Espousing the cause of the Babylonians, he succeeded in completely refuting the rival claims of the Palestinian leader Ben Meir. In recognition of his services he was made an official member of the academy of Sura with the title of Alluf.

The next time Saadia is heard from is in the year 928, when he was appointed to the Gaonate of Sura, being the first foreigner to be invited to occupy this most important and influential position of leadership in the Judaism of his day. He had been in office only two years when a fierce quarrel ensued between him and the man who had been chiefly responsible for his elevation, the Exilarch

David ben Zakkai, the hereditary secular head of the semi-autonomous Jewish community of Babylonia, who traced his descent from the royal house of David. The cause of the conflict was a decision rendered by the Exilarch concerning an inheritance dispute, to which Saadia refused to give his endorsement because he considered the decree illegal. This action on the part of Saadia, especially since his colleague, the Gaon of Pumbeditha, had unhesitatingly affixed his signature, so enraged the Exilarch that he pronounced a ban on Saadia and appointed another Gaon in his place. Saadia retaliated by outlawing the existing Exilarch and naming one of his own choice instead.

For two years two Exilarchs and two Geonim of Sura were functioning side by side until, owing to a change of government, David ben Zakkai contrived to have Saadia officially removed from the Gaonate. The five years during which he lived in retirement were devoted by Saadia to intensive literary activity. Then, through the mediation of mutual friends, a reconciliation was effected between the Exilarch and the Gaon. However, the period of renewed friendship was not destined to last very long, for three years later David ben Zakkai died, and after the lapse of another two years—that is, in the year 942—the man, whom he had appointed to the stewardship of the academy of Sura and who had, by means of his great learning and his fearless championship of the cause of Rabbanite Judaism invested the position of Gaon with new luster and prestige, himself passed away.

#### *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*

SAADIA'S magnum opus, the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, constitutes the first systematic presentation of Judaism as a rational body of beliefs. It was begun apparently as a series of independent treatises, which were later combined into an organic whole, except for the concluding treatise which gives the impression of having been added as a sort of appendix.

In conformity with the procedure in all his writings Saadia prefaces the body of his *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* with a

comprehensive introduction in which he states the reasons that prompted him to undertake its composition and outlines the method he intends to pursue in his argument. What induced him to write this book was the confusion of his contemporaries who were wavering between blind faith on the one hand and arrogant unbelief on the other. It was his aim to lead them on to the road of truth. In order to attain his objective he was going to make use of the various natural sources of human knowledge to confirm the truths already divulged by means of the divine revelations recorded in Israel's Holy Scriptures. Far from being proscribed, speculation about the basic dogmas of religion was regarded by Saadia as not only permissible but a positive duty. This to him, however, did not do away with the need for revelation with which even the profoundest thinker could not entirely dispense.

The ten main treatises into which the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* is divided deal respectively with

- 1) the creation of the world;
- 2) God's unity and other divine attributes;
- 3) the commandments of God and the means of their revelation;
- 4) man's freedom to either obey or disobey God;
- 5) virtue and vice;
- 6) man's soul and its immortality;
- 7) the doctrine of resurrection;
- 8) the age of the Messiah and of Israel's redemption;
- 9) reward and punishment in the hereafter; and
- 10) the golden mean.

In all of these treatises the author presents besides his own view a summary of the most important divergent opinions. These latter are refuted by him, while what he considers the right teaching is supported from Scripture and tradition as well as by means of rational proofs. Thus, for example, in the first treatise he establishes the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* as the correct theory of how the world came into being, disproving the tenability of twelve dissenting views which he lists. In the second treatise he upholds the Jewish conception of the unity of God over against the Christian

dogma of the trinity and Zoroastrian dualism. In the third, after demonstrating the necessity of revelation, he polemizes against the Christian and Mohammedan claims of the abrogation of the Mosaic Law. In the fourth he argues against the allegation that man is hampered in his freedom of choice by God's foreknowledge of things. The sixth treatise contains a rejection of six unacceptable views of the nature of the human soul as well as a refutation of the theory of metempsychosis. The seventh takes up various arguments propounded against the doctrine of resurrection and tries to show that they are all null and void. In the eighth the Christian teaching concerning the Messiah is refuted. In the ninth, again, in addition to proving the necessity of reward and punishment in the hereafter, the objections against this theory are reviewed and answered.

In discussing the various subjects Saadia makes use of illustrations derived from nearly all the sciences cultivated in his time and surroundings, from medicine, anatomy, mathematics, astronomy, and even music. He drives home his points by means of apt quotations from the Bible, which is cited by him no less than 1,300 times. Even though as a Gaon he was the authority in his day on the Talmud, he makes comparatively sparing use of this source of Jewish tradition, apparently because it was his desire to defeat with their own weapons the Karaites who accepted only the Written Law as binding. The views of these sectarians, which Saadia combated throughout his life, are, indeed, mentioned several times directly in the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* but more often by implication.

In his philosophical ideas Saadia might best be characterized as an eclectic although he followed in the arrangement of his book the pattern of the works of the Mohammedan theologians of his time known as the Mutakallimun, particularly those of the school of the Mu'tazilites, whose philosophical treatises usually revolved about the two subjects of *unity* and *justice*, that is, the nature of the Creator and man's freedom of will.

The original Arabic text of the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, was published by S. Landauer (Leyden, 1880) on the basis of a

Bodleian manuscript and with the use of the variants presented by the manuscript of the Leningrad library. A second version of the seventh treatise, which was the one used by Ibn Tibbon and which is contained in the Leningrad recension, was edited by W. Bacher in the Steinschneider Festschrift (Leipzig, 1896, Hebrew section, pp. 98-112).

Although paraphrases in Hebrew of Saadia's *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* were made much earlier, the first literal translation into Hebrew of the entire work, which according to the author's own dating had been completed in the year 933, was that of Judah ibn Tibbon, finished in the year 1186 in Lunel, Southern France. Of the seven individual editions of this Hebrew translation that have appeared since the *editio princeps* of Constantinople (1562), that of Josefow (1885) with the commentary *Šēḥal ha-'Eminah* by Israel ha-Levi is undoubtedly the best.

The only complete rendering into a modern language of the book to have made its appearance hitherto is that of Julius Fürst (Leipzig, 1845), who translated all but the last treatise into German. In reality, however, Fürst's work is a paraphrase rather than a translation of the original, and a very inadequate one at that, for the reason that he was able to utilize only Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew version, which on account of its terminology and its slavish adherence to the syntax of the Arabic text is very difficult to understand without the use of the original.

#### Other Writings of Saadia Gaon

If Saadia had produced nothing else than the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, his claim to live in the memory of posterity would have been established. The fact is, however, that he was a most prolific writer, whose literary works extended over many branches of knowledge, in a number of which he was not only a pioneer but an unexcelled master. The fields of learning covered in his writings have been described by H. Malter in his *Life and Works of Saadia Gaon* as follows:

- A) Hebrew philology (comprising grammar, lexicography, and exegesis);
- B) Liturgy (including poetics in general);
- C) Halakhah in its manifold ramifications (covering the various branches of the Jewish religious and civil law);
- D) Calendar and chronology (largely polemical);
- E) Philosophy (especially the philosophy of religion and embracing the author's systems of ethics and psychology);
- F) Polemics against the Karaites and other opponents of traditional Judaism (of diversified content and written at various periods of the author's life).

Listing Saadia's works in accordance with this scheme we may say that we have in his *'Agron*, in the first part of which Hebrew words were arranged in alphabetical order according to their initial letters and in the second part of which the final letters were arranged alphabetically to facilitate versification, the first Hebrew dictionary. In his *Books on Language*, again, a grammatical work in twelve parts written in Arabic, we have the oldest known grammar of the Hebrew language. Besides these he also wrote an explanation of ninety so-called *hapax legomena* and other very rare Hebrew and Aramaic words of the Bible.

Saadia was the first to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Arabic, and this version is still used by Jews in Arabic-speaking countries. The translation is on the whole literal, paraphrase being resorted to only when found to be absolutely necessary. Just as in the Targum of Onkelos anthropomorphisms are avoided and unfamiliar names are rendered by appellatives known to the Arabic-speaking reader.

According to a catalogue of Saadia's works discovered among the Genizah fragments (see J. Mann in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s., XI, and S. Poznanski, *idem*, Vol. XIII) Saadia wrote commentaries in Arabic on about one half of the Pentateuch, as well as on Isaiah, the twelve minor prophets, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Lamentations, Esther, and Daniel. These were usually provided, as was his custom, with full introductions, and they discussed many of the subjects from the philosophical as well as the philological stand-

point. The above-named list speaks also of sermons, not mentioned elsewhere, that he is said to have composed.

In the field of liturgy, too, Saadia's works were epoch-making. His *Siddur* or "Order of Prayers," which has recently been published in Palestine with a Hebrew translation of the Arabic text, besides being the first scientific investigation of the ritual of the synagogue, is valuable also as the record of many liturgical compositions—other than the basic prayers—emanating from authors who would otherwise have remained unknown. However besides being a systematizer and classifier of the works of others Saadia was also a religious poet in his own right, who tried his hand at almost every type of liturgical poetry in vogue in his day. Most of his verses that have been transmitted to us seem extremely artificial. Some of his prose compositions, however, such as two of his *Bakḳa'ot* that have been preserved, reveal deep religious fervor and real grace and purity of style.

In his capacity of Gaon, the head of the Talmudical academy of Sura and the chief Jewish legal authority in the world, Saadia's prime concern was with Jewish law. In this field, too, as Louis Ginzberg notes in his Geonica, "Rabbi Saadia was the most important author of the Geonic time," distinguishing himself not only by the number but also by the originality of his contributions to Halakic literature. He is quoted as having written an *Introduction to the Talmud*, which was still extant in the sixteenth century. He composed an *Interpretation of the Thirteen (Hermeneutical) Rules (of Rabbi Ishmael)*. Both of these were written originally in Arabic. There are also attributed to him commentaries on various tractates of the Talmud, likewise in the Arabic tongue.

Of particular interest in the Halakic field, however, are his monographs on various legal subjects, which he treated with his characteristic thoroughness. The following titles are quoted: 1. *On Inheritance*; 2. *On Pledges*; 3. *On Testimony and Contracts*; 4. *On Usury*; 5. *On Meat Disqualified for Food (šerephah)*; 6. *On Usury*; 7. *On Deftement and Purity*; 8. *On (legal) Gifts*; 9. *On the Gifts Due to the Priests*; 10. *On the Laws Concerning Menstruation*. The only one of these works preserved in its entirety is the first.

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It reveals in its style as well as its method the influence of Moḥammedan jurisprudence. It, too, was written in Arabic.

Finally mention must be made of numerous *responsa* to questions directed to him as Gaon that Saadia wrote from time to time either in Arabic or in Aramaic, the official language of the Geonim.

The leading role that Saadia played in the Ben Meir controversy reveals him as an expert on the Jewish calendar, the regulation of which demanded a considerable knowledge of mathematics and astronomy. At the request of the Exilarch David ben Zakkai he drew up *A Record-Book and Memorial Scroll for Generations*, dealing with the differences between the four principal rules of the calendar as accepted by the Babylonians and those advocated by their opponents. Copies of this book, which was written in the summer of the year 922, were sent not only to the communities of Eastern countries but to those of Egypt and elsewhere too.

In addition he is quoted as having composed the *Four Gates* on the four principles of the traditional calendar; the *Book of the Festivals* on the appointment of the Jewish festivals in accordance with the accepted calculations; three *Letters*, two in Hebrew and one in Arabic, soliciting the assistance of his pupils in Egypt in suppressing Ben Meir's changes; and *The Order* (or *Mysteries*) of the *Calendar*.

In the realm of chronology, the importance of which lay in the support that it lent to the belief in the uninterrupted continuity of Jewish tradition, Saadia is credited with the composition in Arabic of a *Book of Chronology* in seven parts covering the history of the world from the creation down to the author's time. He is believed also to have written, in Hebrew, a *Chronology of the Teachers of the Mishnah and the Talmud*, a *Genealogy of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch*, and an Arabic translation of the original Aramaic text of *The Scroll of the Hasmonaens*, which gives a detailed and partly legendary account of the victories of the Maccabees over Antiochus and his generals.

As far as philosophy is concerned, Saadia wrote, in addition to his masterpiece, the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, which is the

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subject of our translation, a philosophical commentary, the first on record, on the mystical *Book of Creation*, the authorship of which he ascribed to the patriarch Abraham. In a lengthy introduction, with which he prefaces his book, he takes up seven Greek theories of the creation of the world which he refutes and rejects in favor of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. In the body of the commentary itself he discusses such matters as the variations between the Tiberian and the Babylonian pronunciations of the consonants and vowels of the Hebrew alphabet, the significance of numbers and letters, the process of creation according to the author of the book, the meaning of such terms as *šēkhinah*, "the Holy Spirit," "The Word (of God)," and the "Echo" (that is the resonance of God's voice), as well as the measurements of various planets and other astral bodies. There is included also a discussion of the functions of the internal organs of the human body.

But Saadia's philosophical remarks are not confined to this commentary and the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* alone. They are to be found in his Bible exegesis and in other writings as well. Everywhere is there evidence of the rational, scientific bent of his mind. We come now to the last classification of Saadia's works, the polemical literature that he left behind. As a matter of fact most of his writings were more or less of a polemical character, even his translation of the Bible which served him as an instrument for upholding traditional Judaism and combating the Karaite schism. However whereas in his exegetical books and in his philosophical masterpiece the polemic was only incidental, there were others of which the controversial purpose was direct and deliberate. The earliest of his polemical writings was one entitled a *Refutation of Anan*, aimed against the founder of Karaism. It was composed by him when he was still in Egypt. His most important polemic, written in 926-927, when he was already officially connected with the academy of Sura, was his *Book of Distinction*, in which such matters of controversy between Karaites and Rabbanites as the kindling of lights on the Sabbath eve, the date of the Feast of Weeks, and the validity of the Oral Law are discussed. Whether the *Book*

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*of Proofs for Burning Candles on the Sabbath*, which is mentioned in the list of Saadia's writings published by Mann, was a part of this work or not has not yet been decided.

Another anti-Karaite work of Saadia's was his *Book of Refutation of Ibn Saḳawāhi*, a Karaite who in a brochure entitled *Book of Shameful Things* had attacked the essential parts of rabbinic law. It was possibly against the same author that Saadia's *Book of Refutation of an Overbearing Antagonist*, in which the question of the proper appointment of the festivals of Passover and Tabernacles is dealt with, was directed. His *Refutation of Hiwī al-Balḳhi*, again, was aimed at a Jewish radical, who denied not only the validity of the Talmud but of the Bible as well.

One of Saadia's latest polemics, in which he justified his position in his struggle with the Exilarch and which was composed during his period of seclusion was *The Open Book*. In contradistinction to his previous polemical works it was written in Hebrew instead of Arabic. Later on he issued a sequel in Arabic entitled *The Book That Refutes*.

*Saadia Literature in the English Language*

THE standard work in any language on the career and the writings of the Gaon Saadia is Henry Malter's *Life and Works of Saadia Gaon* (Philadelphia, 1921). Besides giving a full-length biography of the greatest of the Geonim, Malter has also compiled in this book an exhaustive bibliography of all the works by and about Saadia either extant or quoted at the date of its completion. Articles dealing with various phases of the life, works, and teachings of Saadia, as well as additional bibliographical lists, are to be found in the following volumes:

*Saadia Anniversary Volume*, American Academy for Jewish Research, New York, 1943.

*Saadia Studies*, edited by Abraham A. Neuman and Solomon Zeitlin, Philadelphia, 1943. Special edition of *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s., XXXII (1943), 109-401.

*Saadya Studies*, edited by Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, Manchester University Press, 1943.

*Rab Saadia Gaon*, edited by Louis Finkelstein, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, 1944.

THE BOOK OF  
BELIEFS AND OPINIONS

COMPOSED BY

SA'ID IBN YUSUF

[OTHERWISE] KNOWN AS SA'ADYA THE FAYYUMITE

## INTRODUCTORY TREATISE

### I

THE author opened his remarks with the words:  
"Blessed be God, the God of Israel, Who is alone deserving of being regarded as the Evident Truth, Who verifies with certainty unto rational beings the existence of their souls, by means of which they assess accurately what they perceive with their senses and apprehend correctly the objects of their knowledge. Uncertainties are thereby removed from them and doubts disappear, so that demonstrations become lucid for them and proofs become clear. May He be lauded, then, above the highest commendation and praise."

### II

Now after these preliminaries in praise of our Lord and our brief expression of tribute to Him, I shall preface this book, which it has been my intention to compose, with an account of the causes by which uncertainties may beset the minds of men in their search for the truth, as well as of the method by which they may resolve these uncertainties, and thus reach the goal of their search. I shall show, furthermore, how some of these uncertainties so intrigue some men that in their fancy and belief they become established truths. As for myself, I invoke God's help in lifting such uncertainties from my mind so that I may fully attain the means of serving Him, just as His pious one besought Him when he said: *Uncover mine eyes that I may behold the marvels of Thy Law* (Ps. 119: 18).

This [introductory essay], as well as the subject matter of the Note. The English translation of the title of the book follows the Hebrew rendering of Ibn Tibbon.

1. "intrigue"—literally "dominate." Cf. Bloch's translation.
2. "become established"—literally "establish them as."



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book proper,<sup>3</sup> I propose to formulate in simple rather than recondite terms, in easy rather than difficult language, making use of only the principal proofs and arguments and not of their subdivisions. Thus the contents will be plain to follow and simple enough to grasp and easy to master; and he who diligently studies the book may thereby arrive at equity <2><sup>4</sup> and truth—as the saint said of wisdom when it is made accessible: *Then wilt thou understand righteousness and justice and equity, yea every good path* (Prov. 2:9).

I shall, then, first make note of the cause by which uncertainties arise in the minds of men. I maintain that the concepts of the intellect are based on the perceptions of the senses. However, the things perceived by sense are subject to confusion for one of two reasons: either (a) because the seeker is not sufficiently acquainted with the object of his search, or (b) because he takes his task lightly and falls short in the thoroughness and persistency of his quest. For example, if a person were to seek one Reuben, the son of Jacob, he could be in doubt about him for only one of two reasons: either (a) because he does not know him well, so that the latter might be standing<sup>5</sup> before him without being recognized by him, or he might see someone else and think he is Reuben; or (b) because<sup>6</sup> he takes the easiest course, abandoning thoroughness. The result [in the latter case] is that his love of ease inclines him to seek his object with the least effort and the slightest concern, wherefore, indeed, he does not discern it.

Similarly in regard to things of the intellect, confusion may arise from one of these two causes: either (a) because the seeker of intellectual knowledge is unacquainted with the methods<sup>7</sup> of evidence, so that he declares a valid proof to be no proof and, conversely, he declares what is no proof to be a valid proof, or (b) because, even though he is conversant with the processes of reason-

3. "book proper"—literally "entire book."

4. Beginning of page 2 of Landauer's edition of the Arabic text. Subsequent pages will be similarly indicated.

5. "the latter might be standing"—so according to Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew version.

6. "because"—Ibn Tibbon.

7. "methods"—Ibn Tibbon.

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ing, he takes the quickest and easiest course so that he jumps at the conclusion before having completed the task of reasoning about it.

How [much more would this apply] in the case in which both these conditions are combined in the same person! I mean that he be unacquainted with the art of reasoning and, together with that [deficiency], lack the patience to explore fully such correct knowledge as he has. Such a one would be far removed from his goal or in despair of ever reaching it. Now of the first class of individuals mentioned by us the saint has said: *Every one that had knowledge and understanding* (Neh. 10:29), and of the last named: *They know not neither do they understand* (Ps. 82:5).

Still more would this be true where to these two factors is added <3> a third; namely, that the seeker does not know what he is seeking. Such a one would be even further removed and more distant from his goal, so much so that he would fail to recognize the truth even if it should by chance occur to him or<sup>8</sup> he should happen to come upon it. He is thus like a creditor<sup>9</sup> who does not know the art of weighing, or even the nature of a balance and weights, nor yet how much money is due him from his debtor. Even if his debtor were to pay him his debt in full, he would be uncertain whether he had paid it. Or if he were to receive from his debtor less than what was owing to him, he might fancy that it was he who had defrauded his debtor.

Just like this case of the ignorant creditor who sues his debtor<sup>10</sup> is also that of the individual who seeks to weigh something for himself but is totally ignorant of the nature of weighing instruments and the quantity to be weighed. He might furthermore be compared to a person who receives money for himself or somebody else and relies on his own sorting although he is unacquainted with the art of sorting. As a consequence he would often accept defective coins and refuse the good. Something like that would

8. "or"—Ibn Tibbon.

9. "creditor"—literally "an individual."

10. "the ignorant creditor who sues his debtor"—literally "the two litigants one of whom sues the other."

also happen where he is acquainted with the art but fails to observe carefully.

Scripture does indeed liken the sorting of just statements to the sorting of money when it says, *Like tested silver is the speech of the righteous whilst the heart of the wicked is of little worth* (Prov. 10:20).<sup>11</sup> Those whose knowledge of the art of sorting is limited or who have but little patience are presented as wrongdoers, because they wrong the truth; Scripture says, namely, *The heart of the wicked is of little worth*. On the other hand, those expert in sorting are presented as righteous men on account of their knowledge as well as their patience, as it is stated first, *Like tested silver is the speech of the righteous*. Thus praise is bestowed on the learned, and doubts are removed from them, only on account of their patient penetration into all the phases of their art after acquainting themselves thoroughly with it, as the saint said, *Behold, I waited for your words, I listened for your reasons whilst ye searched out what to say* (Job 32:11). In like manner did the other saint say, *And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth* (Ps. 119:43).

What has prompted me to speak explicitly about this matter is my observation of the state of many people in regard to their beliefs and convictions. There is among them, for instance, the type of person who has attained the truth <4> and is cognizant of it and rejoices in it.<sup>12</sup> Of him does the prophet say, *Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart* (Jer. 15:16).

Again there is among them he who has attained the truth but who is nevertheless in doubt about it, being neither wholly convinced nor holding it firmly in his grasp. In reference to him the prophet says, *Though I write for him ever so many things of My Law, they are accounted as a stranger's* (Hos. 8:12).

There is further among them he who holds to be true what in reality is false, thinking that it is the truth; he thus clings to false-

11. The usual translation is *The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver; the heart of the wicked is little worth*.

12. "in it"—Ibn Tibbon. These words are omitted in the Arabic text.

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hood and abandons what is right. Of him Scripture says, *Let him not trust in vanity, deceiving himself; for vanity shall be his recompense* (Job. 15:31).

There is, lastly, among them the type of person who for a while follows one system of thought and then abandons it on account of some flaw that he has noticed in it. So he transfers to another system from which he also withdraws on account of some point in it which he rejects. Then he passes on to still another for a while but gives it up again on account of something in it which has made it reprehensible to him, and so he remains unsettled all his life. Such a one might be compared to a person who wishes to go to a certain city but does not know the road leading to it. Consequently he walks a parasang along one highway and hesitates. Then he turns back and walks a parasang along another highway and hesitates and so turns once more and repeats this procedure on a third and a fourth highway. Of him does Scripture say, *The labor of fools wearieth every one of them, for he knoweth not how to go to the city* (Eccles. 10:15), that is since he knoweth not.

When, now, I considered these fundamentals and the evil resulting therefrom, my heart was grieved for my species, the species of rational beings, and my soul was stirred on account of our people, the children of Israel. For I saw in this age of mine many believers whose belief was not pure and whose convictions were not sound, whilst many of the deniers of the faith boasted of their corruption and looked down upon the devotees of the truth although they were themselves in error. I saw, furthermore, men who were sunk, as it were, in seas of doubt and overwhelmed by waves of confusion and there was no diver to bring them up from the depths nor a swimmer who might take hold of their hands and carry them ashore.

But inasmuch as my Lord had granted me some knowledge by which <5> I might come to their assistance and had endowed me with some ability that I could put at their disposal for their benefit, I thought that it was my duty to help them therewith and my obligation to direct them to the truth. Something of this order was also expressed by the saint: *The Lord God hath given me the*

*tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary; He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth my ear to hear as they that are taught* (Isa. 50: 4).

Although I do acknowledge that my learning is far from perfect and admit that my scientific attainments are lacking in excellence, and I am not wiser than my contemporaries, yet according to my capacity and to the extent of my understanding—and as the saint expressed it, *But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but to the intent that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that thou mayest know the thoughts of thy heart* (Dan. 2: 30)—I beseech God, exalted be He, to help me and grant me what He knows to be the aim and object of my quest, not according to my attainments and my powers, as His other saint said, *I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness* (I Chron. 29: 17).

I also adjure by God, the Creator of the universe, any scholar who, upon studying this book, sees in it a mistake, that he correct it, or, should he note an abstruse phrase, that he substitute for it a more felicitous one. Let him not feel restrained therefrom by the fact that the book is not his work, or that I had anticipated him in explaining what had not been clear to him. For the wise have a tender solicitude for wisdom, entertaining for it a sympathy similar to that entertained for one another by members of the same family, as Scripture says: *Say unto wisdom: "Thou art my sister"* (Prov. 7: 4)—although the fools, too, are devoted to their folly, and are loath to forsake it, as Scripture says: *Though he spare it, and will not let it go, but keep it still within* <6> *his mouth* (Job 20: 13).

Furthermore I implore in the name of God, exalted be He, every seeker of knowledge who studies this book to read it without bias and have in mind the same objective as I, and to desist from narrow-mindedness and conjecture and confutation, until he will have obtained benefit and have acquired profit by the power and the might of Him, who teaches us what profits us, as the saint has said: *I am the Lord thy God, that teaches thee for thy profit, that leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go* (Isa. 48: 17).

If, now, the scholar and the student will pursue such a course in the perusal of this book, then he that strives for certainty will gain in certitude, and doubt will be lifted from the doubter, and he that believes by sheer authority will come to believe out of insight and understanding. By the same token the gratuitous opponent will come to a halt, and the conceited adversary will feel ashamed, whilst the righteous and upright will rejoice, as Scripture says: *The upright see it, and are glad, and all iniquity stoppeth her mouth. Whoso is wise, let him observe these things, and let them consider the mercies of the Lord* (Ps. 107: 42, 43).

Thus will men improve in their inner being as well as in their outer conduct. Their prayers, too, will become pure, since they will have acquired in their hearts a deterrent from error, an impulse to do what is right, as the saint has said: *Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee* (Ps. 119: 11).

Thus, also, will their beliefs prevail in their affairs, their mutual jealousy over things of this world will diminish. They will all tend toward the realm of wisdom and feel no inclination for anything else. Theirs will be salvation and mercy and grace as He, may He be praised and sanctified, has said: *Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else* (Isa. 45: 22).

All this will become possible when doubts are dispelled and uncertainties removed. For then the knowledge of God and acquaintance with His lore will spread even as water spreads at the shores of the sea—as Scripture says: *For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* (Isa. 11: 9).

### III

<7> Now someone might perhaps ask: <sup>14</sup> What was the purpose of <sup>15</sup> the Creator, exalted and magnified be He, in permitting these uncertainties and doubts to prevail among His creatures? To

13. "shores"—literally "parts."

14. "ask"—Ibn Tibbon.

15. "What was the purpose of"—Ibn Tibbon.

this question we here offer an answer. We maintain that the very fact of their being created entities necessitates their entertaining uncertainties and illusions. That is to say: by the plan of creation, they require for every act they perform a span of time within which to complete that act step by step. Cognition, therefore, which is one of these activities, obviously depends upon a like condition. Now the process of knowing on the part of men begins with things that are at first jumbled, obscure and ambiguous. However by the power of the intellect, which they possess they do, in the course of time, continually refine and purify these [complexities] until the uncertainties depart from them and the pure essence is extracted dissociated from any doubt.

Now, since all human arts consist of phases, if men were to stop in their endeavors before these phases were completed, the operation in question, such as sowing or building or weaving or other tasks, that can be brought to completion only by the perseverance of the worker to the last phase, would never be completed. In like manner does the art of cognition require that one start in it at the beginning and proceed step by step until its end. At the initial stage, for example, there may be ten problems, which at the second are reduced to nine, and at the third to eight. Thus each time that man's reasoning and reflection are applied to them these problems decrease, until at the last of these stages, the sole object of his quest is extracted and left isolated, [free] from all ambiguity or doubt.

For the sake of elucidation let it be assumed that a person is looking for proof by means of which he might arrive at the truth. Now such a proof is a statement, and a statement is a kind of sound, and sounds are of many types. When, then, the seeker sets out to distill the object of his quest—and the sounds confronting him, which he has begun to classify, are ambiguous and unintelligible—he first eliminates  $\langle 8 \rangle$  from the complex of noises those produced by 1) the concussion of bodies, such as the falling of stone on stone, and 2) the cleaving of certain bodies, and 3) sounds like that of thunder and crashing and similar noises, for he knows that from these types of sound he could not derive any proof. So

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he arrives, in the second stage, at sounds produced by animated beings only, seeing that it is among these [alone] that he may expect to find the [desired] demonstration. Next, however, he will eliminate from these the sounds made by all animated things not endowed with speech, such as neighing and braying and lowing and the like, since these are no less unintelligible.<sup>16</sup> Thus he arrives, in the third stage, at the sounds produced by human beings in particular, since it is by this species of sounds [only] that all knowledge [is expressed]. From these, again, he eliminates such natural sounds as "Ah" and the like, since these would be of use to him, so that, in the fourth stage, he comes upon the articulate<sup>17</sup> sounds produced by man, which consist of the twenty-two letters of the alphabet. From these, again, he eliminates unconnected consonants, since none of them, when pronounced separately, would serve any purpose, as if thou wert to say: *A, B, C, D, E*, each by itself.

He now arrives, in the fifth stage, at consonants combined with one another so as to form nouns, consisting each of two or three or more consonants. From these, however, he eliminates every instance of a noun that is detached, spoken alone, as when one says: "heaven," "star," "man," since it is not inherent<sup>18</sup> in any of these nouns, when spoken in isolation, to indicate any more than what is designated by them. Thus he arrives, in the sixth stage, at [sounds of] connected speech, as when one says: "A star shining"; "A man writing"; and other such combinations of two words, or of a word and a noun or more, for he expects by means of these combinations to attain his object. From these he now eliminates instances of the [mere] coupling of two or more words or of any [utterance] that does not constitute a statement, and he thus comes,  $\langle 9 \rangle$  in the seventh stage, upon statements such as those made by the person who says: "The sun has risen," or "The rain has fallen," and the like.

He knows, however, that statements are [divided] into three

16. "these are no less unintelligible"—literally "there is no wisdom in them."

17. "articulate"—or "technical."

18. "inherent"—so Ibn Tibbon, literally "in the nature."

different categories: (a) necessary, such as the statement: "The fire is hot"; (b) impossible, such as the statement: "The fire is cold"; (c) possible, such as the statement: "Reuben is in Bagdad." He thereupon puts aside the necessary and the impossible categories, and arrives, in the eighth stage, at the possible [type of] statement, and investigates whether what is contained in it<sup>19</sup> is correct or not.

Then, in the ninth stage, he begins to subject the matter in question to rational analysis, either [starting] from a necessary [premise] and demonstrating—by means of certain methods which we shall elucidate hereafter—that by that premise the matter under discussion, too, must be affirmed as necessary;<sup>20</sup> or starting from an impossible premise and showing that by it any such statement must be declared impossible. When, then, all the alternatives have been excluded and there remains only the one he has reached in the tenth stage, which is now lucid and clear to him, he drops from his mind all previous divisions that had rendered his objectives both ambiguous and obscure before his inquiry had eliminated these divisions one by one.

It is clear, then, that the person who speculates begins with a great many things that are all mixed up, from which he continually sifts nine out of ten, and then eight out of nine, and then seven out of eight, until all confusions and ambiguities are removed and only the pure extract remains. If, therefore, he were to stop in his investigation upon reaching the fifth or the fourth stage or whatever station it be, the number of uncertainties resolved by him would be in proportion to the stations he has put behind himself, and he would still be left with a number proportionate to the stations before him. Should he hold on to what he has accomplished, there is hope that he may come back to it and complete the process. If, however, he does not retain it, then he would be compelled to repeat the entire process of reasoning from the beginning.

19. "Is contained in it"—literally "the informant stated concerning it."

20. "that by that . . . necessary"—literally "the necessary conclusions that it leads to."

It is on this account that many people remain in error, spurning wisdom. Some do it because they do not know the road leading to it. Certain others [take this attitude] because, although they had begun to travel on this road, they did not < 10 > traverse it completely, and were, therefore, among those who perished, as Scripture has said: *The man that strayeth out of the way of understanding shall rest in the congregation of the shades* (Prov. 21: 16). The sages of the children of Israel have also said with reference to him who has not fully studied the subject matter of wisdom: *Ever since the number of disciples of Hillel and Shammai increased who did not wait upon scholars sufficiently there has been an increase of the number of disagreements* (Sanh. 88b). This utterance of theirs indicates to us that when pupils do complete their course of study, no controversy or discord arises among them.

Let, therefore, the worried fool refrain from ascribing his failings to the Creator, exalted and magnified be He. Let him not say that it was He who had implanted the doubts in him. Rather it was his own folly or his worry that had hurled him into these doubts, as we have explained. In fact it is untenable that a single act on his part should instantaneously remove all uncertainties. That would constitute a deviation from the law governing all creatures, and he is, after all, a created being. Furthermore, if a person does refrain from assigning this failing of his to his Master, yet desires that God endow him with a knowledge free from all uncertainty, such a one asks that his Master make him His equal. For, as we shall explain in what follows, he who is capable of knowledge without depending upon a cause is none other than the Creator of the universe, blessed and hallowed be He.

But, as far as all created beings are concerned, they cannot acquire knowledge except by the mediation of a cause; that is, by the process of research and analysis, the performance of which requires certain measures of time, as we have demonstrated. Accordingly, from the first to the last moment of these intervals, they will of necessity find themselves in a state of uncertainty, as we have shown. Those, then, are worthy of commendation who wait patiently until they have purified the silver of the dross, in ac-

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cordance with the statement of Scripture: *Take away the dross from the silver, and there cometh forth a vessel for the refiner* (Prov. 25:4); or, until they have distilled the clear milk of the art [of research] and extracted its cream, according to another utterance of Scripture: *For the churning of milk bringeth forth curd, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood* (Prov. 30:33); or, until their seed is fully grown and they can harvest it, as Scripture says: *Sow <11> to yourselves according to righteousness, reap according to mercy* (Hos. 10:12); or, again, until the fruit of their trees has ripened and become nourishment, as Scripture says: *A tree of life is she to them that hold on to her* (Prov. 3:18).

#### IV

And now that we have finished expounding, as much as we felt it desirable, the matter of resolving uncertainties and doubts, it behooves us to explain what is meant by belief. We say that it is a notion that arises in the soul in regard to the actual character of anything that is apprehended. When the cream of investigation emerges, [and] is embraced and enfolded by the minds and, through them acquired and digested by the souls, then the person becomes convinced of the truth of the notion he has thus acquired. He then deposits it in his soul for a future occasion or for future occasions, in accordance with the statement of Scripture: *Wise men lay up knowledge; but the mouth of the foolish is an imminent ruin* (Prov. 10:14); and it says also: *Receive, I pray thee, instruction from His mouth* (Job 22:22).

Now beliefs fall into two categories: true and false. A true belief consists in believing a thing to be as it really is; namely, that much is much, and little is little, and black is black, and white is white, and that what exists exists, and what is nonexistent is nonexistent. A false belief, on the other hand, consists in believing a thing to be the opposite of what it actually is, such as that much is little, and little is much, and white is black, and black is white, and that what exists is nonexistent, and what is nonexistent exists.

The praiseworthy wise man is he who makes reality his guiding

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principle and bases his belief thereon. Notwithstanding his wisdom, he relies only on what is deserving of trust and is wary wherever caution is in order. The reprehensible fool, on the other hand, is he who sets up his personal conviction as his guiding principle, assuming that reality is patterned after<sup>21</sup> his belief. Notwithstanding his ignorance, he trusts in what should be shunned and shuns what is deserving of trust. All this is borne out by Scripture, which says: *A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil; but the fool becometh overbearing, and is confident* (Prov. 14:16).

To this [last] observation I must append the expression of my amazement at [the view of] certain people who, being <12> that any object the existence of which they deny must be nonexistent and whatever they declare to be in existence is so. These individuals are so sunken in folly as to have reached the very nadir of mental deterioration.<sup>23</sup> For if they be right, then let him among them who has no money take it into his head that his coffers and chests are filled with money, and see what it would profit him. Or let him believe he is seventy years old, when he is only forty years of age, and see what good it would do him. Or let him assume that he is sated when he is hungry, or that his thirst is quenched when he is thirsty, or that he is covered up when he is naked, and see what would happen to him. Or let him among them who has a vicious enemy believe that his enemy has died, aye perished, with the result that he no longer takes precautions against the latter. But, oh, how quickly will he [in such a case] be overcome by the misfortune<sup>24</sup> of which he was not [sufficiently] apprehensive.

Now it is sheer folly on the part of people to imagine that their [mere] refusal to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Lord exempts them from [heeding] His commandments and prohibitions and from [being subject to] His promise of reward and threat of punishment and other such things. It is such individuals that

21. "is patterned after"—literally "follows."

22. "All . . . says"—literally "and as it says."

23. "mental deterioration"—literally "perdition."

24. "misfortune"—Ibn Tibbon.

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Scripture quotes [as saying]: *Let us break their bands asunder* (Ps. 2:3).

Thus there are certain Hindus who have hardened themselves against fire, although it burns them whenever they come in contact with it. Again there are individuals who, affecting youthfulness, have hardened themselves to endure the blows of the cane and the scourge, although they smart from them whenever they are struck by them. How much more should this apply in the case of those who in this wise embolden themselves against the Creator of the universe! Their [mere] ignorance [of it] will not cause them to escape the lot that His wisdom has decreed for them, as Scripture has indeed said: *He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who has hardened himself against Him, and prospered?* (Job 9:4).

### V

Having concluded now what we thought fit<sup>25</sup> to append to our first statement, it behooves us to give an account of the bases of truth and the vouchers of certainty which are the source of all knowledge and the mainspring of all cognition. Discoursing about them in keeping with the aim<sup>26</sup> of this book, we declare that there are three [such] bases. The first consists of the knowledge gained by <13> [direct] observation. The second is composed of the intuition of the intellect. The third comprises that knowledge which is inferred by logical necessity.

Following up [this] enumeration with an explanation of each of these roots of knowledge, we say that we understand by the knowledge of observation whatever a person perceives by means of one of the five senses; that is, by means of sight or hearing or smell or taste or touch. By the intuition of the intellect, we mean such notions as spring up solely in the mind of a human being, such as approbation of truthfulness and disapproval of mendacity. By the knowledge derived from logical necessity, again, is meant conclusions, which, unless they are accepted by the individual as

25. "thought fit"—Ibn Tibbon and codex M quoted by Landauer.  
26. "aim"—so M.

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true, would compel his denial of the validity of his rational intuitions or the perception of his senses. Since, however, he cannot very well negate either of these two, he must regard the said inference as being correct. Thus we are forced to affirm, although we have never seen it, that man possesses a soul, in order not to deny its manifest activity. [We must] also [agree], although we have never seen it, that every soul is endowed with reason, [merely] in order not to deny the latter's manifest activity.

Now we find that there are many people who deny [the reliability of] these three sources [of knowledge]. A small minority of them reject the first source. Of these we shall give an account in the first treatise of this book, together with a refutation of their view. By rejecting the first source, they have automatically rejected the second and the third, since the latter two are based upon the first. More numerous than this group are those that acknowledge the validity of the first but reject the second and the third [sources]. Of their thesis, too, we shall make mention in the first treatise and refute it. Most numerous of all, however, are those who acknowledge the validity of the first two sources [of knowledge] and reject the third. The reason for the difference in their rating of these [various sources of knowledge] lies in the fact that the second [type of] knowledge is more recondit than the first, and likewise the third more so than the second, and that whatever is invisible can more readily be denied than what is visible.

Again there are people who reject the validity of this [last type of] knowledge in certain instances<sup>27</sup> and recognize<sup>28</sup> it in others, each group among them affirming what its opponent negates. Their argument [in each case] is that logical necessity led them to the particular conclusion. Thus there is he who affirms that all things are at rest. <14> He consequently denies the reality of motion. Another, again, affirms that all things move, and by virtue thereof denies the reality of rest. Each one declares the evidence adduced by his opponent dubious and unconvincing.

27. "instances"—so M.

28. "recognize"—literally "hold on to," so Ibn Tibbon. Cf. also Abraham Heschel, *The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy in The Jewish Quarterly Review*, XXXIII, 290, and n. 139.

As for ourselves, the community of monotheists, we hold these three sources of knowledge to be genuine. To them, however, we add a fourth source, which we have derived by means of the [other] three, and which has thus become for us a further principle. That is [to say, we believe in] the validity of authentic tradition, by reason of the fact that it is based upon the knowledge of the senses as well as that of reason, as we shall explain in the third treatise of this book.

At this point, however, we remark that this type of knowledge (I mean that which is furnished by authentic tradition and the books of prophetic revelation), corroborates for us the validity of the first three sources of knowledge. Thus it enumerates the senses in connection with the denial of their functioning in the case of the idols, making them a total of five with two more added to them. It says, namely: *They have mouths but they speak not; eyes have they but they see not . . . neither speak they with their throat* (Ps. 115:5-7).

The first five [organs] mentioned refer to the senses themselves, whilst of the two [functions] that are added to them, one is motion. This is implied in the statement: *Feet have they but walk not* (Ps. 115:7). By means of this faculty [incidentally] there is also obtained consciousness of heaviness and lightness. Thus a person may be prevented from moving about [freely] by reason of his weight, whereas he would not thus be hindered if he were light. On this account, indeed, certain people were minded to add to the number of the senses, for they asked [themselves]: "How [else] can the sensation of lightness and heaviness be experienced?" Our answer is: "By means of the sense<sup>29</sup> of motion, according to whether the latter is found to be easy or difficult."

The other one [of the added faculties] is [that of] speech. It is implied in the statement: *Neither speak they with their throat*. [By] that [of course] is [meant] speech in general, [whether it consists] of individual nouns or combinations [of words], or premises, or proofs, as we have previously explained.

Furthermore [authentic tradition] verifies for us the validity

29. "sense"—M and Ibn Tibbon.

of the intuition of reason. It enjoins us, namely, to speak the truth and not to lie. Thus it says: *For my mouth shall utter truth, and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness, there is nothing <15> perverse or crooked in them* (Prov. 8:7, 8).

Besides that it confirms for us the validity of knowledge inferred by logical necessity, [that is to say] that whatever leads to the rejection of the perception of the senses or rational intuition is false. The untenability of any [theory] that rejects the perception of the senses is affirmed by such Scripture statements as: *Thou that tearst thyself in thine anger, shall the earth be forsaken for thee, or shall the rock be removed out of its place?* (Job 18:4). Again, apropos of the untenability of any theory that rejects rational intuitions concerning the falseness or truth [of propositions], it remarks: *And if it be not so now, who will prove me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?* (Job 24:25).

Next [tradition] informs us that all sciences are [ultimately] based on what we grasp with our aforementioned senses, from which they are deduced and derived. Thus it says: *Hear my words, ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear trieth words, as the palate tasteth food* (Job 34:2, 3). Moreover this last source of knowledge also confirms for us the validity of trustworthy reports. That is the import of its statement: *I will tell thee, hear thou me; and that which I have seen will I declare—unto whom alone the land was given, and have not hid it; among them* (Job 15:17-19). The [reliability of the] types [of knowledge] referred to depends, of course, on conditions which we have explained in the interpretation of these verses in their [respective] places.

Having given an account of these four sources of knowledge, it behooves us [now] to explain how they are to be used for purposes of evidence. We say, then, that as far as the knowledge [derived] from sensation is concerned, whatever is correctly perceived with our senses, by virtue of the connection existing between us and the object in question, must be acknowledged by us to be in truth as it



has been perceived by us, without [the admission of] a doubt. [This is, of course] posited on the assumption that we are [sufficiently] experienced in detecting illusions so as not to be led astray by them. [We should not, for example, act] like those people who believe that the image which they see in the mirror is an image that has really been created there, when in fact it is only a property of polished bodies to reflect the outline of objects facing them. Nor [should we be deceived] like those people who regard the figure, which appears reversed in the water, as possessing a reality which was created at that [particular] time, not knowing that <16> the cause of that [illusion] resides in the fact that the water is deeper in measurement than the length of the figure. So long, then, as we beware of such illusions and the like, our cognition of what is perceived with the senses will be correct, and we will not be led astray by such fancies as the one referred to by Scripture in its statement: *And the Moabites saw the water way off as red as blood* (II Kings 3: 22).

Now as for the intuitions of the intellect, anything that is conceived in our mind in complete freedom from accidents [of any sort] is to be regarded as true knowledge about which no doubt [is to be entertained]. [This, too, is] posited on the assumption that we know how to reason and carry the reasoning process to its conclusion, being wary [at the same time] of fancy and dreams. There are, namely, people who definitely consider these dreams to be realities created in the forms seen by a person. They feel compelled to abide by this view, so they maintain, in order not to reject what they have seen with their eyes, not realizing that [what they believe they have seen] may be due partly to the previous day's affairs that flitted through the mind, of which Scripture says: *For a dream cometh through a multitude of business* (Eccles. 5: 2).

Some [of these musings] again may be the result of the victuals consumed, according to whether they were hot or cold, or great or small in quantity. Hereof Scripture says: *And it shall be as when a hungry man dreameth and, behold, he catcheth* (Isa. 29: 8). Others may be brought on by the fact that the humor has exceeded its proportion in the mixture [of the elements of which the body is

composed], with the consequence that the resulting heat and moisture produce the generation of [uncalled-for] mirth and gaiety. On the other hand, excessive dryness would cause the generation of [unwarranted] sadness and sorrow. In regard to this matter the pain-racked invalid said: *When I say: "My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint"; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions* (Job 7: 13, 14). Of course there is also apt to be mingled with these dreams a glimmer of heavenly light in the form of a hint or a parable, as Job intimates in his statement: *In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men* (Job 33: 15, 16).

As for the knowledge which is inferred by logical necessity, whenever our senses perceive anything the existence of which has been verified, and [the belief in the reality of] that thing can be upheld in our minds only by virtue of the simultaneous acknowledgment [of the reality] <17> of other things, then we must acknowledge [the existence of] all of them, be they few or many in number, since the validity of the sense percept in question is maintained only by them. Now these [necessary postulates] may be one, or they may be two or three or four or more than that. But whatever [figure] they may reach [really makes no difference, for], since there is no negating of the sense percept in question, there is no negating any of them either.

As an illustration of a single [concomitant] let it be supposed that we see smoke, but do not see the fire from which that smoke originates. We must [in that case] assume the existence of the fire because of the existence of the smoke since the one can be effected only by means of the other. Likewise if we hear the voice of a human being from behind a wall, we must assume the existence of that human being, since a human voice can emanate only from an existing human being.

As an example, again, of more than one [concomitant phenomenon that must be postulated, the following might be cited.] When, for instance, we see food go down in bulk in the belly of an animate being, and its refuse come out from it, then, unless we assume

[that] four operations [were involved in the process], what has been perceived by our senses could not possibly have been carried out. That is [to say] that there must be in the belly of that being a force that draws the food into the interior, and a force that holds it until it has been digested, and a force that furthers its digestion and disintegration, and a force that expels the refuse that is in it as it goes out. Now inasmuch as what has been perceived by the senses could be effected only by means of these four [operations], we must assume that these four [forces] are a reality.

Sometimes, too, our acknowledgment of the reality of what we observe becomes possible only by the invention of a science that verifies it for us. We may even be compelled to resort to many such sciences. Once, however, it is realized that the sense percept in question is dependent [for its corroboration] on the said [sciences], it follows of necessity that we must acknowledge all of the latter as valid so that the reality of the sense percept in question may be upheld.

Thus, for example, we see the moon rise upon the earth and set again at different moments of the night and the day. It does this by following either a long or a short route, according to whether it consumes less time than is required for reaching one of the twenty-eight stations that we have distinguished and designated by name or it consumes more time and so passes the latter. <18> We note, furthermore, that at one time it travels to the south [of the sphere of the constellations]<sup>30</sup> and at another to the north. From this we infer that, if it had only one motion, there could have been no variation in either the speed<sup>31</sup> of its course or its extent. The fact, therefore, that we see these two [factors] vary leads to the inevitable conclusion that the moon has many motions and that these multiple motions can be due only to a multiple number of bodies, since one body cannot be endowed with two different motions at one and the same time, let alone three or four motions.

30. So according to the exposition by Abraham ben Hiyy. quoted by Moise Yenuira, *La Philosophie de Saadia Gaon*, p. 85, n. 26.

31. Cf. *ibid.*

Furthermore [we know] that, when a multiple number of bodies equal in form intercept each other, they thereby diminish or increase the speeds of their respective motions.

[All] this is demonstrable only by means of the science of geometry, which shows us synthetically how one figure enters into the other. [That is to say] we must first master the science of plane geometry. Having acquainted ourselves with [the properties of] points and lines, we begin with the study [of the properties] of plane figures, such as the triangle, the square, the circle, the concentric, the tangent, and the secant, until we get to know the properties of the intercepting [spherical] figure,<sup>32</sup> and which of its segments is impossible and which is tenable. This finally enables us to recognize that the figures of the heavenly bodies are spherical or circular, and that some are concentric with others.

Once these sciences have been thoroughly mastered, it becomes clear to us that the moon's course is a composite of five distinct motions. We must, therefore, acknowledge [the theorems of] all these sciences as being correct, since it is only by means of them that our hypothesis of the variation of the moon's course by natural law can be upheld.

And now that we have explained the character of knowledge obtained by logical inference, we must note how it may be preserved against defect, for most of the controversies of men and the variation of their evidence center about it or are due to it. We say, then, that when someone declares: "I believe such and such a thing to be true in order not to negate a percept of the senses," we must inquire whether that percept might not be sustained by some other hypothesis than the one he puts forth. For in the latter event his assumption would fall to the ground.

<19> Thus, for example, there are those who believe, because of its whiteness which they observe, that the Milky Way had formerly been circled by the sphere of the sun. However, when we test their hypothesis, we find that another [explanation] is equally possible. This whiteness might, for instance, be an ascending mist,

32. "until . . . figure"—added by Ibn Tibbon and M.

or a permanent particle of fire, or a conglomerate of little stars, or some other such thing. Their allegation, therefore, falls to the ground.

Again, if someone were to say: "I believe such and such a thing to be true in order not to negate a rational concept," we must make inquiry [into the matter]. [For] if that concept could be upheld by a hypothesis other than the one propounded by him, that assumption of his becomes null and void. Thus, for example, there are those who maintain that there exists another earth aside from this one in which we live. Their argument [in support of this view] is that thereby the fire would be located in the center [of the world], it being acknowledged that whatever is highly prized is kept in the center. However, such [a position of distinction] is already accorded by us to man, who dwells on the earth, which is the center of the universe. Their conclusion, therefore, falls to the ground so far as we are concerned.

Suppose, again, that someone were to say: "I believe such and such a thing to be true by way of analogy with what is perceived with the senses." It so happens, however, that that assumption on his part would invalidate another sense percept. In that case one must decide in favor of the more important of the two percepts, and of the arguments that support it. Thus, for example, there are those who maintain that all things were created from water, because animals originate from the humid element. They fail to consider, however, the water's visible tendency to percolate and flow over. It is, therefore, impossible that it should be the origin of all things, since it does not stand up by itself. When, then, in the search for explanatory hypotheses, two such [contradictory phenomena] are encountered, the more important of the two is the more deserving of being accepted as such.

Again, if someone were to say: "I believe such and such a thing to be true by way of analogy with a certain sense percept," but one part of his theory contradicts another, then his theory is null and void. Thus there are those who maintain that the good is null and which gives us pleasure, because that is how they feel it to be. They do not recall, however, that the killing of them would please their

enemies just as much as the killing of their enemies would please them. The act would consequently be good and evil at one and the same time, [which is, of course,] a contradiction.

Suppose, furthermore, that someone were to say: "I believe such and such a thing to be true for such and such a reason," but upon a thorough investigation of that reason, we find that it leads to a conclusion other than that which he believes to be true. <20> That reason would then be voided. Thus, for example, there is the theory of the proponents of the eternity of the world who declare: "We believe that all things have existed since eternity because we do not regard as real anything except what our senses perceive." However, the fact that they do not regard anything as real except what their senses perceive would prevent them from believing that all things exist since eternity, because it is impossible that they should have perceived in its prime what exists since eternity.

Again someone may say: "I reject such and such a thesis for such and such a reason." Yet thou findest that he ventured into [a theory] more difficult [of entertainment] than the one he had sought to avoid. Thus, for example, certain monotheists shunned the view that God was unable to bring back yesterday in order not to ascribe to Him impotence. They thereby, however, let themselves into something worse by ascribing to God an absurdity, as we shall note in part of the second treatise of this book, if God, exalted be He, is willing.

So, then, if we seek to establish the truth in the domain of knowledge obtained by logical inference, we must guard it against the above-mentioned five types of vitiating factors. [We must,] namely, [make certain] (a) that there is no other [means than the theory in question] of sustaining the truth of what is perceived [with the senses], nor (b) any other [method] of upholding what is [intuitively] apprehended [by reason]. Furthermore (c) it must not invalidate any other [accepted] fact, nor (d) must one part of it contradict another, let alone (e) that a theory be adopted that is worse than the one that has been rejected.

[All] these [precautions are to be taken] in addition to exer-

cising, in the determination of the sense percepts and the rational concepts, such expert care as we have outlined before. Add to these the quality of perseverance until the process of reasoning has been completed, and we have a total of seven points that must be observed to make possible for us the accurate emergence of the truth. Should, therefore, someone come to us with an allegation in the realm of inferential knowledge, we would test his thesis by means of these seven [criteria]. If, upon being rubbed by their touchstone and weighed by their balance, it turns out to be correct as well as acceptable, we shall make use of it. Similarly also must we proceed with the subject matters of authentic tradition—I mean the books of prophecy. However, this is not the place for explaining the properties of these books, something that I have already done for an extensive portion of this subject in the introduction to my commentary on the Torah.

## VI

Now someone might, of course, ask: "But how can we take it upon ourselves to indulge in speculation about the objects of knowledge and their investigation to the point where these would be established as convictions according to the laws of geometry and become firmly fixed in the mind, when there are people who disapprove of such an occupation, being of the opinion that speculation leads to unbelief and is conducive to heresy?" Our reply thereto, however, is that such an opinion is held only <21> by the uneducated among them. Thus thou seest the masses of this country labor under the impression that whoever goes to India becomes rich. It has likewise been reported about certain uneducated people of our own nation that they labor under the illusion that something resembling a whale swallows the moon as a result of which it becomes eclipsed. [It is] also [related] about certain uneducated Arabs that they are under the impression that whoever does not have a she-camel slaughtered on his grave is brought to the last judgment on foot. And many other such ridiculous [stories are circulated].

Should one say, however: "But did not the foremost of the sages of the children of Israel forbid this sort of occupation, and especially speculation about the beginning of time and place, saying: *Whoever speculates about the following four matters would have been better off had he not been born; namely, 'What is below and what is above, what was before and what will be behind?'*" (Hag. 11b), we would reply—and we ask the Merciful One to stand by us—that it is inconceivable that they should have prohibited us from [engaging in genuine speculation]. For did not our Creator Himself enjoin us to do this very thing apropos of authentic tradition, as it is evident from the declaration [of the prophet]: *Know ye not? Hear ye not? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood the foundations of the earth?* (Isa. 40: 21). Furthermore there is the remark made by the saints to each other: *Let us choose for us that which is right; let us know among ourselves what is good* (Job 34: 4). Extensive statements of a similar nature on this subject were moreover made by the five persons figuring in the Book of Job—I mean, Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu.

What the sages forbade was only to lay the books of the prophets aside and accept any private notion that might occur to an individual about the beginning of place and time. For whoever speculates in this wise may either hit the mark or miss it. Until he hits it, however, he would be without religious faith, and even when he has hit upon the teaching of religion and has it firmly in hand, he is not secure against being deprived of it again by some uncertainty that might arise in his mind and corrupt his belief. We are agreed, then, on charging one who behaves in this fashion with sin, even though he be a professional thinker. As for ourselves, the congregation of the children of Israel, we engage in research and speculation in a way other than this. It is this method of ours that I wish to describe and clarify with the help of the Merciful One. <22> Know, then, and may God direct thee aright, Oh thou that studiest this book, that we inquire into and speculate about the matters of our religion with two objectives in mind. One of these is to have verified in fact what we have learned from the

prophets of God theoretically. The second is to refute him who argues against us in regard to anything pertaining to our religion.

Our Master, blessed and exalted be He, has namely given us complete instructions in regard to our religious requirements through the medium of His prophets. [He did this] after [first] confirming for us their possession of the gifts of prophecy by means of [sundry] miracles and marvels. Thus He has enjoined us to accept these matters as binding and observe them. He has furthermore informed us, however, that, if we would engage in speculation and diligent research, inquiry would produce for us in each instance the complete truth, tallying with His announcement to us by the speech of His prophets. Besides that He has given us the assurance that the godless will never be in a position to offer a proof against our religion, nor the skeptics<sup>33</sup> [to produce] an argument against our creed.

These facts are borne out by the statement in which God informs us that all things had a beginning, that He was the Creator who originated them, and that furthermore He was one, having no associate with Him. Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: "I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no God" (Isa. 44: 6).

He tells us also immediately thereafter that, whatever He has commanded or forbidden us to do or informed us about, has been and will be: *And who, as I, can proclaim—let him declare it and set it in order for Me—since I appointed the ancient people? And the things that are coming, and that shall come to pass, let them declare* (Isa. 44: 7).

Next He allays our fear of those who disagree with us, stating that they will not be able to prevail against us in argument, nor be successful in producing convincing proof against us. That is the import of His subsequent remark: *Be not afraid, neither fear ye; have I not announced unto thee of old and declared it? And ye are my witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? Yea, there is no Rock; I know not any* (Isa. 44: 8).

33. "skeptics"—Ibn Tibbon.

When He says: *Be not afraid*, He means: [Be not afraid] of the character of your opponents, of their numerical strength, their [physical] power and other traits, as He says elsewhere: *And thou fearest continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor* (Isa. 51: 13). The expression *wē'al* < 23 > *irhu*, again, is equivalent to *wē'al hir'ū* (neither fear ye), for by the process of substitution the *he* may stand in place of the *'aleph*. He means thereby that we must not stand in fear] of the allegation [of our opponents] or their arguments in themselves. This is borne out by what He says elsewhere: *And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words* (Ezek. 2: 6). In a similar vein it is said: *He that feared the word of the Lord* (Exod. 9: 20).

God's statement, moreover, *Have I not announced unto thee of old?* (Isa. 44: 8) refers to the prophetic revelations concerning the future. His remark again, *And I declared* (*ibid.*) has reference to the prophetic revelations concerning the past. Thus, too, does He say elsewhere: *The former things, what are they? Declare ye, that we may consider, and know the end of them; or announce to us the things to come* (Isa. 41: 22).

When, furthermore, He says: *And ye are My witnesses* (Isa. 44: 8), He alludes to the marvelous signs and the manifest proofs witnessed by the [Jewish] people. These [were revealed] in many forms,<sup>34</sup> such as the visitation of the ten plagues and the cleaving of the [Red] Sea and the assemblage at Sinai. Personally, however, I consider the case of the miracle of the manna as the most amazing of all miracles, because a phenomenon of an enduring nature exhibits greater wonderment than one of a passing<sup>35</sup> character. Aye it is hard for the mind to conceive of a scheme whereby a people numbering something like two million souls could be nourished for forty years with nothing else than food produced for them in the air by the Creator. For had there been any possibility of thinking up a scheme for achieving something of this nature, the philosophers of old would have been the first to resort to it.

34. "forms"—Ibn Tibbon and M.

35. "passing"—Ibn Tibbon and M.

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They would have maintained their disciples therewith, taught them wisdom, and enabled them to dispense with working for a livelihood or asking for help.

Now it is not likely<sup>36</sup> that the forbears of the children of Israel should have been in agreement upon this matter if they had considered it a lie. Such [proof] suffices, then, as the requisite of every authentic tradition. Besides, if they had told their children: "We lived in the wilderness for forty years eating naught except manna," and there had been no basis <24> for that in fact, their children would have answered them: "Now you are telling us a lie. Thou, so and so, is not this thy field, and thou, so and so, is not this thy garden from which you have always derived your sustenance?" This is, then, something that the children would not have accepted by any manner of means.

His statement, again, *Is there a God beside Me?* (*ibid.*) means: "If, now, perchance you be afraid that some of the things, about which I have told you that they had come to pass or some of those concerning which I have told you that they would come to pass, are not true, [that fear on your part might be justified] if a creation had been effected by someone else than Me. In that event I might perhaps not have been posted on what he was making. But inasmuch as I am One, My knowledge embraces everything that I have made and that I will make."

Finally under His statement, *And there is no rock (sur) that I do not know*<sup>37</sup> (*ibid.*) are subsumed the distinguished men of the human race and its sages. For the expression *sur* may be applied to great men. Scripture says, namely: *Look unto the rock (sur) whence ye were hewn and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you* (Isa. 51: 1, 2). It says also: *Yea, thou makest the rock (sur) turn back his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle*<sup>38</sup> (Ps. 89: 44). What is meant by the verse under discussion is therefore: "There is no wise or distinguished man that I do not

36. "not likely"—Ibn Tibbon and M.

37. The usual translation is: *Yea, there is no Rock; I know not any.*

38. These quotations are given as in Ibn Tibbon.

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know. Hence it is impossible that he should be able to produce an argument against you in the matter of your religion or do injury to your creed, because My knowledge is all-embracing and I have imparted it to you."

In this way, then—may God be merciful unto thee—do we conduct our speculation and inquiry, to the end that we may expound concretely by means of rational intuition and logical inference what our Master has imparted unto us. With this thesis, however, there is intimately bound up a point that we cannot avoid [bringing up]. It consists of the question: "Inasmuch as all matters of religious belief, as imparted to us by our Master, can be attained by means of research and correct speculation, what was the reason that prompted [divine] wisdom to transmit them to us by way of prophecy and support them by means of visible proofs and miracles rather than intellectual demonstrations?"

To this question we should like to give, with the help of God, exalted be He, an adequate answer. We say, then, [that] the All-Wise knew that the conclusions reached by means of the art of speculation could be attained only in the course of a certain measure of <25> time. If, therefore, He had referred us for our acquaintance with His religion to that art alone, we would have remained without religious guidance whatever for a while, until the process of reasoning was completed by us so that we could make use of its conclusions. But many a one of us might never complete the process because of some flaw in his reasoning. Again he might not succeed in making use of its conclusions because he is over-befuddled him. That is why God, exalted and magnified be He, afforded us a quick relief from all these burdens by sending us His messengers through whom He transmitted messages to us, and by letting us see with our own eyes the signs and the proofs supporting them about which no doubt could prevail and which we could not possibly reject. Thus He said: *Ye yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven* (Exod. 20: 19). Furthermore He addressed His messenger in our presence, and made it an ob-

39. "and"—Ibn Tibbon.

ligation to believe him forever, as He said: *That the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee forever* (Exod. 19:9).

Thus it became incumbent upon us immediately to accept the religion, together with all that was embraced in it, because its authenticity had been proven by the testimony of the senses. Its acceptance is also incumbent upon anybody to whom it has been transmitted because of the attestation of authentic tradition, as we shall explain. Now God commanded us to take our time with our speculation until we would arrive thereby at these selfsame conclusions. We must, therefore, persevere in this standpoint <sup>40</sup> until the arguments in favor of it have become convincing for us, and we feel compelled to acknowledge God's Torah [that has already been authenticated] by what our eyes have seen and our ears have heard.

So, then, even if it should take a long time for one of us who indulges in speculation to complete his speculation, he is without worry. He who is held back from engaging in such an activity by some impediment will, then, not remain without religious guidance. Furthermore women and young people and those who have no aptitude for speculation can thus also have a perfect and accessible faith, for the knowledge of the senses is common to all men. Praised, then, be the All-Wise, who ordered things thus. Therefore, too, dost thou often see Him include in the Torah <26> the children and the women together with the fathers whenever miracles and marvels are mentioned.

Next I say, in further elucidation of this matter, that one might compare the situation to that of a person who out of a total of 1,000 drachmas weighs out 20 <sup>41</sup> to each of five men, and 16½ to each of six, and 14¼ to each of seven, and 12½ to each of eight, and 11½ to each of nine, and who wishes to check with them quickly on how much money is left. So he tells them that the remainder amounts to 500 drachmas, supporting his statement by the weight of the

40. "standpoint," i.e., that of the acceptance of the teachings of the Jewish religion.

41. "20"—so according to Landauer's emendation.

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money. Once, then, it has been weighed by them <sup>42</sup> quickly and found to be 500 drachmas, they are compelled to credit his statement. Then they can take their time until they find out [that] it [is really so] by way of calculation, each one according to his understanding, and the effort he can put into it and the obstacles he might encounter.

One might further compare this case to that of a person who, upon being informed about an illness accompanied by certain pathological conditions, designates it by a natural symptom [whereby it may be] immediately [recognized], until the diagnostician is able by means of [his] investigations to check the matter.<sup>43</sup>

It behooves us also to believe that even before the era of the children of Israel God never left His creatures without a religion fortified by prophecy and miraculous signs and manifest proofs. Whoever witnessed the latter in person was convinced of their authenticity by what he had perceived with his sense of vision. He, again, to whom it was transmitted, was convinced by what he had grasped by means of his sense of hearing. Thus the Torah says about one of these [who lived before the rise of a Jewish nation]: *For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children* (Gen. 18: 19).

## VII

To this statement I should like to append what occur to me to be the principal causes responsible for keeping infidels and heretics from believing [in the authenticity of] miracles and marvels, and from engaging in speculation about religious doctrines. <27> Of these I consider eight as being particularly prevalent. The first of these is that human beings find the effort to be naturally burdensome. When, namely, they perceive instinctively a certain matter that ought to be confirmed and corroborated by means of logical proof and be applied practically in religious life, they take flight and run away from it. That is the reason why thou seest many people say: "The truth is burdensome. The truth is bitter." For they

42. "them"—m. Cf. Landauer p. 26, n. 6.

43. "matter"—literally "his quest."

desire freedom [from such burdens] and so they flee from them.<sup>44</sup> Of such persons does Scripture say: *Get you far from the Lord! Unto us is this land given for an inheritance* (Ezek. 11:15). They do not realize, these thoughtless individuals, that if they were [consistently] to obey their natural instinct in its tendency to avoid exertion and effort, they would starve to death by virtue of failing to cultivate [the soil] or to build [homes].

The second is ignorance which predominates among many men. [There are, namely, people] who express themselves foolishly, are lazy in their thinking, and say unreflectingly: "There is nothing at all." And this is what they meditate inwardly also. Of such does Scripture say: *Surely now shall they say: "We have no king; for we feared not the Lord; and the king; what can he do for us?"* (Hos. 10:3). Nor do they consider the fact that if they were to make such inane statements and wild utterances about human rulers, they would court death and destruction.

The third [cause of heresy] is the inclination of the average man toward the gratification of his appetites, such as greediness for every [type of] food and sexual intercourse and acquisition. [On account of this tendency] he hurls himself into such activities hastily [and] without deliberation. It is of individuals of this character that Scripture says: *The fool hath said in his heart: "There is no God."* (Ps. 53:2). A person of this type does not bear in mind the fact that if he were to act in such a manner in the event of illness—nay even when he is well—eating whatever he lusted for and cohabiting with whomever he found, he would perish therefrom and die.

The fourth [cause of heresy] is an aversion to speculation and an incapacity for listening attentively and engaging in sustained thinking. [All this causes the individual] to be easily contented and say: "I have already looked into the matter and this is all I got out of it." Of such a one does Scripture say: *The slothful man (remiyah) shall not hunt <28> his prey; but the precious substance of men is to be diligent* (Prov. 12:27). The meaning of [this word] *remiyah* is "one who is without ambition." Such a one does not attain what he needs. Those belonging to this class do not realize

44. "from them"—Ibn Tibbon.

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that, if they were to employ such tactics in their worldly affairs, they would never be successful in them.

The fifth [cause] is arrogance and conceit, by which a person is so dominated as not to concede the existence of any wisdom that might be hidden from him or of any science that still has to be mastered by him. Of such a one does Scripture say: *The wicked in the pride of his countenance saith: "He will not require." All his thoughts are: There is no God.* (Ps. 10:4). This type of individual does not perceive that such an argument would do him but little good in the fashioning of a signet ring or in the writing of a letter of the alphabet.

The sixth [cause of heresy] may be a word that a person hears from the mouth of the godless that touches his heart and unnerves it, so that he remains for the rest of his life in this state of nervous prostration, occasioned by this word. It is of such persons that Scripture says: *The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly* (Prov. 18:8). But why doesn't this [sort of individual] likewise consider the fact that, if he were not to shield himself against heat and cold so that they do not react against him, they [too] would destroy and kill him?

The seventh [cause of heresy] may be some weak, ridiculous argument [in favor of the true belief] that one has heard pronounced by a certain monotheist, and that one believes to be typical of all [arguments of this order]. Of persons thus [misled] does Scripture say: *But they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them* (II Chron. 30:10). Now it does not enter the mind of this sort of individual that the fact that a dealer in fine linens does not know how to describe the costly<sup>45</sup> cloths he offers for sale does not diminish their worth.

The eighth, finally, is the animosity existing between a man and certain monotheists. The unfortunate situation causes him to hate, together with his enemies, also their Master whom the latter wor-

45. "costly"—Ibn Tibbon. The Arabic text uses the adjective *dabilyyah*, i.e., a fabric manufactured in Dabik, a town in Egypt (cf. *Jacobs Geographisches Wörterbuch*, ed. F. Wuestenfeld, II, 548), which was world-renowned during the Abbasid period. (See Hitt, *History of the Arabs*. [London 1937], p. 346.)



ship. It is of persons [who permit themselves to be] thus [carried away by their feelings] that Scripture declares: *My zeal hath undone me, because mine adversaries have forgotten Thy words* (Ps. 119: 139). Such a fool does not realize that his enemy is incapable of bringing upon him [so great] an evil as he has brought upon himself, since it is not within his enemy's power to subject him in perpetuity to painful torment.

There may, however, exist a person the error of whose way is due to the fact that in the course of his interpretation of the verses of the Bible <29> he noted something that he regarded as objectionable, or that he had prayed to his Master and received no answer from Him or that he had made a request of Him which was not granted. Or [there may be one] who sees evildoers who are not punished, or who takes exception to the continued existence of the rule of the infidels, or who notes how death indiscriminately gathers in all creatures, or who is unable to grasp with his mind the meaning of God's unity or that of the soul or of reward and punishment. [For the benefit of such let me state that] all these and related subjects will be taken up individually by me in the respective treatises to which they belong and in the appropriate chapter. I shall discourse about them according to my ability, and I hope, if God, exalted be He, is willing, to contribute thereby to the welfare of those that venture into this discussion.

## VIII

And now that our discussion has reached this point, I deem it proper to make mention of the aim of this book and the number of its treatises. This is to be followed by an elaboration upon each subject, it being noted first what the books of prophecy have to say in each case, after which will be presented the rational proofs, as I have stated previously.

I say, then, that the total number of treatises of which this book consists is ten.

The first treatise [aims to prove] that the world, together with all that is in it, was created in time.

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The second treatise [aims to prove] that the Creator, may His greatness be magnified, is one.

The third treatise [is concerned with proving] that He, exalted be He, has issued to mankind commandments as well as prohibitions.

The fourth treatise [deals] with [the subjects of] obedience and disobedience [to God].

The fifth treatise [deals] with good and evil deeds.

The sixth treatise [deals] with the soul and the state of death and the hereafter.

The seventh treatise [deals] with the resurrection of the dead.

The eighth treatise [deals] with the redemption of the children of Israel.

The ninth treatise [deals] with reward and punishment.

The tenth treatise [discusses] the question of the best possible behavior for man in [this] nether abode.

<30> In each treatise I shall begin with [an exposition of] what has been imparted to us by our Lord and of whatever corroboration is furnished by reason. This is to be followed by [a citation of] such diverging views as have been reported to me. In each instance there will be given a statement of the thesis as well as of the arguments against it. I shall conclude with the proofs furnished by prophecy bearing on the subject of the treatise in question. On behalf of myself, as well as of anyone who studies this book, I beseech God to make even our path and to enable me to realize my aspirations on behalf of His people and His saints, for He is attentive and near at hand.