

Commentary on The Holy Quran

Volume 1

SURAH FATIHA

*Compiled from the Writings
and Pronouncements of*

***The Promised Messiah and Mahdi
Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian***

Translated by
Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan

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Commentary on the Holy Quran Vol.1

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The Promised Messiah and Mahdi
Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian

Translated by: Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan

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سُورَةُ الْفَتْحَةِ
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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ② الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

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الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ⑥

سَبَّحْهُ
سَبَّحْ أَبْنِيَّكَ

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FOREWORD

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyyah Movement in Islam, did not write a formal commentary on the Holy Quran, but in truth all his writings, speeches and pronouncements were derived from and were based on the Holy Book. His teachings, doctrine and the philosophy underlying them were all inspired by it and thus constitute a commentary on it.

This volume, the first of a series, sets forth in translation his exposition of Surah Fatiha, which is the opening chapter of the Holy Quran and comprises only seven brief verses. The Surah is recited in every *raka'a* of each of the five daily prayer services, and also in every *raka'a* of voluntary prayers. Every Muslim, man, woman and child who has emerged from infancy, has it by heart and recites it more than forty times a day. The Surah may be described as the Prologue of the Holy Quran. It has been called the Quran in brief. It is a veritable treasure-house of the wisdom and philosophy which are set forth in detail in the Holy Quran. Its careful perusal would richly repay every thoughtful reader, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

Muhammad Zafrulla Khan

Commentary on Surah Fatiha

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful.

First title of the Surah.

The Surah (Chapter) Fatiha has many titles. The first of these is *Fatiha-tal-kitab*. It has been given this name because the Holy Quran opens with it. Every prayer service starts with it and in supplicating the Lord of lords, a beginning is made with it. It is so called because Allah, the Supreme, has made it an index for the Quran; and all the verities and spiritual insights set out in the Quran by Allah, the Bountiful, are embedded in it and it comprehends all that man needs to know concerning his origin and his end (life here and in the hereafter); for instance, all the reasoning in support of the Existence of the Creator, and the need of Prophethood and Khilafat among His servants. Its chief import is that it furnishes tidings concerning the time of the Promised Messiah and the days of the Promised Mahdi, a subject we propose to deal with by the grace of the Loving Allah, in its proper place. Also in the intelligence unfolded in this Surah there is an indication of the age of the contemporary world. We shall write about that also with the help of the divinely bestowed faculty.

Prediction of an Ancient Prophet about Fatiha

This is the same Fatiha concerning which a prediction was made by one of the ancient Prophets. He said: I saw a mighty angel descend from heaven. In his hand was the Fatiha in the shape of a little book and by the command of the Almighty Lord his right foot came to rest on the ocean and his left foot on the earth and he called in a loud voice like the roaring of a lion. Seven thunder-claps issued forth from his mouth and from each was heard a pronouncement and it was commanded: Seal up the words announced by the thunder-claps and inscribe them not. Thus said the Loving Lord. The descending angel

swore by the Ever-Living One Whose light has illumined the face of the seas and the habitations, that there will not dawn an age greater in glory than that age. Commentators of the Holy Quran are agreed that that age is the age of the Promised Messiah. That age has already dawned and the seven voices have issued forth from the seven verses of the Fatiha. This age is the apex in respect of goodness and guidance and there never will be a period of comparable glory and grandeur. After my departure from this world, there will appear no Messiah till doomsday, neither descending from the heavens nor emerging from a cave, except the one from among my progeny about whom the word of my Lord has already gone forth.* This indeed is the truth and the one who was to come down from the Divine Presence has already descended. The heavens and the earth bear witness to it. But you do not pay heed to their witness. You will, however, remember me after I have passed away. Truly fortunate is the person who recognises the signs of the time and wastes it not through neglect.

Al-hamd, another name of the Fatiha

Surah Fatiha has several other titles also. One of these is *al-hamd* (The Praise), since it opens with the praise of our Lord Most High.

The Fatiha has also been named Ummul Quran (Mother of the Quran), for it comprehends the totality of the meaning of the Quran in an excellent manner. It has embedded in it like in a shell all the gems and pearls of the Quran. This surah is, as it were, a nest for the birds of spiritual knowledge and understanding.

The Quran comprises guidance in respect of four sciences; the science of the origin of life, the science of eschatology, the science of Prophethood and the science of the Unity of the Divine Being and His attributes. There is not the least doubt that all these four are comprised in the Fatiha, but the minds

* There is an indication of this in the saying of the Holy Prophet, peace be on Him; He (the Promised Messiah) will marry and beget children.

of most of the Muslim divines are unaware of them. They recite the Fatiha superficially and do not reflect over its deeper meaning. They do not strive to release the flow of its seven streams but pass their days in sinful disobedience (Ijazul Masih, pp. 72-73).

The surah is also named Ummul-kitab, the Mother of the Book, for it contains the essence of all the teachings of the Noble Quran (Ayyamas Solh, p. 18).

It bears this title also on account of the fullness of its teachings concerning all that relates to the spirit. Indeed a seeker cannot achieve his goal until his heart is saturated with the realisation of the majesty of the Divine and the utter humility of His creatures. For this purpose there is no other guide furnished by the Unique Lord comparable to this Surah.

Consider how it proclaims His Majesty and His Greatness beginning with: All worthiness of perfect praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds; on to: Master of the Day of Judgment; and how it emphasises the humbleness, weakness and helplessness of His creatures in terms of: Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help.

This surah derives this title also from its comprehensive approach to the needs of human nature and its indication of all the yearnings of human temperament whether in the domain of human effort or in that of Divine grace. For, man is in need of knowledge of the Divine Being and Divine attributes and Divine works for the perfect development of his soul. He also desires to gain knowledge of His will and pleasure through the media of His commands, the significance of which is disclosed only through His words. His spiritual urge demands that he should be led by the hand by Divine beneficence and should acquire through this means inner purity and light and Divine communion. This noble surah encompasses all these objectives. In truth, it charms the hearts with the beauty of its style and the power of its exposition (Ijazul Masih, pp. 73-75).

Al-saba'l masani

Another of the names of this surah is *Al-saba'l masani* (i.e. the Dual Seven). One reason for this title is that the surah comprises two halves, one half consists of the worshipper's homage to the Lord and the other half describes the bounty of Providence towards His mortal servants.

It has also been said that it has been called the *masani* (i.e. unique) because of its exceptional merits among all the Divine Books, the equal of which is not to be found in the Torah or the Gospels or in the Books of Prophets. It has also been claimed that it has been described as *masani* because it has seven verses from Allah the Bountiful, the recitation of each one being equal to the recitation of one seventh of the Exalted Quran.

It has also been said that it has been named *saba'* (i.e. seven) as it indicates seven gates of hell and each part of it wards off the flames of one of them by the command of Allah, the Gracious. Whoso, therefore, seeks to pass by these seven gates of hell in security, should enter this *saba'* (seven-verse haven) with eagerness, begging of Almighty Allah steadfast attachment to it. Whatever of morals and conduct and beliefs leads into hell is in principle comprised in seven categories and these seven verses are antidotes to their fatal poison.

In the reported sayings of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, several other titles of this surah are mentioned. It should, however, be enough to remember that it is a treasure-house of Divine mysteries. In addition the number of the verses of this surah (seven) is an indication of the age of the cycle of existence which is seven thousand years, each one of the verses reflecting the nature of each millennium; and the last millennium is the heaviest in error. This needed to be announced as this surah comprises the narration of that which pertains to the beginning through to the end.

Properties of Surah Fatiha

It should be clear that if a composition bears a perfect resem-

blance in all its aspects to an object which admittedly emanates from the Divine as having been fashioned by His might, that is to say, if it should incorporate all the wonders both external and internal that are to be found in any single creation of God, it must then be confessed that the composition is of such superhuman quality that it is beyond the power of man to produce the like of it. For, when in respect of an object, which is held and accepted by all without difference or dispute, as being peerless as the work of God, it is established that another object shares fully its unique features, then the last must undoubtedly be upon a par with the first in respect of its uncommon characteristics. To take a simple illustration, if one object conforms in all aspects to another which measures ten yards, then we may be certain beyond any doubt that it measure ten yards likewise.

Surah Fatiha and Rose

Now, out of the created things of God, we shall for purposes of comparison select a delicate specimen, the rose, delineating its external and internal beauties which make it admittedly of such excellent quality that human resources fall utterly short of reproducing its like. We shall next show that the excellences of Surah Fatiha are in all respects similar to the wonders and excellences of the rose, that indeed they far exceed them. That which has impelled me towards selecting this illustration was an experience of the nature of revelation. I beheld myself holding Surah Fatiha, which had an exceedingly lovely shape in my hand. The paper on which it was inscribed appeared as if it was loaded with countless red and delicate roses. Every time this humble servant of Allah recited a verse of the surah, a number of these roses rose into the air with a sweet cadence. These roses were very soft, big, bright, moist, fresh and sweet-smelling, filling the heart and head with fragrance as they soared, thus inducing a state of ineffable joyousness in the mind altogether above and withdrawn from the world and all that it holds.

This revelatory vision discloses the spiritual affinity existing between Surah Fatiha and the rose. That is why I have chosen it for purposes of illustration. It seems pertinent therefore, to delineate first, for comparison, the excellences to be found in the appearance and the essence of the rose and then to set out the external and internal marvels of Surah Fatiha so that a fair-minded reader may comprehend that the external and internal properties of the rose, which put reproduction of its like beyond human reach, are to be found in a much higher degree in the Fatiha. This would also be in accord with the idea conveyed in the vision described above.

Qualities of Rose

It would be readily agreed that, like other creations of God, the rose has properties the like of which man is unable to manufacture, and these are of two varieties. First, those that may be described as external. For instance, its colour is lovely, its fragrance is delightful and very pleasing, its petals are of an extreme delicacy in texture and, on the whole, it exhales a most agreeable air of freshness and purity. Secondly, there are properties inherent in it with which the Lord of Absolute Wisdom has endowed it, and which are to be found in its essence. Some of these are: it is wholesome for the heart and tones it up and reduces bile and revitalizes the system and lifts up the spirit, dissipates choler and phlegm and strengthens the stomach, liver, kidneys, intestines and lungs and is very beneficial for a variety of physical ailments.

It is because of these twofold qualities that it has been held beyond the range of human capability to manufacture a flower as lovely in colour and agreeable in fragrance and at the same time as soft and tender and delicate and clean with all its internal properties as is the rose. If this is questioned the answer is that no sage or philosopher has so far been able to procure, through any device, ingredients that could be compounded and fused in such a manner as to reproduce all the external and internal properties of the rose. It must be realised

that identical unparalleled features are discernible in Surah Fatiha, and indeed in every passage of the Noble Quran, even as brief as comprising four verses or less. First consider the diction and arrangement of the Fatiha. The easy, flowing style, the perfect juxtaposition, the purest classical vocabulary, the sweet cadence, the grace and majesty. Every feature compels admiration and evokes homage and praise. It is a perfect whole, complete and flawless. With all its overpowering charm and beauty the Fatiha is charged with truth and wisdom. Every phrase proclaims and induces righteousness. There is not the least suspicion of falsehood or a single false note. There is not the least redundancy. Yet nothing has been left out. There is no exaggeration nor any understatement. The beauty of form is complete and perfect, as in the rose, but in a far higher degree.

Internal qualities of Fatiha are healing for mind and spirit

These are the external qualities of the Fatiha. Its internal properties encompass remedies for grave spiritual maladies. It provides healing for the ailments of mind and spirit. It has, besides, a vast provision for the development of the faculties of perception and reflection. It opens up vistas of sublime thought which had been closed to sages and philosophers. Its perusal fortifies faith in the heart of the spiritual pilgrim and heals it of all doubts, misgivings and apprehension.

Its brief blessed text is replete with numberless supreme truths so essential and invaluable for the perfect development of the human mind and soul. Obviously these excellent qualities like the excellence of the rose, cannot be combined in the composition of any human being. This is not speculation, but is established fact. Allah, the Most High, has, in His eloquent and classic word, expounded the high eternal verities at the right hour, the hour of its true need, achieving a perfect combination of external and internal attributes. First, it reproduces the essential high verities all trace of which had been lost and had been obliterated from earlier teachings, and no

sage or thinker had since so much as hinted at them. Then these verities have not been expounded in a vacuum but have been set forth at a time and in an age when the current situation demanded such remedial measures, failing which the age would have hurtled on to its doom. Again, these great truths have not been dealt with perfunctorily in a casual manner. They are presented in perfect shape, both quantitatively as well as qualitatively. No thinker can cite a verity that has been left out, nor is there any misgiving of a follower of falsehood that has not been dispelled.

Language of Fatiha is beyond range of human capacity

To expound all these sublime verities at the exact time of their need in language which it is not possible to match in eloquence and elegance is indeed beyond the reach of human capacity, for the task is in itself superhuman. Man's capacity falls short of setting forth in sublime language even the average ordinary affairs of daily life with strict regard to truth and objectivity. One or two illustrations should make this clear. Take the case of a storekeeper who happens to be a poet of high merit and also possesses great mastery of language both in writing and in speech. Could such a one maintain in his daily converse with his customers the highest standards of eloquence, choosing his words with due regard to each occasion and situation, adhering strictly to the truth and fulfilling the demands of brevity or expansiveness, as the case may be, and yet succeeding every time in persuading the customer to accept his point of view? Indeed he could not.

Take next the case of a magistrate, who must reduce to writing most accurately the statements of parties and witnesses and analyse and criticise them with reference to the point at issue, establishing the facts and then examining the arguments of counsel and in all this sort out the relevant from the irrelevant and finally set down his own conclusions and findings and on that basis determine the law applicable, stating it clearly, and thus propound his judgment. Could he with every

advantage of learning and training carry out his task and set forth all this in proper sequence, briefly or at length, as needed, with absolute accuracy in language which for clarity, conciseness and power of expression would be matchless? Of course, he could not.

All human expression falls short of perfection, for one reason or another. Too great concern for elegance of expression may involve some sacrifice of truth or accuracy, as indeed is often the case, and a strict adherence to these may demand a lowering of the standards of eloquence and elegance of expression. Too often what is deemed as praiseworthy turns out to be mere verbal exuberance devoid of profundity and empty of worthy content.

Thus when reason, re-inforced by experience, rules out the possibility of stating in elegant, eloquent language, every-day affairs with strict accuracy in response to a valid need, it can be readily appreciated that a dissertation on lofty realities, pertinent to true needs, couched in exceedingly apt and expressive language, admitting of no improvement on its lucidity and elegance, is beyond the range of human capacity and is as much outside the realm of possibility as a human endeavour as is the manufacture by man of the rose with all its external and internal qualities. For, when in respect of common affairs of daily occurrence, in whatever walk of life, experience and reason confirm the impossibility of transmuting them into flawless and elegant expression at the highest level, how can it then be conceived to be, within the range of human capacity to achieve something fraught with far greater profundity and complexity? The Fatiha, as we have sought to demonstrate, possesses a many-sided perfection. It is truth at its purest, it sets forth realities, it responds to the urgent needs of the human soul, it prescribes remedies for all spiritual ills, it carries conviction through its perfect reasoning, it meets the requirements and needs of every contingency. It does all this at a level of elegant expression which is flawless and matchless.

Special Qualities of Fatiha

These are properties possessed by Surah Fatiha and indeed by the whole of the Noble Quran in a manner that coincides with the unsurpassed qualities of the rose. In addition Surah Fatiha and the Holy Quran share a remarkable attribute which is a characteristic of this Holy word alone, and that is that its perusal with due care and attention and in a spirit of sincerity purifies the heart, dispels layers of darkness and expands the mind, drawing a seeker after truth into the very presence, as it were, of the One Lord-God, and invests him with such light and tokens as are characteristic of those who have attained nearness to the Supreme Lord and which cannot be acquired through any other device or plan. We have furnished evidence of this spiritual phenomenon in this book and if there be a sincere seeker after truth we are prepared to demonstrate it to his satisfaction and are at all times prepared to furnish fresh evidence in this behalf.

A Challenge

It needs to be remembered that the unparalleled excellence and matchless quality of the language of the Holy Quran are not established by rational arguments alone. Experience, extending over a long period of time, also confirms and verifies them. The Holy Quran has proclaimed its excellences for the last 1,300 years with an open challenge, announcing to the whole of mankind that it is without a parallel in its external and internal qualities and that no man, small or great, can produce the like of it. Yet no one has ventured to take up the challenge, even in a minimal measure, that is to say, to produce as much as the like of Surah Fatiha. Thus what greater and more manifest miracle could there be that not only reason affirms that this Holy Word is above the reach of human capacity but experience also, extending over a long period of time, reinforces its status as a miracle?

Should any one be disposed to reject this twofold testimony

of reason and of experience, which has extended over a long period, and have pretensions to knowledge and skill or should have faith in the ability and capacity of some writer to produce the like of the Holy Quran, we propose to set out, by way of illustration, somewhat of the verities and wisdom comprised in the Surah Fatiha, so that such a one may put forward the like of it.

The incomparable Surah

Surah Fatiha partakes of the two outstanding characteristics of the Honoured Quran which are incomparable, one of which is its external quality of the purity, delicacy, fluence, sweetness and beauty of its style, diction and narrative. Its composition is of such superb order that it is beyond the range of possibility to express the same meaning in language other than that of Surah Fatiha. If all the writers and poets of the world were to combine their efforts to express the identical content in a different style equal or superior to that of the Fatiha, they would only encounter frustration. The Honoured Quran has proclaimed the challenge of its incomparability to mankind for thirteen centuries. Had it been possible, some of the opponents of the Quran would have taken it up. Their utter failure to take it up redounds to the discredit of all its adversaries and to the glory and honour of the Holy Quran. That, during the past thirteen hundred years, no opponent of the Quran has produced anything comparable to the Holy Quran, is clear proof of their emptiness and helplessness in face of the challenge.

It is incumbent on everyone who is not prepared to accept this to produce the like of the Holy Quran himself or with the help of coadjutors. He may take up Surah Fatiha as an acme of perfection in elegance and prepare an eloquent piece equal to it, but so long as he does not do so, the proof furnished by the 1300-year long silence of the dumbstruck adversaries of the Quran stands un rebutted. In fact, this silence, extending over hundreds of years, has given the testimony such strength

that it transcends the proof of incomparability enjoyed by the rose. For, the philosophers, artists and scientists of the world have never been challenged to produce its like nor had they been warned of the frustrations that would attend upon their attempts to fabricate its like. It is obvious, therefore, that the lustre and brilliance that characterize the unsurpassibility of the Holy Quran through the exercise of human capacities and talent in eloquence and elegance, is a fact established in a far greater degree than the incomparability of the rose in respect of its qualities. So much as to the external quality of Surah Fatiha and the Honoured Quran in respect of which its uniqueness and its unsurpassibility by the exercise of human capacities has been well-established, through the utter helplessness of its opponents in this behalf.

Now we propose to re-capitulate here some of its internal qualities so that they may be well comprehended by those who reflect upon them. It must be borne in mind in this connection that just as the Lord of Absolute Wisdom has invested the rose with various properties beneficial to the human body, for instance, its tonic quality for the heart and its curative value in many ailments, so has the Beneficent Lord invested Surah Fatiha, as indeed the whole of the Holy Quran, with healing for spiritual ills such as is not to be found in any other source. For, it is replete with the perfect verities that had disappeared from the world and not a trace of them had been left. This Holy Word did not, therefore, descend upon the world without purpose and without a meaning – nay, in fact this supernal light flashed forth when the world needed it most urgently and it set forth the teachings, the timely diffusion of which on earth was necessary for its reformation. In short, these vital and divine truths were revealed at an opportune time and at the hour of need, in unmatched eloquence and elegance. Naught was omitted of that which was needed for the guidance of the misguided and for the correction of the current situation, and naught was included of that which was unnecessary and uncalled for. In brief, this light and these holy truths, because of their exalted nature, carry magnificence and blessings of an

exceedingly high order, in that they have not been revealed pointlessly and without purpose. In fact, these verities were revealed to the world like a timely rain of mercy to wash out, with full vigor, every kind of distemper and dispel every kind of darkness which had spread over the world in different shapes and the ignorance and mischief that was superimposed on popular beliefs, practices and doctrinal creeds. In truth it was a rain of mercy that came down from heaven to save those who were suffering from extreme thirst. The spiritual life of mankind depended on the descent of that life-giving water and not a drop of it came down but as healing for some ill with which mankind was afflicted. Mankind through persistence in error for hundreds of years had arrived at a state in which it could not itself devise a remedy for its ailments nor could it dissipate its own darkness without the help of heavenly light which should illumine the world and enable those to see who had never seen and impart understanding to those who had never cared to understand. That heavenly light did not only disclose divine truths of which not a vestige had been left in the world: but through its spiritual vitality it filled many minds with rich treasure of truth and wisdom and drew many hearts towards its winsome countenance and led many to heights of knowledge and conduct.

Proof of Unmatchable Characteristics of Holy Quran

Now these twin qualities that are common to Surah Fatiha and the Noble Quran are such brilliant arguments in support of the claim of unmatchability of the Divine Word as are the properties of the rose, believed by all and sundry to be beyond the genius of man to devise. The truth indeed is that the attributes of the Divine Word are so manifestly superb and beyond the reach of human capacities that the properties of the rose look insignificant in comparison. The grandeur and glory and unmatchability of the characteristics of the Holy Quran come into full display when viewed collectively as components of the overall picture. For example, first, turning

over in one's mind the point that as a piece of literature it should be so excellent in eloquence and elegance and so sweet and fluent and pleasant that if a man, comprehending fully all the meaning carried by the eloquent Divine Word, were to plan to reproduce its like, he would find it absolutely beyond his capacity. Secondly, taking account of its teachings and directions that constitute verities of an excellent order, not a sentence, a word or a letter of them but emanates from profound wisdom. Thirdly, these truths are such as were most urgently needed by the times. Fourthly, those verities are so unique that no sage or philosopher is known to have discovered them through his speculative insight and research. Fifthly, when these truths were revealed they came as fresh bounties, so much so that the people of the age were utterly unaware of this guidance. Sixthly, the Holy Word is characterised with the heavenly blessing that obedience to its guidance leads the seeker after truth to true attachment to and love for the Divine so that he should reflect light that should shine forth from the men of God. All these combined compel sound reason to affirm without hesitation that it is utterly impossible for a human composition to comprise all these features in perfection. It is beyond doubt that an overall view of all these external and internal excellences strikes awe in the mind, at the same time bringing home to a sensible person the conviction that the performance of such a comprehensive feat by human effort is utterly beyond the range of possibility and that such an awe-inspiring phenomenon is not at all observable in the case of the rose. For, the Holy Quran has the added characteristic that the above qualities that are the basis of its uniqueness are too evident to call for proof. When a critic finds that not a word of it but has its place in wisdom and relevance and not a sentence of it but was urgently needed for the reformation of the times and withal that its structure is so perfect that it admits not of the replacement of a single line with a differently-worded one, he is awe-struck at the contemplation of these astounding excellences (Baraheen Ahmadiyyah Vol. IV, pp. 339-343, Footnote 11).

An uninformed person may perhaps ask for proof of the presence of all these attributes in Surah Fatiha and the Honoured Quran. The proof is that those who pondered deeply over the unparalleled excellences of the Honoured Quran and were struck by the elegance characterizing it as being far above the range of their capacities to produce its match and found its truth and wisdom of such high order that the age had no parallel of it, and observed its wondrous potentialities which are non-existent in human speech and perceived its timeliness and its relevance to human need, were left no choice but to confess and proclaim its incomparable magnificence. Even those of them who remained bereft of the gift of faith because of their innate perversity, were so confounded by its awe and majesty that being dumbstruck and disconcerted all they could utter was: This is manifest sorcery.

For a fair-minded person there is strong evidence and conclusive proof in favour of the uniqueness of the Honoured Quran, in the 1300-year challenge of the Noble Quran rousing the sense of honour of its adversaries and in the event of their failure to respond, heaping reproaches upon them. Despite all this they could not produce the like of a brief Surah, nor could they find fault with those qualities and attributes and excellences and truths exhibited and expounded by the Divine Word, while it was incumbent on them and still is, that if they are not prepared to abandon their disbelief and hostility, they should produce something comparable to a chapter of the Honoured Quran, even the briefest, and should confront us with a passage for comparison, with all the external and internal qualities of any of the smallest chapters of the Holy Quran. The conditions are that the language should be of equal elegance with due regard to truth and righteousness and should answer a true need, it being beyond the reach of human effort to reproduce the same meaning in comparable eloquence. It should be replete with eternal verities which, again, are not irrelevantly spelled out but should be in answer to a most urgent need and should be totally unknown before their disclosure and their advent should be as a new bounty and they

should, in addition, possess a spiritual effectiveness, as has the Holy Quran, in regard to which we have furnished evidence in this book and are prepared to furnish recurring fresh evidence for the benefit of a seeker after truth. Until an adversary comes forward with such a parallel, his failure shall clinch the unique character of the Honoured Quran. These are but a few of the unique characteristics of the Holy Quran, to which we have confined ourselves for the sake of brevity. Were we to lay down as necessary conditions for an answer to our challenge, all the other qualities to be found in the Holy Quran, as for example, that the Holy Quran embodies and encompasses all religious truths and insights and does not omit a single Divine truth and that it comprises secrets and prophecies of great magnitude which portend its own honour and glory and the decline of its opponents, its own victory and discomfiture of its adversaries – if we were to add to our challenge all these features to those already listed, it would add immeasurably to the difficulties of its opponents and to their confusion. But since the attributes of the Noble Quran already referred to are sufficient to render the opponents of the Quran helpless, it is unnecessary to demand parallels of all attributes of the Holy Quran. Besides, such a demand would necessarily make this work very voluminous.

Despite all these concessions and the reduction of the demand to the briefest chapter of the Holy Quran for a comparable production, it is manifest that the opponents of the Quran, notwithstanding their ardent desire to take up the challenge and their extreme hostility, have been too helpless to enter the lists and not one of them dare raise a little finger, even though their failure to answer the challenge lays them open to the severest reproaches. Like the dead, they emit not a sound.

When the brilliant rays of the Sun of Righteousness are issuing forth from all directions, blinding the bat-minded ones, it would be sheer arrogance to rate so highly the qualities of the rose which, compared to the attributes of the Holy Quran, are weak, poor, ill-supported and transitory as being beyond human ingenuity to reproduce their like, but to hold that the

grand qualities of the Holy Quran that far excel the external and internal properties of the flower and enjoy powerful supporting proof, are within the range of human skill to emulate. While it is understood that man has not the skill to produce the like of the rose which looks fresh and lively and alluring for a moment and in the next moment is blanched, droops and loses all its comeliness, with its petals falling pell-mell, how can then man produce the like of that real flower, for which the Eternal Lord has ordained perpetual spring, with permanent safeguards against the blasts of autumn and whose freshness, beauty and delicacy never change or fade? The truth is that its freshness and its moisture grow with age and its marvels are unfolded more and more and its verities and wisdom are set forth in ever greater measure.

Is not then refusal to recognise the graces and excellences of the real flower symptomatic of one's utter inner blindness? If there be then one failing to appreciate the great eminence of these attributes, on account of his inner sightlessness, it is up to him to produce the like of the graces of the Holy Quran in terms of the testimony furnished by us about the unique character of the Divine Word and the different angles enumerated by us to show that the like of that Holy Word is far above the reach of human capacity, and to show that such a writing possesses the external and internal virtues comparable to those that we have shown are inherent in the Divine Word. (Baraheen-Ahmadiyyah Vol. IV, pp. 343-347, Footnote 11).

Great influence of Fatiha

The title Fatiha is also used as connoting victory. It confirms a believer in his faith and a disbeliever in his disbelief, that is, it distinguishes between them. It opens up the heart and expands the mind. Surah Fatiha should, therefore, be read repeatedly. It is important to reflect deeply on this prayer (Al-Hakam Dec. 24, 1900, pp. 1-2).

Fatiha a miracle

Surah Fatiha is a miracle. It comprises both commandments and prohibitions and grand prophecies also. The Honoured Quran is a vast ocean. If one has to consult it in respect of some point, one should ponder well over Surah Fatiha. For, it is the Mother of the Book. From it issue forth insights into the Noble Quran.

Fatiha oft repeated

Every dot of the Holy Quran is affirmed by tradition. Surah Fatiha is affirmed through a tremendous traditional process. It is recited every day, in every raka'a of every Prayer (*Salat*).

Security against hell

Since hell has seven gates, Surah Fatiha has seven verses. Each one of its verses thus provides a means of security against one's approach to hell (Al-Hakam Feb. 17, 1901).

Fatiha comprises every Verity

The truth is that Surah Fatiha encompasses every science and every insight and comprises all points of truth and wisdom and answers the query of every seeker and overwhelms every assailant. It feeds every guest who desires to be entertained and provides drink for every visitor. It dispels every doubt that would lead to the brink of disaster and uproots every worry that would bring on dotage and leads back to the right path every leader who has lost the way and humbles every implacable enemy and cheers up the seekers, and there is no physician comparable to it for washing out the poison of sin and healing the crookedness of hearts and it leads to righteousness and certitude (Karamatus Sadiqeen, p. 103).

A Holy Tree

Verily the Fatiha is a holy plant that yields constantly the

fruits of pure insight and fills one with drink from the goblets of truth and wisdom. When a person opens his heart to admit its light, that light enters therein and makes it aware of its mysteries, and whoso shuts this door draws, by his own act, darkness upon himself and witnesses his own ruin and joins the spiritually dead.

Fatiha and Inner Light

Recitation of Fatiha during Prayer with full attention and full acceptance of its teaching by the heart as the truth plays a great part in spiritual enlightenment. This is a spiritual characteristic of Surah Fatiha. In other words, it brings satisfaction to the mind, dissipates darkness, and the grace of the Exalted Source of all grace starts descending on the seeker, and the light of Divine approbation encompasses him until, step by step, he becomes the honoured recipient of Divine revelation and begins to enjoy in full measure different forms of true revelation and is admitted to the company of those who are in communion with the Divine Lord. Thereupon such wondrous manifestations are vouchsafed through him, by way of inspiration, revelation, acceptance of prayer, disclosure of that which is hidden and Divine succour that the like of them is not to be witnessed in the case of another (Baraheen-Ahmadiyyah, Vol. IV, Footnote 11, pp. 525–27).

Fatiha reflects Divine Light

This humble servant of Allah affirms on the basis of personal experience that Surah Fatiha is in truth a manifestation of Divine Light. Such marvels have been witnessed during the course of its recitation that they illustrate the dignity and eminence of the Holy Word of Allah. By the blessings of this blissful Surah and through its regular recitation, hundreds of hidden events have been, by Divine favour, disclosed before their occurrence and every difficult situation has been cleared up in a marvellous manner. This humble servant recalls some

three thousand true visions and dreams that have found clear fulfillment like the break of dawn and over two hundred manifestations in response to prayer have taken place at such critical moments when there appeared no way out of the difficulty. Similarly, through the frequent recital of this Surah, insight into matters beyond the grave and marvels of many other kinds have become such a phenomenal occurrence that, if even an insignificant reflection of them were to be experienced by a non-Muslim divine, he would risk his very life readily and forsake all worldly cares and join Islam. In the same manner, the prophecies that have been vouchsafed to this humble servant through revelation, some of which have found fulfillment and are finding fulfillment under the observation of my opponents, are so numerous that their compilation would be about as voluminous as two of the gospels.

This humble servant of Allah, by virtue of obedience to the Noble Prophet, receives in abundance the gifts of Divine revelation, a brief sample of which has been set out in footnote No. 3 comprising revelations in Arabic. The gracious Lord has, by virtue of my obedience to and love of His Honoured Prophet and my faithful following of His Word, especially favoured me with His revelation and honoured me with bestowing upon me spiritual knowledge and understanding and has disclosed to me many secrets filling the heart of this insignificant servant with an abundance of spiritual treasures. It has been made clear to me that all this distinction and beneficence and benevolence and care and help and communion are because of obedience to and love of the Seal of the Prophets, peace and blessings of Allah be on him (Baraheen-Ahmadiyyah Vol. IV, pp. 538-541, Footnote 11).

Glory of Fatiha

All the beauties and characteristics and attributes of Surah Fatiha, outlined by me so far, are demonstrably without parallel and without equal. If one were to appraise justly the excellence of those truths that are comprised in Surah Fatiha, and

consider the fine points that the surah sets forth and take into account its literary charm and conciseness, compressing such volumes of meaning in so few words and then glance at the splendour of its language, its fluency, its clarity, presenting the spectacle of a pure and limpid current and should then contemplate its spiritual effectiveness that miraculously transforms hearts, purifying them of human dross and making them recipients of Divine Light such as we have depicted at several places in this book, the glory of the Honoured Quran, which is beyond the reach of human capacity, would become manifest to a degree that cannot be surpassed (Baraheen-Ahmadiyyah, Vol. VI, pp. 544-545, Footnote 11).

Fatiha is a Citadel

The Fatiha is truly at once a fortified castle, a bright light, a teacher and a helper. It secures the commandments of the Quran against addition or subtraction like securing the frontiers of a realm thus preserving its integrity. It may be compared to a camel carrying every needed provision by way of food, drink, clothing etc. that transports its rider to the land of the beloved. Or it is like a reservoir with an abundant supply of water as if it were the confluence of many streams or the channel of a mighty river. I find that the benefits of this noble Surah and its fine qualities are beyond count and defy computation and that it is not within human capacity to enumerate them, even if one were to dedicate a whole lifetime to this enterprise.

The ignorant and the thick-headed have not appreciated it as it deserves to be appreciated. They read it, but repeated perusal does not help them to appreciate its excellences. This Surah mounts powerful assaults on those who reject it and works swiftly on sound minds. Whoso has deliberated on it analytically and has drawn close to it, pondering with a mind illumined like a bright lamp, has found it the light of the eyes and the key to secrets. This is the truth without a doubt and no conjecture. If you are in any doubt, then be up and try it

yourself laying aside lethargy and indolence; and quibble not about how and when.

Of the marvels of this Surah is that it has eulogized Allah with a eulogy that is beyond the capacity of man to excel. We pray to Allah to judge between us and our people by means of the Fatiha and we place all our trust in Him. Amen, O Lord of the worlds (Ijazul Masih pp. 77–79).

The recitation of Surah Fatiha in Prayer is obligatory and it is this prayer that clearly shows that true prayer is made only in the course of the Prayer service (*Salat*). Allah has taught this in this manner:

Before supplicating the Almighty one should praise and glorify Him, so that one's spirit may be uplifted with love and adoration. The Fatiha, therefore, begins with: All worthiness of praise belongs to Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of all, Who bestows out of His pure grace, even before any action or prayer proceeds from His creatures, and then rewards righteous action in this world and in the hereafter also. He is the Master of Judgment. Every requital rests in His hands. Good and evil are in His power. One becomes a full and perfect believer in His Unity only when one accepts Allah, the Most High, as the Master of Judgment. Beware it is a sin to regard human authorities as all-powerful in their respective spheres of control or authority. This amounts to associating them with Allah. As God has invested them with authority, they should be obeyed. But do not set them up as gods. Render unto man his due and render unto God His due. The next stage is of supplication. Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help. Guide us along the right path – the path of those whom Thou hast favoured. That is the party of the Prophets, the Faithful Ones, the Martyrs and the Righteous. In this prayer the grace and bounty bestowed on all these groups is pleaded for. The supplication proceeds: Save us from the way of those who incurred Thy wrath and who went astray (Al-Hakam, June 24, 1902, p. 2).

Prayer for all Mankind

In this prayer one should include (1) all mankind (2) all Muslims and (3) all the participants in the Prayer service. In this manner all mankind will be included in the prayer and this is the Divine purpose (Letter of the Promised Messiah to Sheikh Ghulam Nabi vide *Al-Hakam*, July 28, Aug. 7, 1937 p. 3).

Effectiveness of Fatiha

The repetition of Surah Fatiha during the course of Prayer is very effective. Even in a mood of mental lethargy and disinclination, this practice should be kept up with constancy. One should repeatedly affirm: Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help; and again: Guide us along the right path; and while in prostration one should implore: O Thou Ever Living, Self-Subsisting and All-Supporting, I beseech Thy mercy (*Al-Hakam*, Feb. 20, 1898, p. 9).

It is most beneficial to recite Surah Fatiha repeatedly in the course of Prayer. During the pre-dawn voluntary prayer it would be helpful to supplicate over and over again: Guide us along the right path, the way of those whom Thou hast favoured; with deep concentration and humility, opening the heart for the reception of Divine Light; and to repeat: Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help. The repetition of these verses will, by the grace of Allah the Almighty, lead to illumination of heart and purification of soul (*Al-Hakam*, June 24, 1903, p. 3).

Remember that the verses of this surah are seven in number and the principal planets are also seven. Each one of the verses thus signifies as if it were a planet so that they may all serve as blighters of satans (*Register Muhavarat-al-Arab*).

Seeking protection against Satan

O seeker of insight, know that it is obligatory on one who

addresses himself to the recitation of the Fatiha or the Furqan (the Holy Quran), to seek protection against Satan as has been laid down in the Quran. Satan sometimes sneaks into the preserve of Allah like a thief and invades the sanctuary that safeguards the innocent. Allah, therefore, determined to shield His servants from the onslaughts of the subtle whisperer of evil, while they recite the Fatiha and the Word of the Lord of mankind, and to defend them with His own weapon and fix the axe squarely on his head and rescue the unwary from their state of unawareness. He, therefore, taught His servants a formula of His own to drive off Satan who has been spurned till the Day of Judgment. The secret underlying this is that Satan is the declared enemy of man from the beginning and has planned his ruin through hidden means and by sudden assault, his most cherished wish being the destruction of man. To achieve this end he has charged himself to eavesdrop so that whenever a command issues from the Gracious Lord calling man to paradise, he should be on the alert and expend all his effort in promoting misguidance and mischief.

Allah planned his discomfiture through the raising of Prophets. He did not slay him outright; instead He granted him respite until the dead are raised by the leave of Allah the Lord of honour and glory. He foretold his destruction in calling him Satan the rejected. That is the formula that is recited before beginning the recital of the Holy Word with: In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful.

That is the rejected one concerning whom the warning has been sounded – that is, the Dissembler whom the Messiah will slay. *Rajm* connotes ‘slaying’ as explained in Arabic lexicons. *Rajeem*, therefore, is the Dissembler whose destruction in one of the coming ages has been prophesied – a promise of Allah Who is solicitous for His servants and there is no changing of the Divine word. This then is glad tidings for the Muslims from Allah the Compassionate that the Dissembler shall surely be slain at the appointed time, as is the connotation of the word *Rajeem*.

Rajm in this context means, as I have been taught by the

Lord of creation, humbling the mean ones and confounding the enemies who dwell in dark caves. It is a stroke that cuts off the root of enmity, but I do not mean thereby the stroke of a sword.

The age of the Dissembler's ruin

The time has now come when falsehood will perish and there will not survive aught of imposture and darkness and all religions will disintegrate except Islam and the earth will be filled with justice, equity and light, even as it was full of cruelty, ingratitude, injustice and falsehood. That will be the time of the ruin of the group whose ruin has been foretold. By ruin is meant the breaking of their power and the emancipation of those held in bondage by them.

In short, by the expression, Satan, the rejected, is meant the old lying Dissembler whose slaughter had been foretold as an event ordained and determined upon. That is why Allah made it incumbent upon the Muslims to recite the formula: I seek Allah's protection against Satan, the rejected, before reciting the *Bismillah* of the Fatiha, so that the reader may remind himself that the age of the Dissembler shall not extend beyond the age of the people mentioned in the last of the seven verses of the Fatiha. Thus the Divine decree had determined in the beginning of time that surely the said *rajeem* shall be slain in the latter age and mankind shall be delivered from the bites of this venomous reptile.

Time has now entered upon its last round and the age of the world has entered its seventh millennium in terms of both the solar and lunar calendars. In this age the rejected one has assumed in symbolic shape the garb of a people who have arrived at the last limit of error and who are mentioned in the last word of the Surah Fatiha. None grasps this point but the enlightened.

The Dissembler will be destroyed only by heavenly weapons

The Dissembler will not be destroyed except by heavenly

weapons; that is to say by the grace of Allah and not by the power of man. There will, therefore, be neither war nor conflict but a phenomenon that will descend from the Presence of the One.

The Dissembler has in every age appointed his progeny to misguide the Muslims, the believers in the One Lord, the righteous, the defenders of the truth and the seekers of God and to demolish the edifice of faith and to tear apart the Books of Allah. Allah had promised that he would be slain in the latter days and that virtue would prevail against vice and rebellion and that the whole earth will be changed and most men will turn to the Gracious One and that the earth will be illumined by the light of its Lord and hearts will be rescued from the darkness of Satan. That indeed is the execution of falsehood and the death of the Dissembler and the slaughter of this reptile.

The Dissembler is not an individual

Do they allege that the Dissembler is an individual who will be slain at a specified time? Indeed not! In fact he is Satan the rejected, the source of all evil, who is destined to be destroyed in the latter days, through the dissipation of ignorance and the annihilation of evil. This is the promise of Allah that is bound to be fulfilled as indicated in His word: Satan, the rejected. This prophecy of our Lord has thus been fulfilled with truth and justice in this age. Allah has looked upon Islam with mercy after it had been afflicted with calamities and tribulations and has sent down His Messiah to slay this sneaking whisperer and to end once and for all this strife.

Satan was named *rajeem* (rejected, or stoned) by way of prophecy, for *rajm* means slaying, without a doubt. As it had been determined that the Dissembler would be destroyed during the age of the appearance of the glorious Messiah, God foretold this to comfort and reassure the people who feared the days of the spread of error (Ijazul Masih, pp. 79 to 87).

Meaning of the Fatiha

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful. God whose name is Allah is worthy of every kind of praise and all praise pertains only to His glory, for, He is the Creator-Sustainer of all the worlds: He is the Gracious; He is the Merciful and He is Master of the Day of Requital. (O Lord of perfect attributes) we worship Thee alone and seek help from Thee alone. Guide us along the straight path, the path of those who enjoy thy favour and save us from the ways of those who were afflicted in this world with Thy wrath, in the shape of plagues and other torments and save us also from the ways of those who though they have not suffered torment in this world but have strayed far away from the path of salvation and shall thus be afflicted with torment in the hereafter (Ayyamas Solh, p. 18).

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful.

This is the first verse of Surah Fatiha and also occurs at the beginning of the other Surahs of the Honoured Quran and occurs also at one place in another passage of the Noble Quran. No other verse is repeated so often in the Holy Quran. Since it has become traditional in Islam to recite this verse before starting on any enterprise, big or small, for the purpose of seeking divine blessings and help, it has become widely known among Muslims and non-Muslims, high and low, so much so, that one who is totally ignorant of all other verses of the Quran, is yet likely to be well-acquainted with this one.

Now, therefore, pay attention to the recital of some of the truths comprised in this verse. The principal purpose of the revelation of this verse is that man who is helpless and ignorant may be enlightened that Allah is the Mighty name of the Self-Existing Being Who comprises all perfect attributes, and is free from every weakness and defect and is alone worthy of worship, is without partner or peer, and is the source of all grace. This Mighty Name has many attributes of which two are mentioned in this verse, namely Rahman and Rahim. The

Divine word is revealed and its light and blessings radiate their beneficence by virtue of these two attributes.

Significance of *Rahmaniyyat*

The revelation of the Holy Word of Allah and its communication to mankind is by virtue of the Divine attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*. It is the characteristic of *Rahmaniyyat* that it is manifested on account of pure Divine grace and beneficence, without any reference to any preceding human effort. For instance, the sun, the moon, water, air, have all been created for the benefit of mankind by virtue of the Divine attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* and no one can claim that they have been created in consequence of any action or effort on his part. In the same way the Word of God that came down for the reformation and guidance of mankind owes its genesis to this very attribute and there is not a soul that can claim that the Holy Word of Allah that comprises the law and guidance was revealed as a reward for his conduct or effort or his piety or righteousness. There have been numberless pious and virtuous people devoted to a life of austerity and worship, but His Holy Word that comprised His commands and injunctions and enlightened His creatures about His purposes, was revealed only at certain times when it was most needed. It is true that the Holy Word of God descends only on those who possess a high degree of purity and righteousness, for the holy and the unholy can have no affinity. But it does not follow that purity and righteousness must ever attract the descent of the Holy Word. The revelation of Divine Law and guidance are contingent upon the urgency of the need. Whenever there has been need that the word of God should descend for the reformation of mankind, God, the Lord of Absolute Wisdom, has chosen to send down His word. The perfect word of God, comprising Divine law, however, is never sent down at any other time even though there be hundreds of thousands of men possessed of piety, purity and righteousness of a high order. Of course, many of the righteous are honoured with Divine communion which may even assume

verbal form, but that also has a purpose, not altogether identical with the purpose which is fulfilled by Divine law and guidance.

Revelation of Divine Law

The difference is that the revelation of Divine law is needed when the people of the world in consequence of misguidance and the pursuit of erroneous ways depart from the right course and to lead them aright a new law is called for, effective for the purpose of removing their afflictions and dispelling their gloom through the light of its perfect and healing exposition, and to provide the remedy needed to cure the distemper of the age. But Divine communion with saintly individuals is not in response to this great urgency and may be aimed at strengthening the individual in his steadfastness in an hour of tribulation and travail or giving him glad tidings for his good cheer or the like. But the perfect and Holy Word of God that descends on Messengers and Prophets of Allah, as explained above, is in response to the true need of the creatures of God for faith and guidance. In short, true and urgent need is the occasion of the descent of the Divine Word, even as when you see darkness enveloping the night entirely with light fading out totally, you perceive the proximity of the appearance of the new moon. In the same way, when utter darkness of misguidance spreads over the earth, inner wisdom perceives the imminence of the appearance of the spiritual new moon, or, when drought threatens havoc, the wise feel the descent of the rain of mercy is nigh. Just as God has assigned certain seasons for rain in certain regions when His creatures are in urgent need of it and it rains during these periods it is not to be concluded therefrom that people are especially devoted to divine worship and the practice of righteousness during those times and are given to sin, transgression and evil conduct during the rest of the year. Instead, it must be realised that those are the times when cultivators are in real need of rain which promotes growth of vegetation during the whole year. Similarly, the descent of the Divine Word comprising Divine

law and guidance is not due to the purity and piety of any individual i.e. the effective cause of its descent is not the extreme piety and purity of any person or his thirst or hunger for righteousness. In fact, as we have said, the cause of the descent of heavenly guidance is the genuine need for it; the darkness and gloom that envelope the world call for a light, so that it may shine forth to dissipate the darkness. There is a reference to this in the Holy Word of God the Supreme: . . . We have sent it (the Quran) down during the night of Determination. This night of Determination is a blessed night in its popular meaning. But the verse just cited also indicates that the darkness of sin prevailing in the world is like the night of Determination, because of its hidden beneficent possibilities. During such a period of darkness, sincerity and steadfastness and austerity and worship of God are esteemed highly by God. It was the same darkness that had reached its darkest pitch at the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), calling for the descent of a glorious light. It was the black gloom of that darkness that stirred the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* to compassion for gloom-ridden mankind and heavenly blessings inclined earthwards. That state of darkness thus became a cause of blessings for the earth and the world experienced, because of it, the most gorgeous manifestation of Divine mercy in the shape of the Perfect Man, the Chief of Prophets, who had no peer before or after. He came for the guidance of mankind and brought a bright Book, the like of which no man has seen. It was indeed a great manifestation of God's *Rahmaniyyat* (gratuitous grace) that He sent down such a glorious light, the Furqan, at the time of deepest gloom and darkness, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, which indeed put the truth on top and uprooted falsehood. It descended on the earth when it was spiritually dead and a great corruption had spread over land and sea. Through its descent, it brought about the consummation referred to by Allah in the words: Be sure Allah revives the earth after its death. It must always be remembered that this descent of the Holy Quran for the spiritual resusci-

tation of the world took place through a stirring of the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*. It is this attribute that, at times, is roused to take care of the famine-stricken and pours out the rain of mercy on parched land and the same attribute is roused to compassion for the spiritually starved and thirsty who are in the death grip of misdirection and misguidance and have run short of the diet of truth and righteousness which is the mainstay of spiritual life. Just as the Gracious Lord of Absolute Sovereignty provides food for the body at the time of need, so does He, through His perfect mercy, provide spiritual nourishment at the time of its true need. It is true indeed that His Word descends only on those exalted personages with whom He is well pleased and He addresses only those, honouring them with His Word, of whom He approves. But it does not follow that a heavenly book would descend on whomsoever He is pleased with irrespective of whether it is really needed or that He should, without cause, necessarily and constantly converse with one who has found favour with Him, on account of his righteous conduct. The Book of God is sent down only when there is a true need for it. In brief, the underlying cause of such Divine revelation is the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* and not the virtuous conduct of anyone. This is a cardinal truth which is ignored by our opponents.

It must be understood that it is through the operation of the attribute of *Rahimiyyat* that a person is enabled to take full advantage of the blessings and benefits of the Divine Word reaching his goal by means of its blessings and light and reaping the harvest of his efforts and diligence. That is why in Allah's Word His attribute of *Rahimiyyat* is mentioned immediately after His attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* so that it may be realized that the effectiveness of the Divine Word working upon human souls is brought about by the attribute of *Rahimiyyat*. The more a person discards inner and outer indifference and disinclination, and the deeper he grows in sincerity and righteousness and the closer he approaches to obedience through effort and application, the heavier is the impact of the Divine Word on his heart and in like proportion does he derive

benefit from its lights and cultivates in himself the characteristics of those who are acceptable to God.

Significance of Rahimiyyat

Another verity comprised in the verse: In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful; is that this verse is intended as introductory to the study of the Holy Quran and it is recited with the object of seeking help from the All-Perfect Lord of Whose attributes one is Rahman, that is, the One Who provides for the seeker of truth through His sheer grace and beneficence all the means of achieving benevolence, blessing and guidance; and whose other attribute is Rahim, that is, the One Who does not let go waste the effort of the diligent and the enterprising and rewards it beneficently, rendering to them the healthy fruits of their labour. These two attributes, *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat*, are indispensable for a successful prosecution of temporal as well as spiritual undertakings. A little reflection would show that both these attributes are in operation incessantly for the consummation of all projects in the world. God's *Rahmaniyyat* has been in operation from long before the advent of man. It is *Rahmaniyyat* that provides man with means and resources that lie far beyond his power and beyond the range of human devising and human planning to secure. Nor are these means and resources the reward or result of any human effort. They are bounties bestowed as pure grace and benevolence, as for instance, the advent of Prophets, the revelation of Books, rainfall, the sun, the moon, the air and the clouds, all carrying out their allotted functions and so also the advent of man in this world equipped with appropriate faculties and capacities and endowed with good health, security, leisure and a fairly long life. All these are manifestations of the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*. In contrast, the Divine attribute of *Rahimiyyat* manifests itself when man puts in motion his God-given faculties for the attainment of a certain objective and expends all the energy, vigor and strength that he can muster to that end, then, God, as is His way, does not

let his effort go waste and crowns it with the best result. It is indeed the sheer *Rahimiyyat* of God that infuses life into the lifeless efforts of man.

Distinction between *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat*

It should be recognised that the object in prescribing the recitation of this verse before starting the recitation of the Honoured Quran is that one should seek help and blessing from Allah, the Supreme Lord of all excellences, through His attributes of *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat*, so that He, the Perfect Lord may, through His *Rahmaniyyat*, provide the reader, out of pure grace and beneficence, with all the means needed by him prior to his own effort such as continuity of life, leisure, stability of faculties and vitality, security, peace of mind, tranquillity and freedom from disturbance, etc. All this emanates from the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*. Seeking blessing through the attribute of *Rahimiyyat* means that the Perfect Being may crown the effort of His servant with beneficent results, safeguard him against failure and bless his enterprise after his exertion and struggle. It is thus the highest virtue to seek blessings and support from the Supreme, through His attributes of *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat*, before reciting the Divine Word and indeed before embarking upon any enterprise. Thus does man realise the essence of Divine Unity, and his own lack of knowledge, information and insight and his error and helplessness, and then his gaze rests on the majesty and glory of the Source of all grace and, discovering himself an utter pauper and of no account whatever, he seeks grace from the Absolute Almighty, through His *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat*. These Divine attributes are in operation all the time, yet the Lord of All-Wisdom has ordained from the beginning that prayer and supplication should play a great role in the achievement of success in any endeavour. Divine grace most certainly helps resolve the difficulties of those who supplicate Him in perfect faith and utter sincerity. A person who is conscious of his own drawbacks and shortcomings, would

not embark upon any enterprise with irresponsible self-assurance. His appreciation of his standing as a creature and servant of Allah would impel him to supplicate Allah, the All-Powerful for help. This appreciation permeates every heart that has retained its innate simplicity and is aware of its own shortcomings. The true man, therefore, whose soul is free from all trace of arrogance and egotism and who is fully conscious of his own weakness and ineffectiveness and finds himself incapable of achieving anything and sees naught of power and strength in his own person, before he embarks on an enterprise finds his feeble spirit bent on seeking heavenly aid, his gaze resting all the time on the Almighty in all His perfection and glory, and His *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* appear to him as the mainsprings for the effective achievement of his purpose.

Therefore, before exercising his own imperfect and ineffective energies, he spontaneously seeks Divine help through the prayer: In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful. In response to his humility he is granted power from the power of God and strength from His strength and knowledge from His knowledge, so that He may thereby achieve success in his objective.

This does not need to be established through an involved process of reasoning. Every human soul possesses the capacity to understand this and the personal experiences of the true seekers of God furnish recurring testimony in support of it. Man's seeking help from God is not a fiction or absurdity or without firm basis in fact. It is an eternal truth that it has ever been the way of the Noble Lord Who is truly the Sustainer of the Universe and Who is, in reality, the propelling power running this vessel, that He lends His support to those who, rating themselves as unworthy and humble, seek it in their undertakings, with the recitation of His name. By turning to Him, in genuine humility and spirit of submissiveness, they partake of His succour.

In short, inaugurating every enterprise with a prayer for help from the Source of every grace, the Rahman and the Rahim, is the way of extreme reverence, submission, self-

negation and utter dependence, which is the first step in the direction of realisation of Divine Unity in human conduct. By strict adherence to it a person acquires childlike humility and is washed clean of every trace of the arrogance with which the minds of the haughty worldlings are filled. Believing in his own emptiness and the reality of Divine support, he partakes of that spiritual insight, which is the special portion of the godly. For sure, the more a person adopts this way and the more strictly he adheres to it and the more clearly he realizes that departing from it spells ruin, the clearer becomes his vision of Divine Unity, the more he is cleansed of the grime of pride and egotism and the soot of artificiality and affectation is washed off his face and it begins to radiate in the light of innocence and candour. This, in short, is the truth that step by step leads a person to the stage of Fanafillah (losing oneself in Allah) until he finds that he has nothing of his own and that whatever he receives is a bounty of God. As soon as a person starts treading along this path, he begins to perceive the perfume of Divine Unity, his head and heart being suffused with it, provided his spiritual faculty of smell is not damaged in any way.

Briefly then, a sincere seeker must, in the pursuit of this reality, confess his own utter ineffectiveness and helplessness, and bear witness to the Omnipotence and all-embracing graciousness of God. Both these affirmations are cherished objectives of God-seekers and a necessary pre-condition of the attainment of the state of self-negation. A simple illustration would be that even if rain should be widespread, only that one would get the benefit of it who takes his stand in the open under the downpour. Thus only the one who asks is given and only the one who seeks finds. Those who embark upon an enterprise relying solely on their own skill or wisdom or power and do not rely on God, the Most High, have little appreciation of the Almighty Who encompasses the Universe through His Power. Their faith is like a dry twig that is no longer bound to the green and blooming tree and has become so dehydrated that it cannot draw aught of its freshness, its blossoms and its

fruits. It has only an outward connection which can snap at the slightest stir in the air or at the jerk of a human hand. Such is the faith of the sophists and theorists who do not rely on the help of the All-Sustaining Lord and do not regard that Source of all grace whose name is Allah, as their indispensable support. They are as alien to the true concept of Divine Unity as darkness is to light. They fail to comprehend that placing oneself under the mighty power of the All-Powerful, truly believing oneself to be powerless and helpless is the last degree of submissiveness and the utmost realisation of the Unity of the Divine where the complete negation of self is achieved and one loses one's self and volition totally, affirming with a sincere heart faith in the overpowering might of God. No weight need be given to the argument that God having endowed us with appropriate faculties and capacities, it would be an act of supererogation to seek His help through prayer for success in an undertaking. It is true that God the Supreme has equipped us with certain faculties to perform certain tasks but His dominion over us has not thereby been abolished, nor has He parted from us, nor has He desired to exclude us from His support, nor has He permitted that we should be deprived of His limitless beneficence. Besides, whatever He has bestowed on us is limited and that which is begged of Him is without limit. Also we have not the power to attain to that which is beyond our capacities. A moment's reflection would bring home to us that we do not possess a single faculty or capacity which is complete and absolute in itself. Take for example our physical powers. They depend on our physical health which, again, is dependent on many factors, some of the earth and others of beyond the earth, but all of them beyond our control. We have made this simple observation for the benefit of an average person. But in truth the extent to which the All-Sustaining Lord, because of His being the Prime Cause, the Cause of all causes, encompasses our exterior and our interior and our beginning and our end, above us and below us, on our right and on our left, in our hearts and our lives and our souls

and the faculties thereof, is so vast and complex as to be far beyond human ken.

In short the only way to win the beneficence of the All-Sustaining Lord is to seek His protection with all one's might and strength and energy. Indeed this is not a new way but one inherent in human nature from the primeval stage. He who desires to tread the path of submissiveness adopts this course and he who seeks Divine beneficence travels along this road and he who seeks Divine mercy observes these primordial rules. These are not novel ordinances. It is a fundamental Divine law, a way of God recurring perpetually, the truth of which is brought home to every seeker of truth through repeated experience. Every person of understanding can realize how helpless and weak we are and how useless and ineffective without Divine help. If the Lord of Absolute Power were not to watch over us, taking care of us every moment, and, if His *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* were not to sustain us throughout, all our efforts would be vain and we would perish. Therefore, embarking on any enterprise, particularly before starting the recitation of the Heavenly Book which is, of all momentous undertakings, the finest and most delicate, the invocation of the name of the Lord of Absolute might, the Gracious (Rahman) the Compassionate (Rahim), with the purpose of seeking His help and His blessing, is a self-evident requirement to which we are perforce drawn. Truly this is the only channel for every blessing; namely, that the Almighty, the Cause of all causes, the Source of all grace, Who is called Allah in the idiom of the Holy Quran, may first be pleased to manifest His attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*, that is to say, to make available through His pure beneficence without the intervention of human effort, the wherewithal needed for human effort, and when the attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* has accomplished its function in perfect shape and full measure, and man, equipped by His grace with appropriate capacities has put forth his effort with due diligence, the Supreme God may next be pleased to manifest His attribute of *Rahimiyyat* by investing man's effort with the best results and saving his efforts from

loss by granting him his objective. It is because of this second attribute (*Rahimiyyat*) that it has been said that one who seeks finds, one who asks is granted, and one who knocks, it is opened to him. In other words, God never lets the labour and effort of anyone go in vain and through the grace of His *Rahimiyyat* one who seeks finds. In short, these truths are so self-evident that every one can attest them through personal experience. They cannot remain hidden from a person of average intelligence. Only those fail to perceive them whose vision is limited to the normal processes of physical laws, and who have no insight into the working of the mysterious determining factors under the direction of the Supreme Controller. They fail to take into account the numberless factors, physical and metaphysical, the operation of which affects the healthy functioning of the human body, and the procurement and regulation of which is not within the range of human power or capacity. There is only One, combining in Himself all the perfect excellences, the Creator of all the means from above the heavens to the nethermost regions, Who exercises full control and authority over them. The wise affirm this readily, as being self-evident. Those who excel them through personal experience of these matters enjoy subjective certitude thereof in the highest degree.

Acceptance of Prayer

An objection is raised that on occasion this seeking of Divine grace and beneficence proves of no avail and the seeker is frustrated. This reflection is generated by a misunderstanding of a great truth which is that God most certainly hears a supplication made in complete sincerity of spirit and helps the seeker in an appropriate manner, on the basis of His perfect knowledge and wisdom. At times, it may happen that the supplication lacks sincerity and humility of spirit. The suppliant may lack faith, the words of the supplication being mere sounds, the heart of the supplicant indifferent. It may also be that the prayer is heard, the petition is granted in the manner

most appropriate and beneficial for the supplicant in God's knowledge and wisdom. A supplicant who does not appreciate the hidden beneficence of God, owing to lack of knowledge and because of his ignorance, may feel frustrated, in utter disregard of the message of the verse: It may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you and it may be that you desire a thing which is harmful for you. Allah knows the true nature of things and you know not (2.217).

It is thus clear that a grand truth is proclaimed in *Bismillah ir Rahmanir Rahim*. It provides an excellent means for fostering of the realisation of Divine Unity and the relationship subsisting between man and his Maker. No other scripture presents its equal. Should any one make a claim to the contrary, let him support his claim by setting forth from the particular scripture the truths set out above and those that follow.

Criticism of Bismillah refuted

We would deal here with an objection advanced against the literary merit of *Bismillah ir Rahmanir Rahim* by a couple of critics who know little or nothing of literary Arabic. The first of these is a Christian cleric, the Reverend Mr. Imaduddin, who has set out the objection in his book *Hidayatul Muslimeen*, and the second is a Hindu gentleman, Bawa Narain Singh, a pleader of Amritsar, who has, out of sheer bigotry, copied the objection in his journal *Vidya Prakashak*. Through an appraisal of the objection and its refutation a fair minded reader would be able to appreciate the lengths to which blind bigotry has pushed the opponents of the Quran so that bright light is accounted by them as darkness and perfume as evil smelling.

The objection is that Rahmanir Rahm is inelegant, and that the proper sequence would be Ar-Rahimar-Rahman. They argue that as Rahman connotes the all-embracing beneficence of Allah and Rahim connotes that Divine mercy which follows upon human effort, the latter is more restricted than the former and that, therefore, elegance of expression and propriety of

sequence demand that Rahim should precede Rahman, rather than the other way about as is the case in the Holy Quran. Now it is a well-known, well authenticated historical fact that, among other numerous excellences of the Holy Quran, every facet of its literary excellence has been extolled by the highest literary authorities on Arabic, contemporary, medieval and modern, Muslim and non-Muslim. Many were converted to Islam because they were convinced that the Holy Book was beyond and above human capacity. Even those who did not accept it as the Divine Word were so impressed that they described it as plain magic that could not be matched. The Quran itself affirms all this. The criticism we have mentioned is advanced by one who has not the capacity to write even two correct and cogent lines of Arabic and who in case of a dialogue between him and an Arab linguist would not be able to utter more than a few disconnected and ungrammatical phrases. Should any one doubt this, he would be welcome to carry out a test. The other fault-finder, his imitator, is totally ignorant of Arabic and is not well-versed even in Persian.

The Reverend Mr. Imaduddin does not seem to be aware that numerous Western Orientalists have rated high the elegance of the Quranic style. Apart from this, an intelligent person is bound to consider whether a book revealed to a person in his own language and hailed on all hands, including the author of one of the Seven Suspended Odes – the celebrated classical master-pieces of Arabic poetry – for the supreme elegance of its style, could be the subject of valid criticism at the hands of one who does not possess even elementary knowledge of the language. Such a person indulging in criticism of that type overreaches himself and merely exposes his own ignorance and lack of knowledge. We invite the Reverend Mr. Imaduddin to hold a 30-minute dialogue in Arabic with an Arab on any religious or secular topic so that the public may know whether he is capable of communicating his thoughts in simple idiomatic Arabic. We know for certain that he is not, and we are sure that were we to confront him with an Arab for a dialogue, he would not be able to relate to him even a

short story in simple Arabic. Should there be any doubt about this in any quarter, it is open to such a one to make a public test. We would undertake to find a qualified Arab for a meeting on an agreed date if the Reverend Mr. Imaduddin makes a request to that effect. We would invite a few qualified Hindus and some Muslim divines to participate in the test. Mr. Imaduddin should invite some of his Christian brethren to accompany him. He will be provided with a simple story and will be asked to narrate it in Arabic. His Arab rival will next be asked to narrate the same in his own language. If the umpires rule that Mr. Imaduddin's narration was made in elegant literary style, we shall concede to him the right to criticise Arab scholars and will also award him a cash prize of fifty rupees. On the other hand if the Reverend Mr. Imaduddin, instead of making an elegant presentation in fluent Arabic, makes a hash of the whole business through his incompetence and ignorance of Arabic or, fearing his exposure, just keeps silence and does not even publicly announce his unwillingness to go through with the test, we can but commit his case to Divine justice. We can affirm with complete confidence that strive as he might Mr. Imaduddin is not capable of complying with the test proposed by us. It is, therefore, no compliment to the intelligence and judgment of those Christian and Hindu gentlemen who have, solely on the authority of a person like the Reverend Mr. Imaduddin, begun to find fault with a book like the Holy Quran, revealed to the foremost personality among the Arabs, which has won encomiums from the highest literary authorities in the Arabic tongue, so much so that on its appearance the Seven Suspended Odes were removed from their place of honour in the Ka'aba, and the last surviving author of one of them paid his supreme homage to it by acclaiming it as the Word of God and submitting to its authority. Moreover, it is not correct at all to assert that literary elegance demands that the particular must always precede the general as predicated by Mr. Imaduddin. The context must be the ruling consideration in each case. In this case the precedence of Rahman over Rahim is most fitting

and proper as we hope to be able to demonstrate in due course. (Baraheen Ahmadiyyah, Vol. IV, pp. 347–364, Footnote 11).

Meaning of ism

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful. May Allah grant you the knowledge of His attributes and lead you on to the ways that please Him and guide you to the paths that have His approval. Know then that the word *ISM* that occurs in Bismillah is a derivative of *wasm* and *wasmun* in Arabic means the mark left by branding. In Arabic *ittasamar rajulu* is used when a person chooses for himself a mark of identification by means of which people distinguish him from others. *Simatul baeer* and *wisamul baeer* are also considered derivatives of *wasmun* and mean branding a special mark on a camel to serve as its distinguishing mark. The phrase *inni tawassumtu fihilkhaira wa ma raaituzzair*, i.e. I scanned his face and found only good in it, I perceived no trace of evil in it; is also derived from the same root. The word *wasmiyyun* is also derived from it; it means the first spring rain, for, when it falls, it leaves marks on the earth formed by the strong current of water, as springs carve out channels in their course. Similarly they call the earth *ardhun mausoomatun* when the first spring rain falls on it and by its flowering pleases the hearts of the cultivators. The word *mausimun* (season) is also a derivative of *wasmun* as, for instance, *mausimul hajj* (the season of Pilgrimage) and *mausimus suq* (market season) and other *mausims* (seasons): for, these are occasions when people gather in large numbers for some common purpose. Also the word *meesamun* is a derivative of *wasmun* and denotes beauty and good looks and is generally used for women. The Arabs used *wasmun* and its derivatives generally in a eulogistic sense whether relating to worldly welfare or to spiritual well-being. In popular parlance the *ism* (name) of a thing stands for its distinguishing mark but, in the view of the learned, it signifies its reality. It is a fact that the names given by Allah to things signify their properties. In this blessed verse, the names Allah,

Rahman and Rahim possess that characteristic. Each one of them denotes its particular properties and its nature. Allah is the name of the Being who combines in Himself all the excellences. Rahman and Rahim indicate that both these are attributes of Allah Who combines in Himself every kind of perfection and every kind of beauty. Again, the word Rahman has a particular meaning of its own which is not shared by the word Rahim and that is that by Divine command the beneficence of Rahman has extended to man and beast from time immemorial, by virtue of the dictates of Divine Wisdom in accord with the capacity of the recipient and not as a bounty in a uniform measure in all cases. In the operation of this attribute of grace (*Rahmaniyyat*) no effort on the part of man or beast plays any role. It is in fact the pure grace of Allah. It is a universal bounty that proceeds from God the Most High, which is totally independent of the effort of any imperfect or perfect person. In short, the grace of *Rahmaniyyat* is not the reward of any one's efforts nor a recognition of any right. On the contrary, it is God's special grace unrelated to obedience or want of it and this grace descends always by the command and will of Allah, independent of any worship, obedience, righteousness or self-denial. This grace is antecedent to the creation of man and beast and to any effort or supplication on their part. The beneficence of this grace has pervaded through every stage of existence and at all times and places, irrespective of obedience or disobedience. Do not you see the *Rahmaniyyat* of Allah, the Supreme, extending over both the virtuous and the vicious? The sun and the moon shed their light and lustre alike on the saint and the sinner. Allah has created everything fully equipped with its appropriate faculties and has charged Himself with the affairs of all. There is not a living creature treading the earth or in the heavens but He provides for it. He has raised for them trees bringing forth fruits, flowers and fragrance. This is a mercy that Allah prepared for His creatures before He created them and in this there is an admonition for the God-fearing. These gifts have been bestowed by Allah, the Compassionate, the Lord of creation, without reference to any

effort or merit or right of the donees. There are yet other gifts bestowed by the Lord of Majesty which are beyond computation, like the means of sustaining health created by Him and the variety of devices and means of healing for every kind of ailment and the commissioning of Prophets and revelation of Books through Messengers. All this is evidence of the *Rahmaniyyat* of our Most Compassionate Lord. This is pure grace and not in response to the works of a worker nor in answer to a distress call or a prayer.

But *Rahimiyyat* is a special beneficence, distinct from the grace of *Rahmaniyyat* and concerned exclusively with the evolution of the human species and the perfection of human nature. It is contingent upon effort and righteous activity and total suppression of selfish desires. This aspect of Divine mercy does not manifest itself except in response to the utmost effort in working righteousness and after purification of self and complete sincerity of conduct without the least ostentation and a readiness to suffer death for the sake of winning the pleasure of the Lord of glory. Truly fortunate are those who become the recipients of these bounties. They are true men; the rest are but animals.

Comprehensiveness of Rahman and Rahim

Here a question is raised which needs to be set down together with its answer so that those gifted with understanding may reflect on it. In Bismillah, Allah has chosen to mention only two of His attributes, Rahman and Rahim, out of all His numerous attributes and the verse does not mention any other Divine attribute; while His supraname Allah comprises all perfect Divine attributes, as they find mention in the Holy Scriptures, and the larger the number of Divine attributes that may be invoked the greater the blessing. The Bismillah thus demands that it should be invested with the honour of comprising numerous Divine attributes. This seems to follow also from the Holy Prophet's injunction that Bismillah should be recited before initiating any important measure. This verse is

the one oftenest to be recited by the tongues of the followers of the faith and is most often repeated in the Book of the Mighty Lord. What then is the wisdom and the philosophy underlying the omission of other Divine attributes in this blessed verse? The answer is that Allah chose to attach in this context to His Supersname the two Divine attributes that epitomize fully all His other great attributes and these two are Rahman and Rahim. Reason also points in the same direction. Allah manifests Himself in the universe at times as the Lover and at times as the Beloved, and these two attributes shed the light of the sun of Providence upon the earth of obedience. Allah in turn becomes the Beloved with the worshipper becoming the Seeker (lover) of this sought-after (beloved) and at times the worshipper (man) becomes the object of love (beloved) and God his Lover, choosing him as His objective. There is not the least doubt that human nature being endowed with love, friendliness and yearning, man yearns for a Beloved who should draw him towards Himself through manifestations of beauty and bounty and that he should have a loving and comforting Friend Who should stand by him in times of fear and distress, secure him against the failure of his effort and fulfil his hopes. Allah, therefore, determined upon granting man in full measure that which his nature demanded and to perfect His favour unto him through His vast bounty. He, therefore, chose to manifest Himself to man through His attributes of Rahman and Rahim. There is no doubt that these two attributes are a link between Divine Providence and human submission and by means of these two the circle of human insight into the Divine and human journey towards Him becomes complete. All other Divine attributes are comprehended in the refulgent light of these two attributes and are but drops in the vastness of their ocean. Again, just as Allah the Supreme determined for Himself that He should be for man both the Beloved and the Lover so He determined in respect of His most obedient servants that they too should be, for their fellow-beings, in their characters and dispositions, reflections of His Being, making these two attributes their

coverings and garments, so that submission may don the raiment of Providence and there should be left no deficiency in the spiritual evolution of man. He thus raised Prophets and Messengers as mirrors, some reflecting His attribute Rahman and others portraying His attribute Rahim so that they should be both seekers and sought, loving and loved, living in mutual accord and affection through His vast grace, granting to some of them a large share of the attribute of being loved and to others a large share of the attribute of loving. Thus did He determine through His vast grace and His eternal beneficence.

Significance of Muhammad and Ahmad

When the time of our master the Chief and the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad, approached, Allah, the Exalted and the Holy determined to unite the two attributes in one person and combined them in his person (on whom be numberless blessings and the peace of Allah). That is why He has made reference to the attributes of loving and being loved at the beginning of this Surah that it may be a clear indication of His determination to that effect. He, therefore, named our Prophet Muhammed and Ahmad, as He named Himself Rahman and Rahim, in this verse. This juxtaposition indicates that no one combines these two concepts to perfection in his person by way of reflection except our Chief, the choicest of creation (on whom be the peace and blessings of Allah). It is well-known that these two attributes are the highest among all the attributes of the Unique Lord. In fact, these two are the quintessence and the core of the reality of all His attributive names. Indeed they are yardsticks for the spiritual evolution of a seeker who strives after perfection through becoming a manifestation of Divine attributes. No one has been granted a complete measure of these two except our Holy Prophet, the culmination of the Prophetic dispensation. He has been given two names by the grace of the Lord of the heavens and the earth parallel to these two attributes, the first being Muhammad and the second Ahmad. The name Muhammad thus

donned the cloak of the attribute Rahman, manifesting himself in the raiment of glory and belovedness and has been praised exceedingly for his benefaction and beneficence. The name Ahmad appeared in the robe of the attribute Rahim and the role of lover and beauty by Allah's grace Who protects the believers with His support and help. Thus the two names of our Holy Prophet (on whom be the peace and blessings of Allah) are reflections of the two attributes of our Bounteous Lord, reflected in two mirrors facing one another.

Rahmaniyyat denotes the spontaneous bestowal of beneficence on every animate, man or other, without reference to any preceding effort on the part of the beneficiary, as pure favour. Such gratuitous favour, which is not in return of any service rendered by any creature, draws the hearts of believers to praise, glorification and thanksgiving; and they eulogize their Benefactor, offering praise with sincere hearts and true intent; thus the Rahman becomes Muhammad (altogether praiseworthy), without a doubt. The Bestower of bounties of diverse kinds upon the people, without any claim on their part, becomes the object of the adoration of all who are thus favoured and this is a quality which is ingrained in human nature. When adoration matches in perfection the perfection of the beneficence, it takes on the character of perfect love and the Benefactor veritably becomes Muhammad (beloved) the object of their love in the eyes of the admirers. This is the culmination of the attribute Rahman. Reflect deep, therefore, like the wise. It should thus be evident to all those who are gifted with insight that surely Rahman is Muhammad (the greatly praised) and equally certainly that Muhammad (the greatly praised) is Rahman and without a doubt the culmination of both is one and the same. Only the ignorant will deny this truth.

The nature of the attribute *Rahimiyyat* is the grant of rewards and bounties for true and sincere effort on the part of the inmates of mosques and not of the inmates of churches, so as to bring their effort to fruition through making good their shortcomings as may be done by helpers and supporters. There is no doubt that this type of graciousness is a response from

the Compassionate (Rahim) Allah to the *hamd* (praise) offered by His creatures. For, He would not send down such bounty on a creature except after he has rendered His praise in an appropriate way and He is pleased with his effort and determines that he has merited His all-embracing grace. Have you not observed that He does not honour with His acceptance the works of disbelievers, polytheists, hypocrites and the arrogant? On the contrary, He renders their labours vain and does not guide them to Himself and does not help them, and leaves them destitute. Assuredly, He would not turn to any one with *Rahimiyyat* and would not bring his effort to fruition with His support and His help, unless He was pleased with his conduct and tribute of praise which was deserving of His mercy. When Divine commendation reaches its point of perfection in response to perfection in the effort of the sincere votary, then Allah becomes Ahmad (the lover) and the worshipping servant becomes Muhammad (the beloved). Holy is Allah, the first of all Muhammads (beloveds) and the first of all Ahmads (lovers).

It is at this point that a righteous servant, devout in duties of obedience, becomes a favourite in the Divine Presence. Allah then praises him from His Throne and He praises not any unless he is loved by Him. In short, it is the culmination of *Rahmaniyyat* that makes Allah a Muhammad (the loved one) and object of adoration and makes a creature Ahmad (the lover), a seeker who is ever running after his besought. It is the culmination of *Rahimiyyat* that makes Allah an Ahmad (the lover) and makes the votary a Muhammad (the loved one). Now you can truly appreciate the high status of our Prophet (on whom be the peace and blessings of Allah), the great leader, for Allah named him Muhammad and Ahmad and did not call Jesus and Moses by these titles. Allah made him a manifestation of His attributes, Rahman and Rahim, for, His grace on him was great indeed. He set forth in Bismillah these two attributes of His so that people may realise that they stand for Allah as His sublime names and for His Prophet (on whom be the peace and blessings of Allah) as a robe of honour from His Presence. Allah named him Muham-

mad to indicate his quality of a loved one; and He named him Ahmad to indicate his quality of one loving and adoring. The name Muhammad was given because people do not praise highly and frequently any one unless such a one becomes the object of their love. The name Ahmad was given because no one praises highly and frequently unless he loves devotedly. There is no question, therefore, that the name Muhammad carries with it the sense of being loved with unfailing consistency, and similarly, the name Ahmad carries with it, by the grace of the Lord of bounties and gifts, the sense of loving with ardour. There is not the least doubt that our Prophet was named Muhammad, because Allah had determined to make him beloved in His own sight and in the eyes of the righteous; and by the same token, He named him Ahmad, since He had determined that he should be a lover of His and also a lover of the faithful believers. He is, therefore, Muhammad in one aspect and Ahmad in the other. One of these two names was by virtue of its perfect manifestation especially associated with one age and the other by the same token with another age. This double aspect is indicated in the Divine Word: Then he (Muhammad) drew nearer (to Allah) and He (Allah) drew nearer to him (Muhammad), and it was a case, as it were, of one chord serving two bows, or closer still (53.9-10).

Since the particularization of this widely-obeyed and devoutly-obeying Prophet, with these encomiums from the Lord of mankind, could be apprehended as giving rise to polytheistic tendencies (association of the Prophet with God in Divine attributes) as was the case with Jesus Christ who was adored in consequence of such a tendency, Allah determined to make the true followers of the Prophet also manifestations reflecting these two attributes so as to make it a recurring favour unto them, dispelling, at the same time, the notion of a specially-favoured person sharing in Divine attributes. He, accordingly, made the companions of the Holy Prophet and those who came after them, manifestations of the attribute Muhammad illustrating the Rahmanical characteristics, decreeing for them victory, and enriching them with

perpetual favours. He made the Promised Messiah manifestation of the attribute Ahmad, investing him with the grace and beauty of *Rahimiyyat* and put in his heart compassion and tenderness, adorning him with excellent moral qualities. This is the promised Mahdi (guide) concerning whom they contend and whom, even after witnessing the signs, they refuse to accept and thus adhere to falsehood and reject the truth. This is the Promised Messiah but they recognise him not; they look at him and yet perceive not the reality. The attributes Isa (Jesus) and Ahmad are identical in their nature and similar in disposition and in their spirit signify grace and renunciation of war. The attribute Muhammad signifies majesty and dominance. These two names, Muhammad and Ahmad, are reflections of Rahman and Rahim. Do you not realise that the attribute Rahman which is the source of the inner reality of Muhammadiyyat, calls for glory in the same way as it signifies the quality of being loved. It is by virtue of His Rahmaniyyat that the Supreme Lord has subdued all animals to the service of man, the cow, the goat, the camel, the mule and the sheep and permitted the slaughter and destruction of the lower species on an extensive scale for the support and protection of the human species. Thus the attribute Rahmaniyyat signifies domination and glory; but by the same token, it turns into mercy on the part of the Loved One for whomsoever He desires to confer favour upon. Myriads of germs in the water and in the air are destroyed for the benefit of man and numberless cattle are slaughtered to the same end.

Priority of Superior over Inferior

The Companions of the Holy Prophet were, in truth, manifestations of the power and majesty of Muhammadiyyat. They were called upon to kill those who had become beasts and wild cattle, in order to emancipate others from the prison of sin and rebellion and to lead them to virtue and guidance. It will thus be realised that the essence of Muhammadiyyat corresponds to the essence of Rahmaniyyat, there being no discrep-

ancy between its aspect of power and glory and its aspect of beneficence. In fact, Rahmaniyyat is the complete manifestation of Divine Majesty and Domination and it is a characteristic of Rahmaniyyat that the inferior be sacrificed for the benefit of the superior. This has been the way of Rahman (the Gracious One) since the beginning of creation. Do you not see how the bacteria infesting the wounds of camels are destroyed to save the lives of the camels and the camels are in turn slaughtered, so that man may enjoy their flesh, and make use of their hides, and process out of their wool robes for decoration and adornment? All this results from the operation of the attribute of Rahmaniyyat for the purpose of safeguarding man and beast. Thus as Rahman is the sought after (the Loved One) He is the Lord of Majesty, and the attribute Muhammad is a reflection of it. The Companions of the Holy Prophet inherited the attribute Muhammad by the grace of the Bountiful Lord and manifested the Majesty of Allah and slaughtered tyrants like cattle and beasts. In the same way the Promised Messiah inherited the attribute Ahmad, the reflection of Rahimiyyat and grace. Allah chose this name for him and his followers who are his spiritual family. The Promised Messiah is thus along with his followers the manifestation, by the command of Allah, of His Rahimiyyat and Ahmadiyyat, so that His promise concerning the appearance of a people who would rank as Companions of the Holy Prophet may be fulfilled. No one dare attempt frustration of the designs of Allah. This also illustrates the true manner of the manifestations of the Holy Prophethood. This is the purpose underlying the association of the attributes Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat with Bismillah, namely, that it may be an indication of the appearance of Muhammad and Ahmad and the manifestations thereof in the shape of the Companions of the Holy Prophet representing Rahmaniyyat and the Promised Messiah, foreshadowed to appear in the robe of Rahimiyyat and Ahmadiyyat.

We recapitulate here the substance of the meaning of Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim.

Perfect man is manifestation of Divine attributes

Know then that the noun Allah is substantive and none knows its meaning but the All-Knowing, the Omniscient God. Allah, the Supreme Lord, has, in this verse, referred to the essence of this name, indicating that Allah is the name of the Being Who possesses the two attributes, Rahmaniyyat (beneficence without reference to merit) and Rahimiyyat (beneficence incidental to faith and righteous effort). Both these are like clear water and agreeable nourishment proceeding from the spring of Rabubiyyat (Providence) and all the other attributes are like their branches, the substantive attributes being Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat. These two attributes reveal part of the mystery of the Supreme Being. Our Prophet, the guide to the path of righteousness, was granted a full measure of both, his name Muhammad being a reflection of Rahman and his name Ahmad being a reflection of Rahim. The secret underlying this is that man can not become perfect until he becomes a manifestation of Divine attributes. You realise by now that the culmination of all Divine attributes are those two attributes, namely, Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat. You also realise that Rahmaniyyat is a universal grace which is wholly spontaneous benevolence, its benefit extending to every one, believer and disbeliever, even to all species of life. But Rahimiyyat is a mercy manifested by the Best of Creators towards the Faithful, exclusive of the disbelievers and of beasts. It was thus necessary that Muhammad, the Perfect man, should reflect both these attributes. That is why he was named Muhammad and Ahmad by the Lord of the Universe and said Allah, in respect of him: Truly there has come to you a Messenger, from among yourselves; grievous is it on him that you should fall into trouble; ardently desirous is he of your welfare, being compassionate and full of mercy for the believers (9.128).

In applying the words Aziz and Hareeth to the Prophet Allah has indicated that he (peace be on him) reflected His attribute Rahman by virtue of His mighty grace and that he was in truth a mercy for the worlds, for all of them, for man

as well as beast and for the disbelievers as well as for the believers.

He then described the Prophet as compassionate and merciful towards the believers; and thus named him Rahim as is not hidden from the observant. He praised him and to exalt and honour him conferred on him high and excellent moral qualities as is set out in the Noble Quran. Should you want to know what this excellence of moral qualities is, then we would say: He is verily Rahman and Rahim and he (blessings be on him) had been granted these two lights when Adam was still in a state between water and clay, and he was the Prophet while there was no trace yet of Adam. Allah being Light, He determined to create a reflection of His Light; so He created Muhammad, one who is like a matchless pearl, and associated his two names Muhammad and Ahmad with His own two attributes Rahman and Rahim. Thus Muhammad excelled all those who came to Allah with a submissive heart. Both these names scintillate in the teachings of the Holy Quran.

Advent of Promised Messiah foretold

Our Prophet combines in himself the light of Moses and the light of Jesus as he combines in himself the two attributes of the Exalted Lord. This very composition called for the grant to him of such a marvellous status. It was because of this that Allah named him Muhammad and Ahmad. He verily inherited the light of His glory and the light of His grace and he is singular in this behalf. He has also been granted the status of being a loved one and the heart of one loving even as these are the attributes of the Lord of the Universe. He is the best of the most highly praised and also topmost of those who praise. Allah associated him with Himself in His two attributes, granting him a large measure of His two mercies and made him drink deep of these two springs and created him with His two hands (power and grace) until he became like the decanter which is filled with the wine of Divine love or like a niche holding a bright lamp; and like His two attributes Allah sent

down on him the Quran, combining in it both glory and grace, and compounding its narrative out of both these attributes and made it the essence of both the Torah and the Gospel and a mirror to exhibit the Countenance of the Lord of glory and grace. Then He granted his people a portion from this noble goblet and taught them through the purifying breath of this glorious pupil of the All-Knowing. Many of them drank of the fountain issuing from the attribute Muhammad that had sprung forth from the attribute Rahmaniyyat and others of them imbibed the spring flowing from the attribute Ahmad, representing the essence of Rahimiyyat and this was divinely decreed and appointed from the very beginning and had been promised through the lips of the Prophets that the manifestation of the attribute Ahmad would not shine forth in its perfection in any of its inheritors except the Promised Messiah, whom Allah would raise with the dawning of the day of judgment and the raising up of the faithful. On that day Allah would find the Muslims weak and helpless and Islam like a child abandoned in the wilderness. Then He would work wonders for them on His own, descending for their sake from heaven. At that hour the kingdom shall be His in the earth as it is in heaven. All falsehood shall be wiped out without smiting any necks and all material resources shall be cut off and all matters shall be referred back to the Sovereign of Sovereigns. This is a promise from the Lord, as true as the one that was made good during the latter period of the Israelites when Jesus son of Mary was raised among them. He propagated the faith without having to slay those who disobeyed the Lord of might. It had been determined in the decree of Allah the Most High, the All-Knowing that He would make the latter period of the Islamic dispensation like the latter days of the successors of Moses. That is why He made the end of its affair totally independent of any human help, making it a reflection of the true nature of His attribute *Master of the Day of Judgment*, as would become clear after a while.

Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat juxtaposed to Muhammadiyyat and Ahmadiyyat

The sum of this discourse is that our Prophet, the choicest of men, being the Seal of the Prophets and the purest of the pure and the most loved of all mankind by the Exalted Lord, Allah, the Holiest, determined to unite in his person His two greatest attributes and, therefore, He bestowed on him the names Muhammad and Ahmad as reflections of Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat. This is indicated in the words He has taught us in the Fatiha; Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help; meaning thereby that only a perfectly obedient servant is granted the reflection of the attributes of the Lord of the worlds, when his worship of Him has altogether suppressed his own self. You are aware that the perfection and culmination of Divine attributes is reached in His attributes Rahman and Rahim. That is why these two attributes are comprised in Bismillah. You are also aware that the names Muhammad and Ahmad are reflections of the attributes Rahman and Rahim and that they have been invested with all the excellences of the two great attributes of Allah, the All-Knowing, the Wise. There is, therefore, no doubt that Allah has made these two names manifestations of His two great attributes and reflections of His Divine disposition to illustrate the true nature of Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat, through the mirrors of Muhammadiyyat and Ahmadiyyat. Then since the perfect ones from among the followers of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) partake of his spirituality and are like the limbs of the essence of Prophethood, He determined that, in order to perpetuate the heritage of this Holy Prophet, they should inherit these two attributes of his, as He had made them inheritors of his spiritual lore. He, therefore, admitted the Companions of the Holy Prophet under the canopy of the attribute Muhammad, the reflection of Divine glory and admitted the Promised Messiah under the shade of the attribute Ahmad, the reflection of Divine grace. This rich bounty was bestowed on them only by way of reflection of Divine attributes

and thus in reality no one was associated as a partner with Him in His attributes. By this division of these two attributes Allah aimed at dividing the Muslim people into two sections, to the end that He made one section of them manifestations of Divine glory like Moses and these were the Companions of the Holy Prophet who readily staked their lives in battle; and He made the other group of them like Jesus the manifestations of Divine grace, and made them tender hearted and put peace in their minds and trained them in excellent moral qualities. This group is the Promised Messiah and those who follow him, women and men. Thus was fulfilled what Moses had predicted and also what Jesus had foretold in his sayings and thus was fulfilled the promise of the Most Powerful Lord. Moses foretold about the Companions who were to be representatives of the attributes of Muhammad, our chosen Prophet, and reflections of the Glory of Allah, the Supreme, in the words: They will be unyielding against the disbelievers (48.30).

Jesus foretold about 'the others from among them' and about the leader of this righteous group, the Messiah, the manifestation of Ahmad, the compassionate, the forbearing and the source of the grace of Allah the Compassionate (Rahim), the Forgiving, in the words: Like a seed that sends forth its sprout (48.30); which delights the tillers. Each of them prophesied in terms of his own individual affinities, each selecting the group that represented his own traits, and excellent moral qualities.

Description of Companions of Holy Prophet by Moses and Jesus

Moses, in the words: They will be unyielding against the disbelievers; had indicated the Companions who were favoured with the company of our Elect Prophet and gave proof of firm determination and steadfast persistence in the battle-field, proclaiming Allah's glory through their sharp sabres and thus became the manifestation of the attribute Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah, the Overpowering Lord, may blessings of

Allah and of the celestial beings and of the people of the earth from among the righteous and the virtuous, be on him!

Jesus indicated by his words: Like a seed that sends forth its sprout; the group from among them who has not yet joined them and their leader, the Messiah. Indeed, he mentioned the name Ahmad clearly. By the simile of the sprouting seed mentioned in the Honoured Quran he indicated that the Promised Messiah would appear as a tender plant, and not at all like something hard. It is another marvel of the Noble Quran that it mentioned the name of Ahmad as related by Jesus and mentioned the name of Muhammad as related by Moses so that the reader may realise that the Prophet of glory Moses, chose the name that resembled his own role, i.e., Muhammad, which comports glory and majesty; and similarly, Jesus chose the name Ahmad which comports grace and beauty, being himself a prophet of grace who was not granted aught of might or fighting. In short each of them indicated the one who resembled him completely. Keep well in mind this point, therefore, for, it will relieve you of many distracting notions by laying bare the truth after lifting the veil, through a full exposition of both the aspects of glory and of grace. Once you have assimilated this, you will have entered into the security and custody of Allah against every dissembler, and will be delivered from every error (Ijazul Masih, pp. 87-124).

The Zoroastrian scripture recites: In the name of the Eternal, Forgiving, Bountiful, Gracious, Just. This formula bears a superficial resemblance to *Bismillah-ir-Rahmanir Rahim*, but it fails to convey the grand philosophical concept which is set forth in the attributes *Rahman* and *Rahim*. Besides the name *Ezad* (Eternal) does not possess the comprehensiveness which is inherent in the name Allah. This formula of the Parsees thus bears no comparison with Bismillah. It appears to have been a later plagiarised addition. In any case its limitations show that it is man-made.

(Mina-nur-Rahman, marginal note relating to pages 4 and 5 and marginal note relating to page 18).

Multiplicity of Divine Attributes

Allah, the substantive name of the Supreme Lord, which combines in itself all perfect attributes, is the Great Name, importing vast blessings. But one who does not have Allah in mind can derive little benefit from it (Report of the Annual Conference (1897) page 98).

In the idiom of the Quran Allah is the name of the Being Whose excellences are the culmination of beauty and beneficence, and Who does not suffer from any shortcoming. In the Holy Quran the name Allah alone has been invested with all the attributes, thus stressing that the name Allah applies only to the Being Who combines in Himself all perfect attributes (Ayyamus Solh, p. 19).

Allah is the Being, Imperceptible, Above the reach of reason, Beyond of beyond, Finer than the finest towards Whom everything turns in true worship, which is extinction in love, that is apparent extinction, or in true extinction, which is death (Tuhfa Golarviyya, p. 103).

The name Allah is the Great Name of the Supreme Being (Tuhfa Golarviyya, p. 107).

Allah is the comprehensive possessor of all attributes and is the Great Name. The Great Name which comprehends all attributes is with the Holy Prophet, blessings and peace of Allah be on him and with his followers (Al-Hakam, Jan. 17, 1903).

The God that the Quran seeks men should believe in is the Being Who is free from every drawback and is the Lord of all perfect attributes. The word Allah applies to the Being Who suffers from no defect and possesses every excellence. Excellence is of two types, excellence in beauty and excellence in beneficence. Both types of excellence are comprehended in the word Allah. The names devised by the followers of other faiths for the Supreme Being are not so comprehensive as Allah. In fact, the very word Allah alone adequately disposes of the false deities of other faiths and of their alleged attributes (Al-Hakam, May 10, 1903).

You know well that Allah, by virtue of His attribute Rahman, confers on every creature, from among men and beasts, disbelievers and believers, every variety of bounty and gift, without reference to any act or effort on their part, qualifying them as worthy of it before the Great Benefactor, and there is little room for doubt that graciousness of this kind makes, at once, the benefactor an object of love. It is thus established that benevolence in the shape of Rahmaniyyat demonstrates in the eyes of the beneficiaries thereof the quality of being loved. As for the attribute Rahimiyyat, it is essentially inclined towards loving. Allah does not condescend to manifest Himself to any one of His Creatures through the grace of this attribute until He is pleased with his words and deeds as a believer (Ijazul Masih, p. 97, Footnote).

Allah, the Exalted, said of the Prophet: We have not sent thee but as a mercy for all the worlds (21.108). This can derive from the attribute Rahmaniyyat only, for Rahimiyyat is associated exclusively with only one class, that of the believers. (Ijazul Masih, page 114 Footnote.)

Next, the attribute Rahman is mentioned. The characteristic of this attribute is the satisfaction of all the natural needs of man without any prayer, supplication or effort on his part. As, for example, before a child is born everything needed for its survival and sustenance is already provided. The breasts of the mother secrete milk before a baby takes its birth. The sky, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the water, the air, all made by Him for the benefit of man, owe their origin to His attribute Rahmaniyyat. But followers of other faiths do not believe that He dispenses pure grace of His own accord (Al-Hakam, May 10, 1903).

Distinction between Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat

Al-Rahman means One Who grants of His own accord without reference to any deeds. The Sanatanist Hindus are among those who believe that everything originated with God. At the same time they add that everything is the consequence of

preceding conduct. According to them a person is born a male or a female because of his or her previous deeds. The same applies to every species, donkeys, monkeys, cats, etc. These people deny the grace of God. Can we hold that God Who made the sun before He made man and created air for breathing as also for carrying the human voice, did all this because of some deeds performed by men? These people have lost track of reality and are engrossed in disbelief. The truth is that all this is a manifestation of Allah's grace. There are many bounties which are not due to any deeds on the part of the beneficiaries and there are others that are connected with deeds like the duties of obedience which the worshippers and the pious carry out and for which they are rewarded (Al-Badr, January 9, 1908).

According to the Quran, the meaning of Rahman is One Who bestows not as a reward, nor in return for any service. Look at the system of the universe. There is the sun and there is the moon; there is corn and there is water and air and a variety of herbs to cure us of many ills. Can anyone point to the service rendered by him that earned this return? Whosoever cares to reflect will find that God is Rahman. All that is in the heavens and in the earth and in our bodies owes its origin to His Rahmaniyyat. When we were in the wombs of our mothers, the bounties that He favoured us with could not have been the reward of any of our deeds. The doctrine of the transmigration of souls is also incidentally refuted by this phenomenon. In fine, there are numberless bounties of God which cannot be weighed in any balance. One has to confess that He is Rahman (Gracious). There are many sects in our country that believe that all the bounties that man enjoys are rewards for his past deeds. The truth is that all this is due solely to the grace and Rahmaniyyat of God. No one can claim that it is a reward for his deeds (Al-Badr, June 25, 1908).

He says He is the Rahman, that is, He provides, of His sheer grace and not in return for any one's labour and even long before the birth of His creatures and before the commencement of their deeds, means of comfort for them, like the

sun, the moon, the earth and all the rest. Such bounty is called Rahmaniyyat in the Book of God and because of it the Supreme Being is called Rahman.

Then He says He is the Rahim, that is, He causes good results to follow on good deeds and would not nullify any one's works. Because of this, He is called Rahim and this attribute is termed Rahimiyyat (Report on Great Religious Conference, p. 123).

Striving is essential for achieving good results

Allah, the Supreme, has two attributes, Rahman and Rahim. He is Rahman, in the sense that He grants a pure nature to man appropriate for the purpose of seeking God; and He is Rahim in the sense that when one employs usefully one's God-given faculties, He blesses one's effort with goodly results. For seeking the benefit of Rahimiyyat it is incumbent on a person to strive. That is why He has assured us: We shall certainly lead along the paths that lead to Us, those who strive after Us (29.70). (Al-Hakam, January 10, 1903).

The meaning of Al-Rahim is that Allah, the Supreme, causes good results to follow upon good deeds. As, for example, the one who offers Prayer, observes fast, bestows in charity, is shown mercy in this world as well as in the hereafter. Allah says: Allah does not let go waste the effort of those who do good (9.120); and says in another place: He who does the least good shall see its good results (99.8). That is, God does not render void anybody's good deeds. He who does even the least good, gets its return (Al-Badr, July 3, 1903).

He is Rahim, that is, He requites deeds. There are some (even among the Muslims) who declare good works are superfluous. They have no use for prayers and fasting and say that if fortune favours them they will escape all ill. In other words, their attitude is whatever has to be shall be and that it is no use bothering about anything. Their number is very large. The most ignorant share this view. They leave everything to fate. They say they are not aspiring to be saints that they should

subject themselves to hardships. But Allah says: I am the Rahim. I will promote to high ranks those who act righteously and are devoted out of sincere love. All the saints and the righteous endured privations before this door was opened to them. The Holy Quran says: We shall guide along the paths that lead to Us those who strive after Us (29.70). The seeker finds. The one who endures hardship is always rewarded. Thus the attribute Rahim rebukes those who say that what is decreed must come to pass and that, therefore, worship is superfluous. Probably the same is the attitude of burglars and highway robbers and their secret thoughts run along the same lines (Al-Badr, January 9, 1908).

Allah has said in Surah Fatiha that He is Rahim, that is, He causes good results to follow upon appropriate effort. For instance, a peasant cultivates his land and irrigates it. Now, as the way of Allah is, He does not render vain the work of anyone. Indeed He bestows many grains in return for a single one. The crop might fail due to some hidden default or the rebellious ways of the cultivator, but this is rare (Al-Badr, June 25, 1908).

Muhammad (blessings and peace be on him) is a perfect manifestation of Rahmaniyyat, for, Muhammad means one greatly praised and Rahman means One Who bestows without reference to effort and without reference to prayer and without distinction between a believer and a disbeliever. It is thus obvious that one who bestows without being asked will be highly praised. Muhammad is therefore the reflection of Rahmaniyyat and Ahmad is the reflection of Rahimiyyat, for, Rahim means one who renders not vain any one's labour or effort and Ahmad means one who praises greatly. It is well understood that one who serves well earns the pleasure of the master and earns a reward for his hard work and is praised. Rahimiyyat is thus displayed through Ahmad. Allah, is, therefore, Muhammad (Rahman) and Ahmad (Rahim). In other words, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was a manifestation of the two glorious attributes of the

Supreme Lord, Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat (Al-Hakam, February 17, 1902).

Two Types of Mercy

Mercy (Rahm) is of two types. One is Rahmaniyyat and the other is Rahimiyyat. Rahmaniyyat is grace that started long before our coming into existence. For instance, Allah visualizing through His eternal knowledge created the kind of earth and heaven and earthly and heavenly objects that could be of use to us and are used by us. It is man who derives the utmost benefit from these objects. Sheep and goats and other animals that are in turn serviceable to man could hardly derive much permanent benefit from these objects. Even on the physical plane man consumes excellent food; prime quality meat is for men, bones and left-overs being for dogs. Physical pleasures are enjoyed by man and also by beasts but they are man's lot on a very high plane. Spiritual pleasures are for man alone. They are not even within the reach of animals.

There are then two types of mercy; one that created the necessary elements and other objects prior to our birth which are constantly serving us. These are due to the urge of *Rahmaniyyat*, antecedental to our existence, longing, or even our prayer. The second type of mercy is due to *Rahimiyyat* – when we pray, Allah the Supreme bestows. A little reflection will show that the law of nature is linked to prayer. Some of our contemporaries regard this as an innovation. I propose to dwell on the link that is established with God the Supreme through our Prayers.

When a baby cries and yells for milk in the grip of hunger milk suddenly surges up in the mother's breasts. The baby has not the least idea of prayer. How then do his cries draw milk so close to him? This is a matter of common experience. It is often the case that the mother does not even perceive the presence of milk in her breasts but the cries and moans of the baby suddenly draw it up. By the same token then will our cries unto Allah, the Exalted, fail to draw anything? Certainly

not. Indeed, every boon is granted. Only those lacking insight, the self-styled savants and philosophers fail to perceive it. If one keeps in mind the relationship between the baby and its mother when pondering the philosophy of prayer, one will find it easy to comprehend it. This kind of mercy teaches the lesson that compassion of this type is induced only by prayer. Ask and you will be given. Call on Me; I shall respond to you (40.61), is not mere words. It is embedded in human nature. Prayer is a human characteristic and responding to prayer is a Divine attribute. He who will not understand and will not believe clings to falsehood. The illustration of the child and the mother that we have cited helps to understand the philosophy of prayer. Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat are not separated one from the other. He who gives up one and pursues the other shall not receive. Rahmaniyyat by its very nature invests us with the capacity to avail ourselves of the graciousness of Rahimiyyat. He who does not recognise this lacks gratitude for the bounties bestowed through Rahmaniyyat. Thee alone do we worship, means we serve and worship Thee through all the means and material Thou hast granted us. Consider the gift of the tongue that is composed of nerves and muscles. If that were not so we would not be capable of speech or utterance. He granted us a tongue for prayer that could effectively express the thoughts of the mind. If we stop making use of the tongue for prayer, that would be our misfortune. There are many ailments that could put the tongue instantly out of commission, rendering the victim totally dumb. How marvellous is this Rahimiyyat then, that we have been endowed with tongues. Similarly, a disorder in the ears could render one incapable of hearing. The same is true of the heart and other organs and faculties. If they are diseased all feeling of humility and the capacity of thought and reflection are suspended. The faculties of a person afflicted with madness are rendered inoperative. Should we not, then, appreciate our God-given bounties? If we neglect the faculties and capacities that Allah, the Supreme, has bestowed upon us through His perfect grace, we would be guilty of ingratitude. Remember,

therefore, that if we make supplication without making proper use, at the same time, of our faculties and capacities, such prayer can be of no avail. Since we did not make use of the divine bounties already bestowed on us, how can we expect to derive benefit through another, namely, prayer (Report of the Annual Conference, 1897, pp. 149–150).

Divine mercy has initially been manifested to mankind in two forms. First the mercy that became available to man without any action on his part in the shape of the earth, the heaven, the sun, the moon, the stars, water, air, fire and all other bounties needed for the existence and survival of the human race. All these are, without a doubt, mercies for man, granted to him without reference to any merit or right as pure grace and benevolence, unrelated even to supplication on the part of man and in fact preceding his coming into being. These constitute a very great favour indeed, for the very life of man depends on them. Yet it is manifest that they do not follow upon any virtuous action on the part of man. Even Divine foreknowledge of human sin did not interdict the manifestation of this mercy. No believer in the theory of transmigration of souls or re-incarnation, however bigoted, dare assert that it is the result of man's labour that the earth was made for his comfort and that the sun and the moon were made to dispel its darkness; or that water and food-grains were made as rewards for some of his virtuous deeds or that the air he breathes was made to reward him for his piety and righteousness. For all these things had come into existence before the birth of man. Unless we assume their prior existence, we can scarcely imagine the existence of man. How can one possibly conceive that the objects on which man depended for his birth, existence and survival came into being after the birth of man? The excellent manner in which man's faculties and capacities have been developed and perfected from the beginning is proof of that special grace which is unrelated to any work, worship or effort on the part of man.

The other kind of mercy is the one that comes into operation in consequence of man's virtuous effort. When he prays with

humility his prayer is heard. When he cultivates his land with diligence the Divine mercy blesses the seed, so that a large quantity of grain is produced. Reflection would show that Divine mercy attends all our efforts, whether they be mundane or spiritual. Whenever we put in hard work in conformity with Divine laws, in pursuit of a temporal or a religious objective, we find Divine mercy attending us instantly, making our labour fruitful. These two kinds of mercy are indispensable for our very existence. Can any one question their existence? Indeed not. In truth they are the most evident manifestations that keep the whole system of our lives running.

Now then, when it is clear that for our growth and evolution the Almighty had set running the two springs of two mercies which, in fact, are His two attributes, in two forms for the fostering of our existence we should try to discover how they are designated in the Arabic language. Know then that in respect of the first kind of mercy, God the Supreme has been named Rahman in Arabic and in respect of the second kind of mercy He is named Rahim, in the Arabic language. To emphasize this distinction we have mentioned the word Rahman in the opening sentence of our Arabic Address. This shows that since this attribute of mercy was divided into two categories of Divine Law from the beginning, there are two basic words in Arabic to convey their meaning. It will be a very instructive method for a seeker after truth to take from the attributes and works of God so manifest in the chronicle of nature, a cue for discovering the subtle differences in the meanings of Arabic words, and to look for their distinguishing characteristics as demonstrated in the operation of the laws of nature in the basic words of the Arabic language. Wherever it is desired to demonstrate the distinction between the signification of two Arabic synonyms which have reference to Divine attributes or works, one should turn to the division of Divine attributes or Divine works as illustrated in the laws of nature. For, the real purpose of Arabic is to convey knowledge of the Divine as the purpose of the creation of man is that he

should know God and the best way to know the properties and the essence of an object is to keep its purpose in mind.

Mercy is of two types – one is designated *Rahmaniyyat* and the other *Rahimiyyat*. *Rahmaniyyat* is grace that preceded our birth and our very existence. For example, Allah, the Supreme, created the earth, the sky, the moon, the sun and other earthly and heavenly objects before our birth. All these are of use to us and are serving us. Even animals derive benefit from them but, since they too are of service to man and are used by him, one could say that ultimately it is man alone who derives benefit from everything. On the material side we observe that man consumes the finest variety of foods, choice meat is for man and bones and crumbs and bits are for dogs. Even thus animals share with man the benefit of material bounties to some degree but they have no share in spiritual bounties. There are thus two kinds of mercy – one that preceded our coming into existence and the other that is manifested through *Rahimiyyat* and this last is granted in answer to Prayer. It calls for action on man's part (*Al-Hakam*, Aug. 31, 1901).

Rahimiyyat stimulates hope and effort

Allah has mentioned *Rahim* as His attribute in the Quran. This means that He does not let go waste any one's work or effort. Indeed, He crowns them with results and achievement. If man did not believe that his labour and his work would produce results, he would grow indifferent and lazy. This attribute widens the horizon of human hope and acts as a powerful incentive towards good-deeds. It would be borne in mind that in the language of the Holy Quran, Allah, the Most High, is called *Rahim* in the sense that He hears the prayers and supplications of His creatures and accepts their good deeds and averts calamities and visitations and does not let go waste their works. *Rahmaniyyat* has a universal character. *Rahimiyyat* is concerned exclusively with man – other creatures

have not been granted the capacity for prayer, supplication and virtuous deeds. Man alone has been so endowed.

The difference between Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat is that the former does not call for prayer and the latter does. This is a distinctive badge of man. If man does not cultivate this quality he reduces himself to the level of beasts, even of stones.

This attribute constitutes by itself adequate rebuttal of all false doctrines. Some religions reject the idea of any advance or improvement in this life. How can an Arya Samajist believe in the perfect excellences of Allah, the Supreme, when he denies even His attribute of benevolence? Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan repudiated the efficacy of prayer, denying to man the beneficence he received by means of prayer (*Al-Hakam*, May 24, 1903).

When we study the Divine Law of nature, we clearly discern that whatever Allah has provided for His servants is divisible in two kinds. One consists of His bounties which precede the coming into existence of man and have nothing whatever to do with any effort on his part. For instance, He made the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, water, air and fire for the well-being and comfort of man. They preceded the coming into existence of man and his deeds. Indeed man came into being long after their emergence. This is the type of Divine mercy which is called Rahmaniyyat in the language of the Holy Quran, that is, a bounty that is not bestowed in return for man's virtuous deeds but is bestowed by way of pure grace.

The other kind of mercy is termed Rahimiyyat in the language of the Holy Quran, that is, the rewards and bounties that are bestowed on man in return for his so-called virtuous deeds (*Chashma Maarifat*, pp. 19-20).

The distinction between Rahmaniyyat and Rahimiyyat is that the former is unrelated to action and effort while the latter is contingent on them; but there is the possibility of human failure. Divine compassion seeks to cover it (*Al-Hakam*, Aug. 31. 1901).

The mercy of Allah, the Exalted, which is the portion of

man without any action or effort proceeding from him is named Rahmaniyyat. For instance, God created the universe. He made the sun. He made the moon. He made the stars. He made air, water and food-grains. He created curative herbs and drugs for our various ailments. In short, he bestowed, through His pure grace, thousands upon thousands of gifts and bounties without reference to any labour or service or work on our part. If man were to cast a discerning look around, he would perceive hundreds of thousands of such bounties. He would have no ground to deny, in fact, he would have to affirm, that all these gifts and provisions for comfort, existing long before our birth, are not the consequence of any activity on our part. Consider the earth and the sky and all that is therein and our own constitution and our condition in the wombs of our mothers and our present faculties which are not the fruits of any of our labours. This is not the place to discuss the doctrine of transmigration of souls. But it may be observed that Allah's gifts and bounties are so vast and numerous that they cannot be weighed in any balance. He made the moon, the sun, the earth and provided for all our requirements before our birth. Can any one suggest against which of our works should we balance these gifts?

One must, therefore, recognise that God is Rahman (Gracious) and that hundreds of thousands of His bounties, that we enjoy, are due to His Rahmaniyyat, not being the consequences of any of our deeds and that those who believe them to be the fruits of their antecedent labours do so because of short-sightedness and ignorance. The grace of Rahmaniyyat of God provides for our physical and spiritual development. No one can assert that they are the rewards of his deeds.

He is Rahim: He rewards the honest labour and diligence of man. A man puts in honest hard work. The way of Allah is that He would not let honest labour and hard work go waste. Instead He invests it with good results (Al-Hakam, July 14, 1908).

The Divine attribute Rahmaniyyat refutes those who hold

that God confers no bounty except as a reward for effort and action.

The Divine attribute Rahim, that is, He Who causes good results to follow upon beneficent action, refutes those who consider action as futile and irrelevant, and hold that prayer and fasting are of no account. Their attitude is that, if the Forgiving and Compassionate God so determines, one would go to heaven and if He decrees otherwise one would go to hell. Sometimes these people say they are not aspiring to be saints that they should devote themselves to worship and good works. Whatever of good they can achieve without any special effort they consider is all that is called for, the rest is immaterial. The Divine attribute Rahim makes it plain that whoso strives and is devoted to God in love, is set apart from others and becomes a favourite of His. Allah Himself guides such people as He has said: Those who strive in Our cause, We certainly guide them along the paths that lead to Us (29.70).

Divine Attribute operate in two ways

All the saints and Prophets and the elect of God who have appeared in the past, worked hard in the way of God and ultimately God opened to them His gates. But those who do not accept this Divine attribute believe that their actions are immaterial, that whatever is already decreed must come to pass; that their labours would make no difference and that whatever has to take place will surely happen. Perhaps thieves, highwaymen and other lawless people secretly hold to the same belief. To sum up: one must remember that the attributes of God operate in two ways; one, without reference to human action, such as the creation of the sun, the moon and the air and many other objects, by His perfect power, before our coming into being; two, in consequence of human effort and action. For instance, the pious and the righteous strive in His cause and receive their reward (Al-Hakam, January 2, 1908).

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Verse 2: *Al-hamdu-lillahe Rabbil Aalameen*

All praise is due to the Rightfully Worshipped Being, Who combines in Himself the aggregate of all Perfect excellences and whose name is Allah.

All perfect excellence belongs to Allah

In the language of the Noble Quran, Allah is that Perfect Being Who is rightfully adored, combining in Himself all perfect attributes, and free from every defect, the One without associate and the Source of all beneficence; for, Allah, the Exalted, has, in His Holy word, the Noble Quran, made His name Allah comprehensive of all His other names and attributes and has not accorded that status to any other name. Therefore, the name Allah has primacy over all the other names of which it is comprehensive. Since it is the aggregate of all names and attributes, it combines in itself all the Perfect qualities. The meaning of *Alhamdu lillahe* then is that every type of praise, whether relating to external aspects or internal realities, whether relating to inherent excellences or as manifested in natural phenomena, is due exclusively to Allah. No other shares in it. Whatever true praise or perfect excellence the wisdom of the wise can imagine or the minds of thinkers can contemplate belong to Allah the Supreme. There is no excellence of which sane reason can contemplate the possibility but which Allah lacks. In other words, reason is not able to conceive of any excellence which is not comprehended among Divine attributes. He has all the excellences that any one can imagine and He is Perfect in His Being, in His attributes and qualities, in every respect and is totally free from every defect and shortcoming (Baraheen Ahmadiyyah, Vol. IV, pp. 364-365, Footnote 11).

True hamd belongs to Being Who Exercises Benevolence deliberately

Hamd is praise which is offered in appreciation of commend-

able action of one worthy of praise: it also means lauding one who has done a favour of his own volition and according to his own choice. The true reality of *hamd* is the due only of the Being Who is the source of all grace and light and exercises beneficence deliberately and not in ignorance or under compulsion. All this is found only in Allah, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing. Indeed He is the true Benefactor and from Him proceed all benefits from beginning to end, and for Him is all glorification, in this world and in the hereafter and all praise that is bestowed on others reverts to Him.

The word *hamd*, used in this verse by the Lord of Glory, is the stem and is used both in the active and the passive sense, that is, it is used both for the subject and the object and it signifies that Allah receives perfect praise and also bestows it. This interpretation derives support from the fact that Allah has followed up the word *hamd* with the mention of attributes that entail this meaning in the view of the discerning. In the word *hamd*, Allah, the Holy, has signified the qualities that subsist in His Eternal Light. In defining *hamd*, He has treated it as a veiled reality that uncovers its face on the recitation of the attributes Rahman and Rahim; for Rahman signifies that *hamd* is used in the active sense and Rahim signifies that it is used in the passive sense, as is not hidden from those who possess knowledge.

Hamd is verbal praise offered for acts of Benevolence

Hamd is verbal praise which is offered to honour a mighty and noble being for His acts of beneficence. Perfect praise is the exclusive prerogative of the Lord of Majesty. The ultimate goal of every kind of glorification, be it in a small or a large measure, is our Lord Who guides the misguided and exalts the lowly and is the object of praise of all who are praiseworthy.

According to many scholars *shukr* (gratitude) differs from *hamd* in the sense that its application is restricted to beneficent qualities and *madh* differs from *hamd* in the sense that it

applies to involuntary beneficence also. This is fully appreciated by rhetoricians and men of letters.

Allah commenced His Book with *hamd* (glorification) and not with *shukr* (gratitude) or *madh* (praise) for *hamd* comprises the sense of the other two and is their substitute par excellence, in that it also comprehends correction, adornment and beautification. Since the idolators used to praise their idols without any justification, preferring the use of the word *hamd* for them, believing them to be sources of favours and bounties, and their mourning females vied with one another in boastful enumeration of the valorous deeds of their dead in battlefields and at banquets and praised them in the manner in which Allah, the Bestower, the Guardian, the Guarantor should be praised, the Fatiha is their rebuttal, and, of all who associate partners with Allah, and furnishes an admonition for those who use their judgment. In these words Allah reproaches the idol-worshippers, the Jews, the Christians and all those who associate partners with Allah, as if He was saying: Why do you glorify your associate-gods and why do you magnify your ancestors? Are they your lords who sustain you and your children? Or are they the compassionate ones who treat you mercifully, ward off calamities and avert evil and affliction, safeguard the good that has been your lot, or wash off the dirt of your sufferings and cure you of your diseases? Or are they the lords of the Day of Judgment? Nay, Allah alone sustains and shows mercy by granting happiness in full measure and by the grant of means of guidance and by answering prayers and by deliverance from enemies and He shall certainly reward those who work righteousness.

Cognition of Allah through Attributes

There is yet another direction in the word *hamd*, and that is that Allah, the Exalted and Lord of blessings, says: O My servants, know Me through My attributes and recognise Me through My excellences. I certainly do not suffer from any defect or shortcoming. Nay, My Praiseworthiness far exceeds

the highest limits of praise rendered by those who praise Me. You will not find in the heavens or in the earth any praiseworthy feature that is not to be found in My countenance. If you tried to count My excellences you would not be able to number them, even if you exerted yourselves hard and took pains like the dedicated. Search well then if you can light upon a praiseworthy merit that you do not find in Me or can discover an excellence that is beyond Me and My Presence. If you feel that way then you have no knowledge of Me and are bereft of vision. I am known through My glories and excellences and the heavy clouds saturated with My blessings indicate the plenitude of My bounties. Those who believe in Me as comprehending all perfect attributes and all excellences and attribute to Me whatever perfection they observe anywhere and whatever glory they can conceive of in the highest flights of their imagination and ascribe to Me every grandeur that their minds and vision may observe and every power that is reflected in the mirror of their thoughts, are indeed the people who are treading the paths that lead to true recognition of Me. They have grasped the Truth and they will be successful. Be up then (may Allah keep watch over you) and seek earnestly for the attributes of Allah, the Glorious, and reflect over them like deep thinkers.

Seek diligently and ponder every aspect of perfection searching for it in every overt and covert manifestation of this universe as a greedy person occupies himself incessantly with the pursuit of the object of his desires. When you arrive at the comprehension of the fullness of His perfection and begin to perceive His fragrance, it is then that you have found Him. This is a mystery that is unveiled only to those who are earnest seekers of guidance.

Reflection over Divine Attributes safeguards against errors

This then is your Lord, your Master, Perfect in Himself, comprehending all perfect excellences and worthy of all praise. He alone can know Him who deliberates deeply over the

Fatiha, seeking His help with a pining heart. For those who make a covenant with Allah in perfect sincerity, binding themselves fast in perpetual obedience to Him, and cleanse their minds of all rancour and ill-will, are admitted through the portals of this Sura and are endowed with inner sight.

The Fatiha also warns that whoso perishes for lack of his cognition of Allah, the Supreme, through his misconduct or by taking some other than Him as his god, in truth perishes because of his disregard of His excellences, his failure to contemplate His wonders and his neglect of all that is His due, as is the way of those who are the devotees of falsehood. Have you not considered that the Christians were invited to the Unity of God, but it was this distemper that brought about their ruin? Their erring selves and their beguiling passions drew them to the worship of a servant of Allah as their god. They drank deep of misguidance and ignorance and forgetting the excellences of Allah, the Supreme, and His attributes they invented for Him sons and daughters. Had they pondered the attributes of Allah, the Supreme, and the excellences that are worthy of Him, their insight would not have failed them and they would not have perished. That is why Allah, the Supreme, has warned us here that to safeguard ourselves against error in respect of a true concept of Him we must ponder His excellences and should seek out His appropriate attributes and should remind ourselves constantly of them, for they are far superior to every material gift and far more helpful than every kind of succour. We should reflect particularly over those attributes of His which have been manifested in His works, that is to say, His might, His power, His dominance and His bounteousness. Then be mindful of it and neglect it not. Be sure that all Providence belongs to Allah and all Rahmaniyyat belongs to Allah and all Rahimiyyat belongs to Allah and all sovereignty belongs to Allah on the Day of Judgment. Withhold not, therefore, your obedience from your Sustainer and be of those who submit themselves wholly to the One Lord. This verse also connotes that Allah, the Supreme, is far above every suspicion of weakness or shortcoming, such as the assumption

of a new attribute on the decline of another attribute, or a change in His status or dignity, or developing a defect, or any kind of renewal or rehabilitation. On the contrary, to Him belongs all worthiness of praise in the beginning and in the end, manifestly and covertly, for ever and evermore. Whoever says aught contrary to this repudiates the Truth and is a disbeliever.

Thus this verse refutes the Christians and the idol-worshippers, for they do not render to Allah His just due and do not look forward to the spreading of His light. Instead, they seek to stretch over Him coverings of darkness, to abandon Him in the paths of tribulation, to divest Him of perfect excellence and to associate with Him a number of His creatures. This is an error that has ruined them and this is the blind tradition that has proved a disaster for them. Reliance on the words of fabricators has destroyed them and they fancy they are following the truth. They allege that these notions are set forth in gospels vouched for by reliable authorities. They pay no attention to the blunders of their predecessors, the ignorance of their divines and their straying far away from the basic teachings of their Prophets and their wanderings uphill and down dale in distraction. One wonders at their lack of understanding and sense! They do not realise that Allah is Perfect in every respect, admitting of no defect, shortcoming, decrepitude, change or replacement. They attribute to Him a great many of these, ascribing to Him every failure, loss, defect and weakness, thus belying that which they had earlier affirmed, talking irrationally like one demented.

In the phrase *Alhamdu lillahe*, Muslims have been taught that when they are asked: Who is your Lord?, each one of them must say: My Lord is the One to Whom all praise is due and there is no excellence or power but is found in Him in perfection. Be not, therefore, of those who are apt to forget. Had the polytheists possessed but a flash of faith or been blessed with a sprinkle of insight, they would not have perished on account of their erroneous concept of the Sustainer of the Universe. On the contrary, they conceive of Him as one who

has grown senile after his spell of youth and has become dependent after having been independent and has been afflicted with old age and decrepitude and destitution until he rolls in the dust and is on the brink of ruin and has become utterly helpless (Karamatus Sadiqueen, pp. 64–65).

Perfection of beauty and perfection of Beneficence are unique qualities of the Supreme Being

This chapter begins with *Alhamdu lillahe* which means that all praise and all glorification belongs to the Being named Allah. This is inspired by the purpose that the worship of Allah, the Supreme, must be characterized by the fervour of the soul and a strong inclination, animated by love and ardour, which cannot well up, unless it is established that the object of worship is a Being, possessing all perfect excellences that inspire the heart spontaneously with admiration. It is obvious that comprehensive praise is inspired by two qualities, the perfection of beauty and the perfection of beneficence. If a being combines both these excellences, the heart melts and yearns for him with fervent devotion. The Holy Quran aims at impressing these two excellences of the Supreme Being upon the seekers after Truth, so that mankind may be drawn to that peerless and unique Being, and worship Him with fervent devotion and yearning. That is why in the very opening chapter, this charming description has been set forth to demonstrate the wonderful excellences of the Divine Being to whom the Quran invites mankind. Thus this surah begins with *Alhamdu lillahe*, which means that all praise belongs to the Being called Allah. In the terminology of the Quran, Allah is the Being all of Whose excellences are the culmination of beauty and beneficence, and Who suffers not from any shortcoming or defect. Allah alone comprises all attributes according to the Holy Quran, and thus the name Allah is justified for that Being alone in Whom all excellent attributes culminate. As, therefore, every kind of excellence centres in Him, the perfection of His beauty is established. It is because of this perfect beauty that

Allah, the Supreme, has been called Light in the Holy Quran: Allah is the Light of the heavens and of the earth (24.36). All light is a reflection of His light.

Four basic varieties of Beneficence

Again, Allah possesses many varieties of beneficence. Of these four are basic. According to their natural order, the first is the Sustainer of the Universe, as stated in Surah Fatiha. This means that the Providence of the Supreme God – that is, creating, sustaining and leading to the desired perfection – is operative and pervasive throughout the Universe, in the heavens, in the earth, in bodies, in souls, in the realm of substance and in the realm of essence and in animals, vegetables and minerals and all other realms. All are sustained by His Providence. Man receives sustenance from the spring of Divine Providence, from the early embryonic, even pre-embryonic state, to the time of death, and beyond in the stage of life in the hereafter. The Providence of God, because of its extending over all spirits and bodies and beasts and vegetables and minerals and the rest, has been called the most universal benevolence. For, every object that is extant is the beneficiary of this Divine attribute and every entity owes its very existence to it. Divine Providence is thus the creator of every existing thing and sustainer of every extant object, yet it is man that benefits most by it, for the entire creation of God is of service to man. Man has, therefore, been reminded that his God is the Lord and Providence of the Universe, so that the horizon of his hopes may be extended and he may believe that God, the Supreme, has immense beneficial powers and that He can bring into being an extensive variety of means for his benefit.

Second Beneficence

The next Divine attribute which may be termed general beneficence, is called Rahmaniyyat by virtue of which God is named Al-Rahman in Surah Fatiha. Rahman is the attribute of God

because of His granting to every animate, including man, a shape and a constitution appropriate to his or its role, i.e., He bestowed upon each one the faculties and powers that are best suited to the life it has to live, and equipped each with appropriate bodies and limbs making available to each all that was needed for their survival, for the birds and the beasts and for men, all that was suitable. Not only that, He created the celestial bodies and the earth thousands of years before the coming into existence of these creatures, to provide the means of sustenance and protection for them. This shows that the Rahmaniyyat of God, the Supreme, is not contingent on the work of any creature; it is, in fact, pure grace which came into operation long before the creation of these objects. Man enjoys the largest share of this beneficence, for everything serves to promote his welfare. That is why man has been reminded that his God is Rahman.

Third Beneficence

The third attribute of God, the Supreme, is Rahimiyyat, the third category of beneficence, by virtue of which God is called Al-Rahim in Surah Fatiha. God, the Most High, is called Rahim according to the Quran, when He accepts the prayers, humble supplications and good deeds of men and safeguards them against calamities and afflictions and loss of the fruits of their labours. This beneficence is called special grace because it has relation exclusively to man. God has not bestowed upon other animals the faculty of prayer and supplication or of righteous action. Only man has been endowed with this faculty. Man possesses the faculty of speech and is thus capable of attracting Divine grace by means of his supplications. Other creatures have not been endowed with that faculty. It should, therefore, be obvious that Prayer is a characteristic of human nature, having been embedded in it. Just as grace is received through the Divine attributes of Providence (Rabubiyyat) and Beneficence (Rahmaniyyat), so is one kind of grace received through the Divine attribute of Rahimiyyat, the only difference

being that for Rabubiyyat (Providence) and Rahmaniyyat (Graciousness) prayer is not a prerequisite, because, both these attributes are not related exclusively to man but are shared by him with beasts and birds and other parts of creation. For instance, the attribute Rabubiyyat (Providence) benefits all animates, vegetables and minerals and all earthly and celestial bodies, not a single object being beyond the orbit of its benevolence, unlike the Divine attribute Rahimiyyat which is the exclusive privilege of man. If man fails to avail himself of this attribute, he degrades himself to the level of beasts, even lower, as low as that of vegetables. Out of His four attributes of Beneficence, God has reserved one, Rahimiyyat, exclusively for man, and this attribute calls for prayer and supplication. It is thus emphasised that a particular type of grace is bestowed only in answer to prayer and supplication and is not attainable through any other means. This is the way and law of God admitting of no variation. It was because of this that all the Prophets (peace be on them) were constant in their prayers and supplications on behalf of their followers. Read the Torah and you will find how often the children of Israel were threatened with Divine affliction for their having offended God, but the punishment was averted through the prayers, supplications and prostrations of Moses, though time and again God had threatened to destroy them.

All this shows that prayer is not a meaningless form of worship that does not attract any kind of grace. This is the view of those who do not esteem God as highly as He is entitled to be esteemed, nor do they ponder over His word deeply, nor do they study the laws of nature. The truth is that prayer indeed attracts the grace that saves us and is named Rahimiyyat, impelling man towards continuous progress. It is by means of this grace that a true worshipper reaches the stage in which Allah becomes his guardian, his faith, acquiring the quality whereby he believes in Allah with such certainty as if he sees Him with his own eyes. Intercession is also rooted in the attribute of Rahimiyyat. It is Divine Rahimiyyat that

demands that the righteous should intercede for the wrongdoers.

Fourth Beneficence

The fourth category of Divine beneficence is His fourth grace which has been termed the most exclusive beneficence – it is His *Malikiyyate Yaumiddeen*, by virtue of which Allah is named in Surah Fatiha, *Malike Yaumiddeen* – Master of the Day of Judgment. It is distinguished from the attribute *Rahimiyyat* in that under *Rahimiyyat* through prayer and supplication the worshipper is deemed worthy of grace, but it is through the attribute *Malike Yaumiddeen* that the grace is bestowed. For example, a student through diligent application and hard work, learns the law of the land and passes the prescribed test in it. Qualifying for success through the blessings of *Rahimiyyat* is akin to passing an examination; attaining the objective or the position for which one has qualified is akin to attaining the grace awarded by virtue of the attribute *Malike Yaumiddeen* (the absolute Divine overlordship on the day of requital). These two attributes, *Rahimiyyat* and *Malikiyyate Yaumiddeen* indicate that the beneficence of *Rahimiyyat* accrues from the compassion of God, the Supreme, and the beneficence of *Malikiyyate Yaumiddeen* accrues from the grace of the Supreme Lord, and though the latter will make its full manifestation in the hereafter these four attributes are also constantly operative in this realm of earthly existence, within the limits of its sphere. *Rabubiyyat* (Providence) as a general rule, sows the seed of one kind of beneficence, *Rahmaniyyat* extends that beneficence manifestly to all animates while *Rahimiyyat* shows man at the terminal end of the elongated line of beneficence. Man is a being who does not ask for grace only through his conduct and condition; he supplicates for it verbally as well. *Malikiyyate Yaumiddin* grants the final reward of grace. These four attributes are in operation in this life. But as the sphere of earthly existence is narrow and since man is handicapped by ignorance, unawareness and shortsight-

edness, the immensely extensive spheres of these four attributes appear small as viewed from this life, as do the big spheres of stars like dots from a long distance. In the hereafter, however, these four attributes shall appear in full display and thus the true and perfect Judgment Day will be manifested in the hereafter. There the operation of each of these attributes will be displayed doubly, both manifestly and covertly. These four attributes will thus appear as eight. It is this phenomenon that has been described in the Divine Word that eight angels will uphold the Divine Throne on that Day (69.18), whereas four are upholding it here. This is a figure of speech. Since an angel has been created to attend on each Divine attribute, therefore, four angels have been mentioned as attending on four attributes. When eight attributes are manifested, they will be attended by eight angels and since they uphold the nature of Divine attributes in such a manner as if they were sustaining them, they are figuratively supporting them. Such delicate figures of speech abound in the Word of God, interpreting the spiritual realm in terms of physical life. In short, Allah possesses these four super-attributes which every Muslim must believe in. He who disregards the fruits and graces of prayer in fact believes in only three out of these four Divine attributes (Ayyamus Solh, pp. 18-23).

The Noble Quran begins with *Alhamdu lillahe* (All praise belongs to Allah), to draw attention to the name of the Holy Prophet, blessing and peace of Allah be on him (Al-Hakam, Feb. 17, 1901).

Muhammad and Ahmad are derivatives of *hamd* and these were two names of the Holy Prophet (blessings of Allah and His peace be on him). In other words, these were two manifestations of *hamd* (glorification) (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1901).

All praiseworthy qualities that are observed in the world as existing in created objects are, in fact, attributable to God and worthy of praise as such, for, any excellence that subsists in an object is in reality an emanation from the Fashioner. That is to say, the sun does not illumine the world, in truth God illumines it. Nor does the moon dispel the darkness of night,

in truth God dispels it. Nor do the clouds pour down water, in truth God sends it down. Similarly, what our eyes see is through the Divine gift of sight; and what our ears hear is through the Divine gift of the faculty of hearing, and what wisdom discovers is indeed through Him and whatever excellent qualities heavenly and earthly elements disclose and all the beauty and freshness that are manifested, are in reality attributable to the Creator who has clothed all these objects with perfection through His own excellence. He did not stop at that, but invested everything with an accompanying mercy which sustains and supports it. Further, He fosters everything to its highest point of perfection, thus demonstrating its full value and utility. Obviously, then, He is the true Benefactor and Bestower Who comprehends all excellences. It is to this that the Fatiha draws attention, in its opening verses: All praise belongs to Allah, the Creator-Sustainer of all the worlds, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment (Al-Hakam, June 24, 1904).

Ponder well Surah Fatiha, which is an epitome of the Holy Quran and is also called the Mother of the Book. In it are comprehended within a brief compass all the verities and wisdom of the Holy Quran. It begins with *Alhamdu lillahe* which means that all praise belongs to Allah. This signifies that all profit and all the weal of social life proceed from Allah, for, being worthy of every kind of praise, He alone can be the Bestower of all gifts; otherwise, it would follow that He does not deserve certain kinds of praise, which would clearly be blasphemy. How comprehensive is then the concept of the Unity of God comprehended in *Alhamdu lillahe*. It affirms that everything in the universe is in subjection to Allah, and is not in itself a source of profit or weal, and definitely and clearly impresses on the mind that all profit and weal truly emanate from God, the Supreme Lord, for, all praise belongs to Him alone. Hold fast, therefore, to God above every good and every gain. Nothing can avail save Him alone. Were it not for His pleasure, children could turn against their parents as indeed, in such case, they do (Al-Hakam, Aug. 31, 1901).

Islam is the only faith which presents God, the Supreme, as free from every blemish and possessing all perfect attributes. The Hindu masses believe their so-called gods are His partners in the realm of Providence, fancying them as constant intermeddlers in Divine works. Indeed, they conceive that their gods modify Allah's designs and frustrate His decrees. Some of them believe that the Supreme Creator has, at times, incarnated himself in the form of man or beast, even so unclean and disgusting as swine, and has been involved in all the filth and vileness that pertains to them and has been afflicted like them with hunger, thirst, pain, torture, fear, grief, disease and death, and has suffered disgrace, humiliation and helplessness. It is obvious that all such notions besmirch the noble attributes of the Supreme Lord, being highly derogatory to His eternal glory and majesty.

On the other hand their cultured brethren, the Arya Samajists, who imagine that they follow strictly the teaching of the Vedas, divest God of His attribute of Creation. They regard all souls as uncreated, self-existent and self-subsisting entities like God Himself. Sane reason rebels against the concept that the Lord and Master of the universe should not be the Creator and Sustainer of any portion of it, and that the world should be self-existing and not owe its existence to Him. Indeed the verdict of reason is clear. The perfect worthiness of all praise of the Omnipotent Lord demands that He should, of His own will, bring into existence all objects, being as much their Creator as their Sustainer, that the system of the universe should proceed from His Providence, that the power and might of creation should be part of His attributes and that He should be immune from birth and death. Reason rejects out of hand the negative concept that the whole of the universe that He holds in the grip of His power is not His creation and does not owe its existence to Him, nor depends on Him for its *esse in re* and its survival, and that He is neither its Creator nor its Sustainer, being devoid of the attribute and power of creation, and that He is not immune from the pangs of birth and the agony of death. That the Lord of the world is not its creator

and that the thousands of qualities replete with the highest wisdom that subsist in souls and bodies are self-existent, having no Creator and that God, Who is called the Sovereign of all these, is only a nominal master is an affront to reason. Nor would it tolerate the view that He should be deemed powerless to create or should be held weak and imperfect or that unbecoming and vile habits or characteristics should be attributed to Him, or that liability to death and pain and torment and lack of knowledge and ignorance be ascribed to Him. Reason proclaims that the Supreme Being must be free from all such defects and degrading disabilities and that perfection in excellence alone behoves Him, which is bound up with perfection of power. Should God, the Supreme, lack Omnipotence and should He lack the power to create and should He be unable to guard Himself against every kind of loss and defect, He would lack perfection in excellence and lacking such perfection, He would not be worthy of perfect praise.

God of Christians became dependent on an inadequate son

So much for the position of the Hindus and Aryas. As for the glory of the Supreme God which the Christians proclaim, its worth can be easily estimated. Is it permissible to hold that the Perfect, the Eternal, the Independent, the Self-Sufficient Being, Who had needed no assistance at any time for the fulfillment of His great designs, Who created the universe without the aid of a father or a son, Who bestowed all needed powers and faculties on souls and bodies, Who was the sole Protector, Sustainer and Determining Lord of the entire universe and brought into existence whatever was required for the sustenance of His creatures before their own coming into existence through the pure grace of His Rahmaniyyat, and created the sun, the moon and innumerable stars and the earth and thousands of bounties that the world abounds in, for mankind, by His pure grace, without any action having proceeded from man and without having to call in aid a son in all this grand process, that this perfect God should, in the latter

days, suffer a total loss of His glory and dominion and should become dependent upon a son for providing the means of salvation and forgiveness for mankind? The gospels, if they are to be depended upon, reveal that the son was so deficient that he had nothing in common with the Father, not even as much as the creation, like his Father, even of a single corner of the firmament or a region of the earth, if only to prove his divine origin. On the contrary, in Mark, Chapter 8, verse 12, his helplessness has been shown in his heaving a deep sigh over the insistence of his contemporaries on being shown a sign and saying: Verily, I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. Even when he was put upon the cross the Jews said if he could come back to life they would believe in him, but he did not come back to life before their eyes, thus refusing to furnish the slightest evidence in support of his divinity and omnipotence. If he did perform some miracles, they were of the same type as Prophets preceding him had shown on a much larger scale. In fact, even the water of a pool worked kindred wonders at the time (John, 5, 3-4). In short, he did nothing to show he was God. On the contrary, as Christians would have us believe, after being born to a woman, he went through so much humiliation, disgrace, helplessness and hardship as is the lot only of the most wretched and most unfortunate men. By staying a prisoner for a long while in the dark cell of the womb, involving himself in every detail of the process of the birth of a human child, without the least omission or remission and later, according to the gospels, confessing his lack of knowledge of things hidden, power and goodness he affirmed his simple humanity with all its attendant shortcomings and weaknesses. This humble man, who had been preceded by Prophets who were his superiors both in knowledge and practice, was without rhyme or reason proclaimed son of God, while even his teaching was but one facet of the teachings of Moses and was altogether incomplete. How could it be justifiable to forge a lie against the Eternal, the Ever-living Lord of Absolute Power that this one-time Perfect, Independent and Almighty Being became at last dependent on an inadequate

son, losing at once all His glory and greatness? It is not worthy of credence that any sensible person could permit such disparagement of the Perfect Lord, possessor of all perfect excellences.

Jesus was a humble human being

Shorn of absurd panegyrics and exaggerations, what can be gathered from the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus amounts only to this that he was, like other human beings a humble, weak and somewhat ineffective man and was one of the Prophets of Israel subordinate to and a follower of that great and eminent Prophet Moses. He did not rank as high as Moses, since his teaching was but an offshoot of a lofty code and did not constitute an independent dispensation. The Gospels record that he disclaimed goodness for himself and knowledge of the hidden and any kind of power and was a humble man. He prayed earnestly overnight before his impending arrest for deliverance and was tried by Satan as humble men are put to trial. This shows that he was altogether humble.

Having borne all the travail of a human birth, he suffered for long the pangs of hunger and thirst and pain and sickness. It is related that on one occasion being driven by hunger he had recourse to a fig tree but, since it was bare of fruit, he was chagrined and could not create even a few figs for his sustenance. In short, after enduring suffering and hard times for quite a while, he finally breathed his last, according to the Gospels, and passed away. One is impelled to enquire whether Almighty God should suffer from such imperfections? Is He then called the Holy and the Lord of glory because He is riddled with these shortcomings and inadequacies?

Again, how is it possible that of the five children borne by Mary, one should become son of God, even God Himself, and the remaining should have no share in Divinity? Assuming that, contrary to the normal course, a woman could give birth to God, should it not follow that all children borne by her should be gods or possess divine qualities, so that her holy

womb should be safeguarded against all human association, and should be the nursery of only divine children? If that were so the brothers and sisters of Jesus should have shared in godhead at least to some degree, and the mother of these five children should have been called Mother of gods, for, the five would derive their spiritual and physical qualities from her.

The Christians, in their zeal for glorification of Jesus, gave currency to many myths, but could not gloss over his imperfections as a human being. They recorded his human characteristics and limitations and yet made him the son of the Supreme God. The Christians and Jews are, according to their scriptures, all sons and children of God, and, according to one verse, even gods. Yet we find that the Buddhists have done better in their myth and fables. Having made Buddha a god they did not attribute to him a birth through the normal human process. They believe that Buddha was born through the mouth. It is a matter of regret that the Christians, having invented many myths, it did not occur to them to invent the story of the birth of Jesus through the mouth and thus to save their Lord from contamination; nor did it occur to them to keep him shielded from death which is the antithesis of Divinity. It did not occur to them to omit from the Gospels all the admissions made by Jesus of his humanity to the effect that he was neither good, nor possessed absolute wisdom, nor had he come on his own but was sent, nor did he know that which was hidden, nor did he possess power, nor could he himself accept prayers and that he was a humble creature of the progeny of Adam who had been sent by the Sovereign Lord of the Universe.

Brahmoos regard God as dumb, mute and without power of speech

In brief, the grand truth enshrined in *Alhamdu lillahe* is to be found in no religion other than the holy religion of Islam. Should, however, the Brahmos claim that they subscribe to this verity, that claim would be demonstrably untenable. The

Brahmos regard God, the Supreme, as dumb, mute, destitute of the power of speech, and incapable of revealing any knowledge concerning Himself, and divest Him of all attributes that must inhere in the True and Perfect Guide. They have not enough faith to believe that He has revealed His existence and His Divinity to the world of His own volition. On the contrary, they hold that the Supreme Being was hidden like a dead body or a piece of rock in some obscure corner and that the wise worked hard to seek Him and having discovered Him broadcast His Divinity to the world. It is thus obvious that like their brethren they too deny perfect excellence to the Unique Lord. On the contrary the attributes whereby He should be glorified are misappropriated by them for themselves (Baraheen-Ahmadiyyah, pp. 365-371, Footnote 11).

This distinctive honour belongs to the Holy Quran alone that, while it refutes all false faiths, exposing their errors, it sets forth true and genuine concepts. Surah Fatiha is a model in this respect. Every word of it embodies refutation of false religions. Take, for instance, *Alhamdu lillahe*, that is, all perfect praise of every description belongs to Allah alone. By the use of this expression it is intended to make clear that the Divine Being to Whom the Holy Quran invites mankind is the One Who is free from every drawback and possesses every perfect quality; for, the word Allah is applicable only to the One Who suffers from no disability. Excellence has two aspects, beauty and beneficence. Excellences of both types are comprised in this title. The names selected by other people for God, the Supreme, are not as comprehensive. This one word Allah refutes adequately the errors concerning the existence and attributes of God current among other faiths. Take, for instance, the Christians. The God they believe in is the son of a humble, frail woman. His name is Jesus and his mother bore him in travail like all other children. He was subject to afflictions, suffered the pangs of hunger and thirst, had to face difficulties and endure hardships, was the victim of all human ills and was in the end maltreated by the Jews and they put him on the cross. Now put this portrait of Jesus (whom the

Christians have made their god), as outlined in the Gospels, before any sage person. Will he affirm that without doubt he possessed all perfect attributes and suffered from no drawback? Indeed not! On the contrary he would be forced to concede that he was not free from normal human weaknesses and shortcomings. How then can a believer in *Alhamdu lillahe* accept such a crucified weak being for his god? As against this, the Quran invites men to the God who cannot be subject to any blemish. Now take the Arya Samaj. They assert that their God never created the particles of matter nor the souls but that all the particles of their bodies are independent beings like God, eternal and everliving and do not depend on Him for their subsistence or survival; in fact, in a manner of speaking, He has to depend on them to make His Divinity operative and that He is not the creator of anything. It is thus not a far-fetched conclusion that if He is not the Creator, He cannot be the Supreme Master either. They also believe that He is not the Lord or Providence or anything of the sort, for, whatever man receives is the recompense of his deeds and that he is not capable of receiving anything more than that.

Now how can sane reason reconcile itself to belief in a God suffering from so many defects? The expression *Alhamdu lillahe* thus refutes all the wrong and absurd views and notions entertained about God, the Supreme, by the followers of other faiths (Al-Hakam, May 10, 1903).

Rabb

According to Lisanal Arab and Tajul Urus, the two most authentic lexicons, the Arabic word *rabb* has seven connotations, namely: Malik (Master), Sayyad (Chief), Mudabbir (Determiner) Murabbi (Provider), Qayyum (Sustainer), Mun'im (Rewarder), Mutammim (Perfecter). Of these seven three are connotative of Divine greatness. One of these is Malik. In Arabic Malik is one whose hold on that which he owns is complete and who can use it in any way he pleases and who has sole title to it, with no one having any share in it. In

the fullest sense of its meaning it is not applicable to any one besides God, the Most High; for, complete hold, complete power of user and complete title are not admissible except for God, the Supreme (Minanur Rahman, pp.7-8 marginal note 18).

In His word *Rabbilalameen*, Allah, the Holy, points out that He is the Creator of everything and from Him has emanated everything that is in the heavens and in the earth. The word *alalameen* encompasses all that is found in the world, of the groups of the guided as well as the parties of the misguided and the lost. At times, the *alam* (realm) of misguidance and disbelief and transgression and excess flourishes until the earth becomes full of injustice and tyranny and people abandon the ways of Allah, the Lord of Majesty. They appreciate not the true nature of the relationship subsisting between the Creator and His creatures and do not render that which is due to Him as Provider and Sustainer. The world becomes dark like the blackest night and faith is pulverized under this affliction. Then Allah initiates another *alam* (realm) and the earth is replaced with another earth and a fresh decree descends from heaven and men are granted perceiving hearts and eloquent tongues to render thanks to Allah for His bounties. Then they make their selves lowly like frequented paths, before the Lord of Greatness and run to Him in fear and hope, their eyes downcast with modesty and their faces turning wistfully to the Provider of all needs with a resolve in submissiveness that knocks at the very top of the heights. Such people are needed most when the nadir of misguidance has been reached and through degradation of their condition people turn into beasts and animals. It is at this moment that Divine compassion and His eternal favour urge that a person be raised in heaven, who should dispel darkness and demolish that which Satan has built and raised up. Then an Imam (leader) descends from the Rahman (the Gracious One) to fight the armies of Satan and these two forces join battle – only those perceive them who are gifted with insight – until falsehood is fettered and its mirage-like reasoning is obliterated. That Imam dominates the

enemy and lends constant support to the rightly guided, raising aloft the banners of guidance, reviving the seasons and gatherings of piety, until people come to realize that he has succeeded in capturing the ringleaders of disbelief, fastening hard their fetters and has rounded up the beasts of falsehood and has placed halters round their necks and has destroyed the structures of innovations, dismantling their domes and has consolidated the word of Faith, and strengthened its organisation and has reinforced the dominion of heaven and has closed every breach and has reburnished its glory and has straightened up its affairs and has tranquillized trembling hearts and has sealed up false tongues and has illumined dark minds and has renovated the dilapidated power. This is ever the way of God, until darkness is dispelled and misguidance fades away. At this point the enemy turn on their heels and pull down the tents they had pitched and unravel the knots they had tied.

The most honoured of all the worlds and the most marvellous of the whole of creation are the group of Prophets and Apostles and the righteous, the true servants of Allah, for they excel all the rest, in propagating righteousness, removing injustices, reforming conduct, wishing their own and all others well, inculcating peace and truthfulness, uprooting vice and evil, exhorting to virtue, forbidding unlawfulness, subduing passions, turning to the Lord of the obedient, disenchantment with new and old gains and gods, persisting in obedience to Allah with full strength and complete preparation, mounting assault on the progeny of Satan with mustered troops and organised bodies, withdrawing from the world for the sake of the Beloved Creator, exiling themselves from its verdant spots and abandoning its springs and meadows like emigrants and bending their heads in His Presence. They surely are a people whose eyes are overtaken by sleep while they are still absorbed in their love for Allah and in prayer for their people.

In the eyes of its votaries the world is beautiful and attractive, but in the eyes of these people (the Prophets and Apostles and the righteous and the true) it is more offensive than offal and

more evil-smelling than carrion. They turn to Allah with all their minds and bend down before Him with full sincerity of heart. As the foundations of a structure have priority over windows and cupboards to be constructed, so have these exalted ones priority over all other classes of the virtuous in this world. I have been shown in a vision that the most perfect, the most honoured, the most God-conscious and the most knowledgeable of them all, is our elect Prophet, salutations and peace be on him both in this world and in the high heavens; and that the most unfortunate of the people are those whose tongues lashed out at him attacking him, finding fault with him and cavilling at him without being privy to Divine secrets. Many there are who are reviled in the earth but are commended by Allah in the heavens; and many there are who are accounted great in this abode who will be humiliated on the Day of Requital.

Allah, the Holiest, has indicated in His word Lord of the worlds (Rabbil Aalameen) that He is the Creator of everything and is praised highly in the heavens and in the earth and that His praise is celebrated constantly by His servants who are ever occupied with His remembrance. There is not a thing but celebrates His praise and glorifies Him all the time. When one of His servants discards his own desires, is emptied of his passions, is wholly centered in Allah, His ways and His worship, and knows His Lord Who nurtured him by His favour, he glorifies Him all the time loving Him with all his heart, even with all the particles of his body. Such a one also becomes an *alam* (a world) one of the *aalameen* (the worlds). It is thus that Abraham was named *Umma* (a people) in the Book of the Most Knowledgeable of all the knowledgeable (16.121). Of the *aalameen* there was an *aalam* when the Seal of the Prophets was raised. There was also to be another *aalam* when Allah was to bring forth the other party of the faithful, in the latter period, as a mercy for the seekers. There is an indication of that in His Word: To Him belongs all praise in the beginning and in the end (28.71). Here Allah has referred to two Ahmads describing them as His two great bounties. The first of them is Ahmad the Mustafa (the chosen), our elect Prophet (on

whom be the peace and blessings of Allah) and the other is Ahmad of the latter days, named Messiah and Mahdi by Allah, the Gracious. I have gathered this from His Word: All praise belongs to the Lord of the worlds. Everyone possessing understanding may well deliberate the point (Ijazul Masih, pp. 128–135).

Aalam means something concerning which report and information can be given and which constitutes evidence of the existence of a perfect, independent and unique Creator impelling the seeker to have faith in Him and linking him to the party of believers.

Aalamee covers, with the exception of the Creator Himself, every existing thing, whether in the realm of spirits or in the realm of bodies, whether of earthly creation or like the sun, the moon or other celestial objects, all of them being *aalameen* abiding under the providence of the Lord (Ijazul Masih, pp. 135–136).

Allah is Master of the World of Element and Command

The expression employed here is not *Khaliqilaalameen* (Creator of the worlds); but *Rabbil Aalameen* (the Lord Creator-Sustainer of the worlds) since some people deny His Providence and say that whatever they receive is the consequence of their actions. For instance, they allege that if some of them had not sinned in a particular fashion and not been born as cows and buffaloes in a previous incarnation there would then have been no milk. Since *Khalq* connotes fashioning and putting together, Divine wisdom employed here the expression *Rabbilaalameen* which is more comprehensive and is also designed to indicate that He is the Rabb of the world of elements and command also, for elements proceed from command and compounds are fashioned (Al-Hakam, Nov. 10, 1900).

God is the Lord of the entire universe. He is *Rabbilaalameen*, the Lord of the Universe and as He has provided all the material means for the physical requirements of all kinds of

creatures collectively, without discrimination, like food-grains, air, water, light and other things, so has He raised, time and again, reformers for every people, to warn and guide. The Holy Quran says: There has not been a people to whom a Warner has not been sent (35.25).

The image-worshippers believe their idols to be Divine personifications. The Holy Quran rejects this concept. It says at the very outset *Al-hamdu lillahe-Rabbil-aalameen*: All praise belongs to the Lord of the worlds. If the Creator and the creatures were identical and equal and there were no discrimination, the expression *Rabbil-aalameen* would not have been employed (Al-Hakam, Aug. 10, 1902).

All perfect attributes combined in Allah

As has been explained earlier, Allah is the Being who combines in Himself all the perfect attributes, is free from all imperfections, and is the very apex of beauty and beneficence so that people should gravitate to that peerless Being, worshipping Him with fervour and yearning of soul. Thus the attribute of beneficence has found its first expression in *Rabbil-aalameen* through which all creation derives benefit from the Grace of Providence. In contrast with this, all other religions reject this attribute. The Aryas believe that whatever man receives in this life is the fruit of his actions in some previous incarnation and that he does not at all partake of the Providence of God. For, since they renounce the fact that God is the Maker of their souls and believe that they do not depend on Him for their subsistence and support, they perforce reject the idea of Divine Providence. The Christians also do not believe in this attribute, for they look upon Jesus as their Lord, proclaiming: The Messiah is our Lord; and do not thus believe God to be the Creator of all that is in the Universe. They exclude Jesus from the operation of the grace of Providence, taking him as the Lord. Likewise the Hindu masses do not believe in this Divine attribute for they take everything as their Lord.

The Brahmos have no faith either in Divine Providence, for

they aver that whatever God had to make He made it once for all and that the entire Universe and its capacities that came into being all at once, are now operative independently and that Allah, the Most High, has no longer any say in the matter, nor can there be any change or alteration in them. According to them Allah's attributes are now completely suspended.

Thus the closer we study the different faiths and examine their beliefs, the more clearly we perceive that they do not believe God to be the Lord of Universal Providence (*Rabbil-aalameen*). This high attribute which is in evidence every moment, has been proclaimed by Islam alone which, by this one word, refutes all the erroneous and absurd notions of the followers of other religions in consequence of which they ignore or reject this Divine attribute (*Al-Hakam*, May 10, 1903).

God's grace and providence not confined to one people

Surah Fatiha begins with *Al-hamdulillahe-Rabbil-aalameen* which means that all holy and perfect attributes are exclusively possessed by God who is the Lord-Sustainer of the Universe. The word *aalameen* (worlds) covers all nations, all ages and all lands. This initial verse of the Holy Quran constitutes a refutation of those who seek to confine the Providence and grace of God to their own people, believing that other communities were not created by God, or that after creating them God had rejected them or had forgotten them. For instance, the Jews and Christians hold even today that all Prophets and Apostles were raised from among the children of Israel and that God was so wroth with other peoples that He did not take the least pity on them even when He found them in error or in a state of unawareness. The Gospel alleges that Jesus (peace be on him) observed that he had come only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Incidentally, if he was God, as is alleged by the Christians, and not only a Prophet in Israel, how is it that he disclaimed responsibility for the guidance of any except the lost sheep of the house of Israel? Was he, then, the God of only the Jews and Christians? In short, the Jews and

Christians believe that all Prophets and Apostles were raised from among the house of Israel and that the scriptures were revealed only to them. According to the Christian belief revelation and Divine speech ended with Jesus (peace be on him) and the Divine Word was then sealed up.

The Aryas adhere to a similar line of thought. Just as the Jews and Christians confine Prophethood and Divine revelation to the house of Israel, denying other peoples the honour of Divine address, the Aryas hold that Divine revelation and Divine speech always remained restricted within the frontiers of India (the Arya Varta). It was from this land that four *rishis* (saints) were chosen every time and that every time it was the Vedas that were revealed and that revelation is conveyed only in Vedic Sanskrit.

God has made provision for material and spiritual welfare of all peoples

In brief, these two peoples do not accept God as *Rabbil-aalameen*, the Lord of Universal Providence. Otherwise, there is no reason why, if He is *Rabbil-aalameen*, the Lord of Universal Providence, and not only the Lord of Israel or the Lord of the Aryas, He should attach Himself permanently to a particular people in a manner that could be construed as partiality or favouritism. To denounce such notions God, the Exalted, began the Holy Quran with the verse *Al-hamdu lillahe Rabbil-aalameen*, and in a number of places He made it clear in the Holy Quran that it was an error to hold that His Prophets had been raised only among a particular people or in a particular country and, that on the contrary, He had not neglected other peoples and other lands. The Holy Quran has expounded in diverse ways that as God has made provision for the material welfare of the people of all lands so has He made provision for the spiritual sustenance of every people. The Holy Quran says: There has not been a people but had a Prophet or Apostle sent to it (35.25). It is thus established that the true and perfect God whom every person must accept and

believe in is *Rabbil-aalameen*, the Lord of Universal Providence, His Providence not being confined to any particular people, or particular time or particular country. He is the Lord of all peoples, all ages, all places and the source of all grace and every physical and spiritual capacity proceeds from Him and everything that exists is sustained by Him. He is the support of every creature. His grace comprehends all peoples, all lands and all epochs. Thus it is so that no people may have cause to complain that God was gracious towards some people and not towards others, or that a particular people was given a Book so that it may be guided thereby and another was not, or that He manifested Himself through His words and revelation and signs in a certain age but remained hidden in another age. By extending His Providence universally He disposed of all such objections and exercised such universal benevolence that no people or age was denied the beneficence of His material and spiritual grace (Paigham Sulh, pp. 3-7).

All praise belongs to Allah, the Creator of the Universe. Some people do not believe God to be the Creator. For instance, the Aryas hold that souls and matter and all their qualities and capacities are self-existing like God and that God had no concern in the matter. The attribute *Rabbil-aalameen*, the Lord of the Universe, refutes them (Al-Badr, Jan. 9, 1908).

God is called *Rabbil-aalameen*. Rabb means the Sustainer. He sustains both the spiritual and the physical realms. If He had not endowed man with appropriate capacities he would not have been able to derive benefits from His bounties. In the same way spiritual advance is not possible without His grace (Al-Badr, June 25, 1908).

God, the Exalted, says that it is He Who sustains us. No one could provide sustenance if there were no Divine sustenance. When God afflicts someone fatally no physician can avail. Consider this epidemic of bubonic plague. The medical authorities have striven hard to control it but it persists. The truth is that all good proceeds from God and it is He who dispels every kind of evil. He says *Al-hamdu lillahe-Rabbil-*

aalameen – all praise belongs to Allah alone and He is the only source of universal sustenance (Al-Badr, July 31, 1903).

Al-hamdu lillahe Rabbil-aalameen means that Allah is the Sustainer of all realms. His *rabubiyyat* (Providence) extends to all spheres (Jang-i-Muqaddas, p. 19).

All powers working in the Universe do not operate on their own, Divine power operates through them

It is beyond doubt that all the qualities and capacities with which the celestial bodies and earthly elements are temporarily invested are but a reflection of the spiritual power and attributes eternally possessed by God, the Supreme. Allah has made it plain to us that the sun and other bodies are nothing in themselves – it is His dominating Power that operates in them, as it were, from behind a screen. He makes the moon shed light in dark nights serving as a reflector for His light as He illumines dark hearts, entering them and speaking to man inside him. He manifests a glorious light by His power through the instrumentality of the sun and makes manifest His multifarious designs in various ways. It is His power that descends from the sky in the form of rain and revives and refreshes the dry earth and provides drink for the thirsty. It is His Power that invests fire with the quality of combustion and invests the air with the quality to refresh life, make flowers blossom forth, lift clouds and convey sound. It is His Power that enables the earth to carry on its back man and beast. Then, are all these things God? Indeed not; they are only created things. But Divine power manifests itself through them as the power of the hand manifests itself through the pen. We say the pen writes but, in fact, it is the hand and not the pen that does the writing. A piece of iron which is left in the fire for a time assumes the qualities of fire and we say that it burns and emits light; but these are not its own properties, they are the properties of fire. By the same token it is true that all the heavenly bodies and earthly elements, indeed every particle in the lower and upper spheres that is visible and perceptible, all of them

are, by virtue of the various properties that are found in them, so many names and attributes of God. It is the power of God that manifests itself through them. These are all His words which His power made manifest in different forms. One not aware might ask how did the words of God acquire material shape? Did God suffer diminution by sending them forth? A magnifying glass, by reflecting the rays of the sun, may ignite a fire, but that causes no diminution in the power of the sun. Fruits are fostered and ripen under moonbeams but that does not wear down the moon.

This is the truth that furnishes insight into Divine working and is at the centre of all spiritual phenomena that the universe has come into existence through the words of God. The Holy Quran having taught us this it seems to me possible that the acclamation by the Vedas of fire, air, sun, etc., signifies that Divine Power works through them so mightily that they are mere shells and He is the reality behind them; that all their properties are derived from Him and that thus He may be called fire and water and air, for all their operations are not theirs but His and all their powers and qualities do not belong to them but to Him. The verse *Al-hamdu lillahe Rabbil-aalameen* of Surah Fatiha indicates that all the forces in operation in the heavens and the earth in various shapes and forms to ensure the proper running of the universe do not operate on their own, but that Divine power operates through them. The same idea is expressed in another verse (27.45), that the world is like a palace with floors paved with transparent glass, under which runs a strong current of water. An unaware person ignores the glass and is afraid to step in lest he should tumble into the swift current. In 17.71 it is stated: We carry them in their voyagings over land and water; which also conveys the same idea, namely, that mounts and vessels are only the visible means of carriage, and that it is Divine Power which is the real carrier (Naseeme Davat, pp. 56-59).

The expression *Rabbil-aalameen* is most comprehensive. If it were established that any of the heavenly bodies are inhabited

their habitations and their dwellers would be covered by this expression (Kishti Nooh, p. 38, Footnote).

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ مَلِكُ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ۝

Verses 3-4: Most Gracious, Ever Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment

Malike Yaumiddeen means that all recompense is in God's hands. He has not withdrawn Himself from the governance of the universe committing it to some vicegerent with all authority to award recompense here and hereafter (Islami Usul ki Philosophy, p. 51).

The word Malik (Master) negatives all rights in the subject. It is applicable in its fullest meaning to God alone, for He alone is the complete Master. One who acknowledges someone as the master of his life and substance affirms that he himself has no right whatsoever over his life and property and that everything belongs to the master (Malik) (Chashma Maarifat, p. 15).

To punish every default is incompatible with the Divine attributes of forgiveness and forbearance. He is the Master (Malik) and not a mere magistrate or judge. He has named Himself Malik (Master) in the very opening chapter of the Holy Quran, in the phrase *Malike Yaumiddeen*, meaning that He has full authority to dispense reward and punishment. It is obvious that no one can be truly called Master (Malik) unless he has the power to punish or pardon as he may determine (Chashmae Maarifat, p. 16).

In the Holy Quran He has also been named *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Judgment). A person may be well off but it is quite possible that birds and beasts may be happier than him. This world is a realm of trial. For its consequences and recompense there is another realm. He has promised happiness in the hereafter in recompense for the hardships endured in this world. If someone questions His dispensation, the answer is that He possesses dominion and mastery. He does as He wills. There is no room for anyone to find fault with that which He does (Al-Hakam, May 31, 1908).

It is only the awe of Divine Majesty that can safeguard against sin. Once one realises that God is *Malike Yaumiddeen* – Dispenser of reward and punishment – and that His punishment is severe, that awesome consciousness would become a barrier against sin (Al-Hakam, Dec. 10, 1901).

Besides the day of greatest Dispensation there is continuous judgment in this life as well

Malike Yaumiddeen (Master of the Day of Judgment) does not signify that reward and punishment will be awarded only in the hereafter. The Holy Quran makes it clear that the Day of Judgment is the Day of the Greatest Dispensation and that there is a continuous judgment in this life also. Consider the verse: He will grant you a distinction (8.31) (Kishti Nooh, p. 39).

He has said: I am *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Judgment). Award of reward and punishment is in His hands alone. Requitall starts in this very life. A burglar may escape once or twice but he is sure to be caught in the end or to be punished in some other way. Indeed, it is enough punishment that though he commits his crimes to acquire wealth he continues poor and destitute and is humiliated through life. We have observed that whosoever is steadfast in virtue is not left without his reward and that he who does evil suffers evil. Adultery invites venereal disease and drunkenness brings on palsy or ulcers.

In brief, the bounties of God are numberless. Who bestowed on man the faculties and capacities he is born with? One who reflects would realise that all his faculties are under the dominion of Allah. Should He so determine a person's heart could fail in a moment, causing sudden death. But who chooses to die (Al-Badr, June 25, 1908)?

Malike Yaumiddeen refutes those who do not believe in resurrection. This has been explained in detail in several places in the Holy Quran. The difference between this Divine attribute and Rahimiyyat is that Rahimiyyat opens the way to success

through prayer and worship whereby a reward is earned and *Malike Yaumiddeen* confers that reward (Al-Hakam, May 24, 1904).

Malike Yaumiddeen means Master of the Day of reward and punishment. The atheists say there is no reward and no punishment. Those who do not believe in the divine attribute *Rahimiyyat* are indifferent towards good action but atheists deny the very existence of God and deliberately neglect good action (Al-Badr, Jan. 9, 1908).

God's grace manifests itself in four ways

In Surah Fatiha, Allah, the Exalted, has set forth His four principal attributes, namely, the Lord of Universal Providence (*Rabbil-aalameen*), Most Gracious (*Rahman*), Ever Merciful (*Rahim*), Master of the Day of Judgment (*Malike Yaumiddeen*), giving priority to the attribute Lord of Universal Providence (*Rabbil-aalameen*) and setting out *Rahman*, *Rahim*, *Malike Yaumiddeen* thereafter in that order. Now why did God, the Exalted, adopt that order? The answer is that that is their natural order, because these four attributes come into operation in that order. An intelligent observer can discover for himself that God's grace manifests itself in the world in four ways. The first is the most universal, that absolute benevolence which continually embraces and supports every animate and inanimate object from the highest heaven to the earth. The very coming into being of each thing from non-existence and its maturity into perfection is through the operation of this grace and no animate or inanimate object is outside its purview. All bodies and souls owe their existence to it, and everything receives its sustenance through it. This grace is the very breath of life of the entire universe. Were it cut off for one moment, the entire universe would perish. But for it nothing of creation would have come into existence. It has been termed *Rabubiyyat* in the Holy Quran and it is on its account that God has been called *Rabbil-aalameen*, the Lord of Universal Providence. As has been said in another place in

the Holy Quran: He is the Rabb of all things (6.165); meaning God is the Sustainer of everything and nothing in the universe is outside the sphere of His Providence (Rabubiyyat).

First and Second Categories of Divine Grace

In Surah Fatiha the attribute *Rabbil-aalameen* (Lord of Universal Providence) is mentioned as the first of all the attributes of beneficence: *Al-hamdu lillahe Rabbil-aalameen* (all praise is due to the Lord of Universal Providence). That is so, both because in the natural order the attribute of providence comes into operation before the other Divine attributes of beneficence and also because it is the most comprehensive, covering as it does everything, animate and inanimate. The next in order is the second category of grace which is general, the difference between the two being that the first is an all-embracing Providence by means of which the entire universe came into being and continues to be sustained and the latter is a special eternal grace which extends only to the animates. In other words, the special concern of the Divine for the entire animal kingdom has been called the general grace. The characteristic of this grace is that it extends to all members of the animal kingdom without reference to any merit or right of any of them, in proportion to their respective requirements, not being the recompense of any action on their part. It is because of this grace that every sentient being is alive, works, eats, drinks, feels secure against afflictions, and has his needs fulfilled. It is because of this grace that all the requirements of life for every animate and for the survival of its species have been made available. It is by the blessing of this grace that all that is needed for physical development has been provided and all that is needed for spiritual development by those who are gifted with spiritual faculties, has also been provided from the earliest times, according to their needs, through Divine revelation. In short through this grace of *Rahmaniyyat* man enjoys the fulfilment of millions of his wants. For his habitation there is the surface of the earth, for light there are the sun and the

moon, for breathing there is air, for drinking there is water, for eating there is a large variety of foodstuffs, for treatment of ills and ailments there are innumerable drugs and remedies, for wearing there are different kinds of apparel and for guidance there are Divine scriptures. No one can claim that these are the consequences of his actions or that he had been engaged in some virtuous pursuit in a previous incarnation in appreciation of which God has bestowed all these innumerable bounties upon mankind. It is thus established that this grace which manifests itself in thousands of ways for promoting the well-being of all animates is a gratuitous bounty unrelated to any action on the part of anyone. It is but the upsurge of Divine mercy so that every animate creature may attain his natural goal and may satisfy the urges inherent in his nature. The function of eternal bounty as manifested through this grace is to provide for the needs of all living creatures and to look after all that is good for them and that is harmful for them lest they perish or their capacities stay dormant. That the Divine Being possesses this attribute is manifestly established through a study of the law of nature. No sensible person would dispute the fact that all these objects like the sun, the moon, the earth and the elements that are the mainstay of life proceed from this very grace and that every animate, man and beast, believer and disbeliever, good and bad, is benefiting therefrom, according to his needs and not a single animate being is excluded from their scope. This grace is called *Rahmaniyyat* in the Holy Quran and by virtue of it the attribute Rahman is mentioned in Surah Fatiha immediately after Rabbil-alamin; *Al-hamdu lillahe Rabbil-aalameen Ar Rahman*. This attribute is mentioned at several other places also in the Holy Quran. For instance, in Chapter 25, verses 61–64 we find: When the disbelievers are invited to submit themselves to the Rahman, they declare their aversion in the retort: Who is this Rahman? Shall we submit to whatever thou biddest us? Tell them: Rahman is that source of blessings and of perpetual good, Who has made mansions in the heaven and has placed therein the sun as a lamp and the moon shedding lustre for all without

discrimination between believer and disbeliever; that Rahman made for you, that is, for the whole of mankind, day and night that alternate so that a seeker of insight may be instructed by the wisdom underlying the system and be relieved from the darkness of ignorance and neglect and he who is disposed to be grateful may render thanks for Divine bounties. The true worshippers of the Rahman are those who walk on the earth in humility and when the ignorant accost them roughly they answer back gently: Peace. In thus turning away wrath with gentleness and pronouncing blessings in return for vilification they reflect the Divine attribute of *Rahmaniyyat*, as the Rahman pours forth His grace on all His creatures, without discrimination of good and bad, through the sun, the moon, the earth and other innumerable bounties. Thus God, the Exalted, has made it clear that He is Rahman, in the sense that His mercy extends to every one, good and bad, without distinction. In 7.157 it is pointed out: My punishment is inflicted on whomsoever I adjudge as deserving of it, but My mercy encompasses everything. This also refers to His *Rahmaniyyat*. The same concept is expressed in 21.43: Ask them: Who could shield you by night and by day were it not for the Rahman? That is to say, it is because of His *Rahmaniyyat* that He gives respite to the disbelievers and the disobedient, that they may have the opportunity to repent, and does not seize them quickly. In 67.20 also, attention is drawn to His *Rahmaniyyat*: Ask the disbelievers and the disobedient: Have they not observed the birds flying above, spreading out their wings and then drawing them in? It is the Rahman who keeps them from falling. In other words, the grace of *Rahmaniyyat* is so comprehensive that even the birds of which two or three may be purchased for a penny sail joyfully and happily in the vast expanse of its beneficence. Since this grace is next in order after *Rububiyyat* (universal providence), Allah, the Exalted, has mentioned His attribute Rahman immediately after His attribute *Rabbil-aalameen*, to preserve the natural order between them.

Third Category of Divine Grace

The third category of grace is the special benevolence. The distinction between this and general benevolence is that it is not required of the recipient of general benevolence to conform his conduct to virtue or to pull himself out of the grip of dark barriers or to exert himself and put in any particular effort. On the contrary, God, the Exalted, extends this grace to every animate to the extent of his requirement, without supplication or effort on his part. But for special benevolence, effort, exertion, purification of heart, prayer and supplication and earnest direction of the mind towards Allah and every kind of appropriate striving are necessary conditions. It is only one who earnestly seeks this grace who receives it. It attends only those who work hard for it. This grace is also comprehended through a study of the law of nature. It is obvious that those who strive in the way of Allah and those who are indifferent towards it cannot be equal. Doubtless those who strive in the way of God with a sincere heart and keep away from every kind of darkness and mischief, become recipients of special grace. Because of this type of grace God, the Exalted, is called *Rahim* in the Holy Quran. Because the attribute *Rahimiyyat* is exclusive and conditional it ranks after the attribute *Rahmaniyyat*. *Rahmaniyyat* came into operation first and *Rahimiyyat* followed it and it was because of this natural order that it was mentioned after the attribute *Rahmaniyyat* in Surah Fatiha in the words *Ar-Rahman-ir-Rahim*. The attribute *Rahimiyyat* is mentioned in several passages of the Holy Quran as, for example, in 33.44 it is stated: Allah is *Rahim* towards the believers; meaning that the disbelievers and the rebellious have no part in it. It is noteworthy how God has here reserved the operation of the attribute *Rahimiyyat* for the believers but He has not anywhere indicated that He has reserved *Rahmaniyyat* for them. It is nowhere stated that He is *Rahman* for the believers. In fact the compassion that is especially reserved for the believers has been called *Rahimiyyat* every time. In 7.57 we are told: The *Rahimiyyat* (compassion)

of Allah is very close to those who do good. Again, in 2.219 it is stated: Towards those who believed and left their homes and discarded their personal desires for the sake of Allah and strove in the cause of Allah, for Allah's mercy, Allah is Most Forgiving, Compassionate. In other words, His *Rahimiyyat* attends those who seek it earnestly. There is none who sought it earnestly and did not achieve it. As the poet has put it:

What type of lover is he who fails to win the regard of the Beloved?

It is the yearning that is lacking, my master, not the Physician!

Fourth Category of Divine Grace

The fourth category of Divine grace is the most special grace. This aspect of grace does not manifest itself merely in response to effort and exertion. Its manifestation demands a total negation and utter annihilation of the dark and narrow realm of means and that the perfect might of the One and the only God should shine forth directly in its full splendour without the intermediary of any instrument. For, in respect of this ultimate grace the only addition and perfection that human wisdom can conceive of is that it should be manifested with the utmost clarity, excluding every possible doubt, reservation or imperfection, so that there should be no question concerning its deliberate bestowal on the part of the Gracious Bestower, nor concerning the reality and fullness of the grace, as a mercy. The munificence and requital of the Eternal Master should become manifest like the brightness of day. At the same time the recipient of grace should feel and realize with the highest degree of certitude that it is indeed the Sovereign of the kingdom Who has bestowed on him, by His will and command and special power, a mighty favour and a great delight and that in truth he is the recipient of full and lasting reward for his good deeds which is pure and superb, a prized and highly desired boon, and not any kind of test or trial. The grant of such perfect, superb and enduring grace is contingent on the

subject's migration from this imperfect, dim, dense, narrow, depressing, ephemeral and unstable realm. For, this grace is the culmination of the supreme manifestations of the unveiled Beauty of the Beneficent One, as an objective certainty transcending every degree of revelation, manifestation and certitude, without the least intervention of interpretative devices or means, with every degree of perfect cognisance emerging from potential into actual realisation. The manifestation of grace should be so clear and revealing as to bear Divine attestation that it is free from even a suspicion of trial or test. This manifestation of grace should further comprehend the highest and most refined pleasures, the pure and perfect quality of which should so completely absorb the heart and soul, the inside and outside, the body and life and every physical and spiritual capacity as should be beyond the power of reason, imagination or fancy to exceed. This world which is imperfect, unlovely, punishable, illusory, and has limited capacity is not suited to serve as a sphere for those grand manifestations, brilliant lights and eternal bounties, nor can it comprehend those full, perfect and enduring auroras. An altogether different realm is needed for the manifestation of that grace, totally independent of and free from the opaqueness of physical means, adequate to demonstrate the absolute and pure might of the Overpowering Unique Lord. Yet a foretaste of this most special grace is vouchsafed in this very life to those perfect persons who tread wholeheartedly along the path of righteousness and discarding all personal desires and inclinations devote themselves utterly to God. For these, in truth, die before death overtakes them and though they subsist in this world they have their being in the hereafter. Thus, as they wean their minds away from all temporalities and make a break with human ways and values and, turning their faces away from everything beside Allah, adopt a transcendent mode, the Beneficent Lord also treats them in like fashion and manifests His light to them in a manner in which it is not manifested to others except after death, and thus they become recipients in this very life of a portion of the light of this most special grace.

This grace is the most exclusive of all graces and is the culmination of them. Its recipient attains to the apex of beatitude and ever-lasting felicity which is the fountain head of all joys, and he who is debarred from this grace is condemned to everlasting hell. By virtue of this grace, Allah has named Himself *Malike Yaumiddeen* in the Holy Quran. The Judgment referred to here is the perfect requital defined in the Honoured Quran. That perfect requital, however, demands a perfect manifestation of full Divine Sovereignty which excludes all instrumentality. This is reinforced in 40.17: To Whom does the Kingdom belong this day? It belongs to Allah, the One, the Most Supreme. This means that on that day the Divine attribute of Providence will manifest itself independently of the normal media and it will be seen and felt that nothing counts except the overpowering dominion and perfect sovereignty of the Exalted Lord. All comfort and joy and requital and reward will be seen as emanating directly from God, with no screen or barrier in between, nor will there be left any room for any doubt. Those who had withdrawn themselves from the world for His sake, will find a perfect state of felicity enveloping their bodies and souls and their exterior and interior leaving no part of them outside the embrace of this great happiness. The phrase *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Judgment) also connotes that on that day every comfort and torment and pleasure and pain that mankind will experience shall proceed directly from the Divine Being and He will be in truth and in fact the sole Lord of Dispensation; that is to say nearness to Him or distance from Him will determine eternal happiness or everlasting misfortune, in the sense that on those who had believed in Him and had held fast to Divine Unity and had dyed their hearts with His pure love, the light of the mercy of that Perfect Being will descend clearly and manifestly, and those who did not have faith and did not experience Divine love, will be denied this joy and comfort and shall be in painful torment.

These are the four types of Divine grace that We have described in detail. It is now clear that the attribute Rahman

must take precedence over the attribute *Rahim*; this also satisfies the requirements of proper syntax. For, a glance at the Book of Nature first encounters the universal Providence of God, next His *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) and then His *Rahimiyyat* (Compassionate mercy) and finally His attribute *Malike Yaumiddeen* (the sole Dispenser of reward and punishment) and elegance of syntax requires that the order of priorities in the Book of Nature should be reflected in the Book of Revelation. Reversal of the natural order in narrative is tantamount to reversal of the law of nature and the natural order. It is an essential requirement that the order of narrative should be in accord with the order of nature so as to reflect it accurately and that whatever has natural and factual priority should have precedence in description also. The verse under consideration conforms to the highest standards of syntax and narrative. It is also a true picture of the natural order as it appears to every beholder. Is it not the most straightforward approach that Divine bounties should be set out in the Book of Revelation in the same order in which they occur in the Book of Nature? To find fault with such an appropriate and wise order is to confess a lack both of sight and of insight.

The fault-finding eye, may it be gouged out, appraises merit as demerit (*Baraheen-Ahmadiyyah*, pp. 371–382, Footnote 11).

Surah Fatiha sets out the concept of God to which the Holy Quran invites mankind. The four principal Divine attributes have been therein mentioned in proper order. These Divine attributes are the basic attributes and as the surah itself has been called Mother of the Book, these attributes are Mothers of attributes. They are: *Rabbil-aalameen* (the Universal Lord), *Al Rahman* (the Gracious), *Al-Rahim* (the Compassionate) and *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Judgment). These four attributes reflect, as it were, the countenance of God, the Supreme. The beneficence of *Rabubiyyat* (Providence) is very extensive and universal, that is the care of all creation at all levels and in full measure. Consider how high rise the hopes of man when he contemplates the Providence

(Rabubiyyat) of Allah, the Most High. Then there is His *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness), namely, that He provides the means needed for support and survival without reference to and prior to any labour or exertion of man. Look at the sun, the moon, air and water and other things that He has pressed into service for our survival without any supplication on our part or any exertion or labour in this behalf. Then there is *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) which safeguards our labour against going waste. The attribute *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Lord of the Day of Requit) crowns actions with success. For instance, a candidate works hard to get through an examination, but falls short of the pass percentage by a few marks and is rejected. But in the Divine system the *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) of God is moved to indulgence in such a case and covers up the default or deficiency and the person concerned achieves success. *Rahimiyyat* also imports an element of forbearance. The Christian concept of God utterly lacks forbearance and forgiveness, otherwise there would be no need for vicarious atonement.

Powers of the God of Aryas are confined merely to manipulation

Likewise, the God of the Aryas is neither Rabb (Creator-provider) nor Rahman (Gracious), for He cannot bestow on anybody aught gratis, but only as reward for labour or work on the part of the creature. In fact it appears obligatory, in the light of Vedic basic teaching, to commit sins. For example, (so we are told), if someone wants to have cow's milk it is necessary that a Brahmin lady should commit adultery so that, as punishment for this manifest sin, she should be reborn as a cow and provide milk for the person needing it who may perchance be her husband. In short, unless such a chain reaction starts, no one may derive any benefit from the treasury of the Vedic God, because His power is confined merely to manipulation. But the God presented by Islam being worthy of every kind of praise is the true Donor. He is Rahman

(Gracious) and bestows out of His grace without reference to any preceding labour or work. Then there is His *Malikiyyate Yaumiddeen* (Mastery of the Day of Judgment) which crowns one with success, as already explained. No temporal authority can guarantee due reward for all workers in all circumstances. But God's Sovereignty is perfect and His treasures are unlimited, they lack nothing. Every one who works is graced by Him with success and in consideration of good deeds and virtuous behaviour He even covers up imperfections and shortcomings. He is also Oft-returning with compassion and is clement. Allah, the Supreme, is aware of thousands of defaults of His servants but He covers them up and does not expose them. But a stage may be reached when a person advancing in sinfulness unabashedly failing to take advantage of the clemency and indulgence of God, the Most High, develops instead an atheistic streak. In such case the jealousy of God, the Supreme, would not suffer the hardened one to be spared and he is exposed to humiliation. The point is that *Rahimiyyat* has an element of forbearance also, but for this to come into operation it is necessary that there should be some good to the credit of the person concerned. Then if there be any drawback or shortcoming in respect of the good, Allah, the Exalted, covers it up by virtue of His *Rahimiyyat* (compassion). The difference between *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* is that actions and conduct play no part in relation to the former but they play a role in the case of *Rahimiyyat*. Yet human weakness cannot be ruled out. The compassion of God, the Supreme, demands clemency. Similarly *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Judgment) is the attribute that grants the true objective. Be mindful that these Mother attributes furnish a spiritual likeness of God. A study of these ushers one into the Presence of God and the soul, in rapturous ecstasy, prostrates itself before Him. In *Al-hamdulillahe* (all praise belongs to Allah) the start was made in the third person, but after the mention of these four attributes, the worshipper having been thereby ushered, as it were, into the Presence of God, changes his form of address, and quite appropriately

submits his supplication, addressing the Divine Presence in the more intimate second person. The circle is thus completed with: Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help (Al-Hakam, Aug. 31, 1901, pp. 1-2).

There is another kind of orderliness in the arrangement of these attributes, that we proceed to set forth for your greater enlightenment and that is that the verses with which Allah has inlaid this Surah after setting out these attributes correspond to the attributes as apposites respectively, in the same order, arrayed one above the other like the layers of the heavens and the earth. First Allah, the Supreme, mentioned His name and His attributes in the same order as is to be found in the Universe. Next, He set down all that is appropriate to human nature in the order observed in the law of Allah, placing each human characteristic under a corresponding Divine attribute, assigning to every human yearning a Divine attribute as the fountain-head from which it may derive benefit and satisfaction. In all this God has illustrated a perfect and apposite orderliness. Blessed indeed is Allah, the Best of organizers.

Five oceans of attributes of Supreme Being

To be more explicit. The attributes together with the name of the Supreme Being mentioned in the beginning of this Surah, that is Allah, Rabbil-aalameen, Ar-Rahman, Ar-Rahim and Malike Yaumiddeen constitute, as it were, five oceans. Then Allah followed them up with five human needs as beneficiaries, placing the latter five as apposites each of them to the corresponding one of the former five, each one of the beneficiaries drinking deep of its appropriate attribute, gathering from it the meaning it encompasses, to the deep satisfaction of the Seers. For example, the foremost of these is the ocean of Allah's name and the phrase: We worship Thee alone, derives benefit from it like things assembled and arrayed face to face. The essence of worship is glorification of the Deity with utter humility, following His lead, taking on His colour and emerging out of self and self-assertion like those who are totally immersed

in Him. The truth of the matter is that man has been created like one sick, ailing and thirsty and the quenching of his thirst, the proper functioning of his liver and his healing are to be found in the water of Divine worship. He cannot be restored to health and his thirst cannot be quenched except by turning his attention to Him, with love brimming over for Him and running towards Him like seekers of water hastening to quench their thirst. Nothing can purify his nature or bestow calm upon him or sweeten his palate except the glorification of Allah. Hearken, it is the glorification of Allah that bestows tranquillity upon the hearts of those who worship Him and present themselves before Him in obedient submission. The verse: Thee alone do we worship; constitutes a commitment to the worship of Allah Who combines in Himself all the perfect attributes. That is why it has been placed in juxtaposition to *Al-hamdu lillahe* (all praise belongs to Allah). Look deep if you are one of the discerning.

Second Ocean

The second of these oceans is the one called *Rabbil aalameen* (the Lord of Universal Providence), its beneficiary being the phrase: Thee alone do we implore for help. When a person learns that Allah sustains the worlds, all of them, there being not a stage that He does not look after, and perceives his own self prompting him to evil, he humbles himself and is filled with anxiety and turns for protection to His door and clings to the hem of His robe and enters His banquet hall, minding all its regulations, so that He may be pleased to extend His Providence to him and treat him with generous benevolence, He being the Most Benevolent One. Divine Providence is the attribute that bestows upon everything its appropriate shape and would not leave it in an imperfect state.

Third Ocean

The third ocean is Al-Rahman, its beneficiary being: Guide us

along the straight path; so that the worshipful servant may join the ranks of those who were guided aright. The attribute Rahman provides for all the needs of every being that has been favoured with sustenance by the attribute *Rabubiyyat* (Universal Providence). The function of *Rahmaniyyat* is equipping with appropriate faculties. It is the virtue of this attribute that it clothes every being with the garment that covers up its imperfections, grants it embellishment, applies salve to its eyes, washes clean its face, provides it with a mount to ride on and instructs it in riding. It ranks next to *Rabubiyyat* (Universal Providence) and confers on every being all that it needs, qualifying it for striving after its goal.

Fourth Ocean

The fourth ocean is *Al-Rahim*. Its beneficiary is: The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; so that a worshipper may become one of God's chosen favourites. The attribute Rahimiyyat leads one to those favours which are enjoyed exclusively by God's obedient servants, in contrast with the universal bounty of Allah which embraces all beings from men down to snakes and serpents.

Fifth Ocean

The fifth ocean is the attribute *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Judgment); and its beneficiary is: Not those who incurred Thy wrath or who went astray. The full manifestation of Allah's wrath and of His abandoning some in error and misguidance will take place only on the day of Requital. On that day Allah will manifest Himself through His displeasure and His favours, inflicting humiliation and bestowing honour, on a scale on which He will not have manifested Himself before.

On that day those who excel others in the cause of Allah shall look like the winning horse that shoots ahead on the race-course, and the sinners will be observed floundering in

their error. The disbelievers will realize on that day that they had truly incurred the wrath of Allah and were blind, and whoso is blind in this life shall be blind in the hereafter; only their blindness in this life is veiled and shall be manifest on the Day of Judgment. Those who disobeyed and did not follow the guidance of our Prophet and the Light of our Book and persisted in their allegiance to their false deities, shall certainly encounter the punishment of Allah, the fierce blazing of the fire and its roaring and will perceive their own darkness and their error and will find themselves crippled and squint-eyed and shall enter hell where they shall abide, without anyone interceding on their behalf. The verse implies that the Divine attribute *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Judgment) has two facets – He adjudges ‘lost’ whomso He wills and adjudges ‘guided aright’ whomso He wills. Pray to Him then that He may cause you to be among the rightly guided.

That is what we had set out to describe, namely, some of the subtle points and literary niceties of this Surah which are like beacon lights for the seers, and its unique and beautifully ordered eloquence which encompasses fine points, rare pearls of wisdom and uncommon insights into Divine purposes. You will not find its parallel among the ancients or among contemporaries. Its literary merits are doubtless of singular excellence and its foothold is far above the mountain-tops of science and it enchants the hearts of the discerning. Now that you have learnt the order of arrangement of these five oceans, one after the other, you should appreciate it and be of the grateful. If you desire to be one of the beneficiaries you will recognise the order of beneficence by the order of the respective oceans (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 74–77).

Here is an excellent example of orderliness. First there is *Al-hamdu lillahe*, Allah combining in Himself all perfect attributes, possessing every excellence and free from every imperfection and shortcoming, secondly, *Rabbil-aalameen*, thirdly *Al-Rahman*, fourthly *Al-Rahim* and fifthly *Malike Yaumiddeen*.

If all objects are self-existing what need is there of God?

The supplications that follow are related to the above five attributes. This sequence starts in this manner: *Iyyaka na'budu* (we worship Thee alone); this is juxtaposed to *Al-hamdu lillahe* (all praise belongs to Allah). This may be paraphrased: O Allah Who art the possessor collectively of all noble qualities and art free from every defect, We worship Thee alone. A Muslim is cognizant of the Deity Who has all the virtues the human mind can conceive; He is even higher, far higher than that. For, the truth is that human mind and human wisdom and human intelligence cannot completely comprehend the attributes of God, the Supreme. The Muslim believes in the Supreme Being possessing all perfect excellences. The followers of other faiths feel embarrassed and have to feel embarrassed when they are required to expound in public their concept of God. For example when the Hindus speak of God as they believe Him to be in accord with the concept which they allege they find in the Vedas, and assert that He did not create a single particle of the universe, nor a single soul, would they have any answer if it were to be objected that it would make little difference to the universe if such a God were to die? If all objects are self-existing and self-subsisting what need is there of God who is neither needed for their coming into being nor for their survival? His case is like that of a person who shoots an arrow and falls down dead while the arrow is on its way. Will the arrow be in any degree deflected from its course once it is out of the hands of the archer? It is no longer dependent upon the latter. Thus if death were to overtake God as He is conceived by the Hindus, no Hindu can say what harm could result therefrom. But we cannot postulate such a fate for God, for He is Allah and the very word signifies complete freedom from every imperfection and shortcoming. When an Arya asserts his belief that souls and bodies are eternal and self-existing we may ask, then, how can he prove the existence of God in face of such a belief? If it is said that God joined them together to create man, it may be countered

that if matter and soul are eternal and self-existent their being joined together is a minor incident and they could well possess the potential to join and merge together. Further, when we are told that God has laid down in the Vedas that if a woman cannot conceive a child of her husband she should lie with another man to have children, what would one think of such a deity? Or, when it is asserted that God cannot grant eternal salvation ever to His devoted worshippers, as it is incumbent upon Him to put all saved souls back into the circle of metempsychosis to keep the universe running, or that God cannot make a gift of aught to any one, through His sheer grace and mercy, for whatever a person receives represents the reward of his deeds in a previous incarnation, what need is left of such a God? A believer in such a God must be prepared to face great humiliation.

Again, when Christians claim that Jesus is their God and at the same time confess that he was maltreated by the Jews and was tried by Satan and suffered hunger and thirst and was in the end nailed to the cross in utter helplessness, what intelligent person would be prepared to believe in such a God? In short, all other people feel greatly embarrassed when speaking of their respective deities. But a Muslim is never faced with such a contingency. For, every beauty and excellence is found in the God he worships, and He is free from every defect and shortcoming, as Allah has been declared the Possessor of all praiseworthy attributes in Surah Fatiha. In short *Iyyaka na'budu* (we worship Thee alone) has been juxtaposed to *Al-hamdu lillahe* (all praise belongs to Allah).

Then follows *Rabbil-aalameen* (Lord of the worlds). *Rabubbiyyat* (Providence) comprises rearing and fostering to maturity as does the mother. She brings up the child, washes him, safeguards him from every kind of filth and defilement and wet-nurses him. In other words, she helps him in every way. Juxtaposed to this we find *Iyyaka nasta'een* (we implore Thee alone for help).

Worship absorbs and sucks Divine Grace

Then He is *Al-Rahman* (the Gracious) Who has bestowed His bounties on us without any supplication and without reference to any action on our part. If our bodies were not constituted as they are, we would not be able to prostrate ourselves or bow down before God. That is why *Iyyaka nasta'een* (we implore Thee alone for help) is juxtaposed to *Rabubiyyat* (Universal Providence). A garden cannot flourish without water. We could not flourish if we did not receive of the water of Divine grace. A plant absorbs water; it has pores and stoma in its roots. According to botanical research branches of trees also absorb water; they have absorbing capacity. Similarly, worship has absorbing capacity; it absorbs and sucks Divine grace. Therefore, *Ihdinas siratal Mustaqeem* (Guide us along the straight path) is juxtaposed to *Al-Rahman* (The Gracious), i.e., if His *Rahmaniyyat* (grace) were not to favour us, if He had not equipped us with these capacities and faculties, how could we have availed ourselves of His beneficence?

Ihdinas siratal mustaqeem (Guide us along the straight path) is juxtaposed to *Al-Rahman* (the Gracious) for guidance cannot be claimed as of right. It is a grace procured through the *Rahmaniyyat* of God (graciousness). *Siratallazina anamta alaihim* (the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours) is juxtaposed to *Al-Rahim*, for the supplicant therefor receives of the fountain of *Rahimiyyat* (Divine compassion). He supplicates in effect: O Thou Hearer of prayer, of Thy compassion, show us the path of the Prophets, the Righteous, the Martyrs and the Virtuous who, through constant prayer and striving, received from Thee a rich variety of gifts of insights and truths and inspirations and revelations and attained to perfect knowledge through their earnest supplications, self-negation and righteous deeds.

**No one can be accounted righteous unless he is totally
dedicated to Holy Prophet**

Rahimiyyat comprises the quality of compensating for loss.

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: Were there no grace, there would be no salvation. Aiysha (may Allah be pleased with her) enquired if this was true of him also. Placing his hand on his head, he answered in the affirmative. Christian critics, because of their lack of understanding and lack of knowledge, have seized upon this as proof of his sinfulness, not realising that this attitude was expressive of the utmost humility on his part and was a means of attracting Divine Providence. We can affirm from repeated personal experience that whenever humility and humbleness reach the extreme limit and our soul pours itself out in utter lowliness and worship at the threshold of the Great Bestower of Gifts, a refulgent light descends from above like, as it were, the influx of clear water from one channel into another. Thus whenever we find the attitude of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) as one of extreme lowliness and humility, it signifies that he is in like measure gifted and illumined with the support and light of the Holy spirit, as he has indeed demonstrated through his example in practical aspects of life. The orbit of his light and blessings is so vast that his spiritual reflections appear in all ages. The benison and grace that are experienced today are only through obedience and devoted service to him. I affirm truly and from personal experience that no one can be accounted righteous and worthy of Divine favour and become the recipient of spiritual rewards, gifts, insights and revelations, which accrue only on attaining extreme purification of self, unless he is totally dedicated in obedience to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). This is affirmed by the Holy Quran: Announce: If you love Allah, follow me; then will Allah love you (3.32). I am a living proof of this Divine truth. Identify me, therefore, through the signs borne by the favourites and friends of God, the Most High, as set out in the Holy Quran. In short, so vast was the excellence of the Holy Prophet's disposition (peace and blessings of God be on him) that if an old woman took hold of his hand, he would stop and would listen to her with the utmost attention and would not move off until she herself let go of him.

Then, *Ghair-il maghdhube alaihim va ladhalleen* (not of those who have incurred Thy displeasure or of those who went astray) is juxtaposed to *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Requit). One who invokes it, receives of the grace of the ocean of *Malike Yaumiddeen*. His supplication, in effect, means: O Master of the Day of Requit, save us from being disobedient like the Jews who were afflicted with plagues and like visitations in this world and perished, having incurred Divine wrath and save us from being like Christians who went astray and lost the way of salvation. The Jews have been named *maghdhub* (those who incurred God's wrath) for, they suffered in this world also because of their misdeeds; they rejected the Prophets and the righteous and persecuted them. It should be borne in mind here that the Divine warning in Surah Fatiha, to keep off the path taken by the Jews and ending with *Ad-dhalleen* (the erring ones) signifies that the followers of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) will pass through a period when the formalists among them will step into the shoes of the Jews and will interpret metaphoric expressions literally and will reject the Righteous one of God, the way the Jews denounced Jesus. They ridiculed his interpretation of previous prophecies and that was their undoing. They said that if God meant that one like Elijah (and not Elijah in person) would be the forerunner of the Messiah, why did He not make this clear in the prophecy? Our opponents have adopted the same attitude and have taken the same line and have spared no effort in denouncing and persecuting me. They have proceeded to the length of condemning me to death and have sought to degrade and destroy me through various devices and stratagems. If, by the grace of God, the Supreme, there had not been British rule in the country they would have long ago won their hearts' delight by putting me to death. But God, the Exalted, frustrated all their designs and His promise: Allah will guard Thee against people (*Tadhkira*, p. 283); was fulfilled.

Not of those who have incurred Thy displeasure, indicates that a group of Muslims will adopt a certain attitude in

opposition to the Promised Messiah. Similarly: Those who have gone astray; indicates that at the time of the appearance of the Promised Messiah the mischief of the doctrine of the cross will have reached its climax. The dispensation that God would then establish would be that of the Promised Messiah. That is why God, the Exalted, has named the Promised Messiah Breaker of the cross through the mouth of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). It is a fact that every Reformer (mujaddid) is raised to cure the ills of the contemporary age. Now, if you were to reflect a little, you would find that both pen and tongue have been employed so intensively and extensively in support of the doctrine of redemption through the crucifixion of Jesus that there is no parallel to it in the chronicles of past times of any other campaign being pursued with such enthusiasm in support of falsehood. The writings of the champions of the cross having reached their peak and unjust and violent attacks having been launched against the true Unity of the Divine and against the honour, sanctity and veracity of the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be on him) and against the genuineness and truth of the Holy Quran, would it not behove the jealousy of God, the Supreme, to raise in this age the Breaker of the cross? Did God, the Exalted, forget His promise: It is We indeed Who have sent down this Reminder and We certainly are its Guardian (15.10)? Indeed not. The promises of God are ever true. He has sent a Warner to the world according to His promise. The world did not accept him but God, the Exalted, will surely accept him and will establish his truth through mighty Signs. I tell you truly I have come as the Promised Messiah, in terms of His promise. Let him who so wills accept and let him who so wills reject (Al-Hakam, Sept. 10, 1901).

Excellence of Attributes of God demands a response from our mundane natures

God has four attributes of superior excellence; they are the Mothers of attributes. Each of these attributes demands a

response from our mundane natures. These four attributes are: *Rabubiyyat*, *Rahmaniyyat*, *Rahimiyyat* and *Malike Yaumiddeen*. (1) *Rabubiyyat* demands for its manifestation absolute non-existence or near non-existence. Every variety of creation, animate or inanimate, comes into being through its operation. (2) *Rahmaniyyat* demands for its manifestation non-existence of a type; in other words, absence of any sign or expression of embodiment. Moreover, it is concerned exclusively with animate beings and not with things. (3) *Rahimiyyat* demands on the part of the rational a confession of their utter non-existence and non-being and is concerned only with mankind. (4) *Malike Yaumiddeen* calls for the humility and wailing of destitution and is concerned only with persons who lie prostrate like beggars at the portals of the Divine Being, extending their aprons of want and dependence to receive Divine grace and finding themselves utterly destitute believe firmly in the *Malikiyyat* of God, the Exalted.

These are the four Divine attributes that are in operation in the Universe. Of these *Rahimiyyat* impels to prayer and *Malikiyyat* stoking up the fire of fear and anguish promotes true humility and abasement. This attribute establishes that God is the Master of Requital. Nobody has a right to claim aught and forgiveness and salvation are dependent upon grace alone.

These are the four attributes of the Supreme Lord that the teachings of the Quran and the efforts of wisdom establish. One of these, *Rahimiyyat*, calls for prayer on the part of man so that Divine grace may descend in consequence. We have dealt in Baraheen Ahmadiyyah and Karamatus Sadiqeen with the manner in which these four attributes are arrayed in Surah Fatiha and how they are reflected in the law of nature, the Book of Divine Works, in the same order as they are found in Surah Fatiha. Thus depreciation of, or disparagement of prayer, or excluding it as a means of attaining grace is tantamount to denial of the Divine attribute *Rahimiyyat* (compassion) and this denial is a step in the direction of denial of God. For, it is through *Rahimiyyat* alone that faith in the

other attributes of the Divine is strengthened and perfected. When through our prayers and our supplications we receive Divine grace and our difficulties of every kind are resolved, our faith in God, the Supreme, in His power and in His mercy and His other attributes is confirmed as a certainty and we see as if with open eyes that, in truth, God, the Most High, is worthy of praise and gratitude and that His Providence (*Rabubiyyat*) and *Rahmaniyyat* (graciousness) and all His other attributes are a reality. But without evidence of *Rahimiyyat*, all His other attributes lack certainty (Ayyamus Solh, pp. 14–16).

Four fountains of beneficence

It should be clearly grasped that Allah, the Lord of glory, has, in Surah Fatiha, set forth, after *Alhamdu-lillahe*, these four attributes as four fountainheads of beneficence and the juxtaposition of the verses that follow indicates that grace is to be sought from each of these fountain-heads. Beginning with the phrase *Al-hamdu lillahe* to the phrase *Malike Yaumiddeen* five distinct subjects have been mentioned. First, *Al-hamdu-lillahe* (all praise belongs to Allah), secondly, *Rabbil-aalameen* (the Lord of Universal Providence), thirdly, *Al-Rahman* (the Gracious) fourthly *Al-Rahim* (the Compassionate) and fifthly *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Judgment). The five expressions that follow are placed in juxtaposition to these five respectively. The phrase *Iyyaka na'budu* (Thee alone do we worship) is juxtaposed to *Al-hamdu-lillahe* (all praise belongs to Allah) clearly indicating that Allah alone is worthy of worship, being the possessor of all perfect attributes. The phrase *Iyyaka nastaeen* (Thee alone do we implore for help) is juxtaposed to *Rabbil-aalameen* (the Lord of Universal Providence). This means that we seek aid from the fountain-head of *Rabubiyyat*, a source of universal benevolence; for it is not possible to achieve any outer or inner development or advance towards holiness or a spiritual regeneration without the grace of Divine providence (*Rabubiyyat*). The supplication

Ihdinas siratal mustaqeem (guide us along the straight path) is juxtaposed to *Al-Rahman* (the Gracious). One who invokes it seeks grace from the fountainhead of Al-Rahman (the Gracious); for, the gift of guidance is not the right of any one. This wealth is achieved only through Divine graciousness (*Rahmaniyyat*). The expression *siratalladhina anamta alaihim* (the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours) is juxtaposed to Al-Rahim (the Compassionate). He who invokes it seeks grace from the fountainhead of Al-Rahim (the Compassionate). His supplication in effect means: O Thou Who by Thine special compassion hearest prayers guide us along the path of the Prophets, the Righteous, the Martyrs and the Virtuous who through constant prayer and striving received from Thee gifts covering a variety of insights, verities, inspirations and revelations and through these means attained to perfection of knowledge. The expression *Ghairil maghdhube-alaiheem va ladhdhalleen* (not of those with whom Thou wast wroth, nor of those who went astray) is juxtaposed to *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Requital) and he who invokes it seeks grace from the fountainhead of *Malike-Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Judgment). His supplication, in effect means: O Lord of the time of requital, safeguard us against the afflictions of this world such as plague and other visitations that befell the Jews because of Thy displeasure, and against our going astray from the path of salvation like the Christians who thus earned punishment in the hereafter. In this verse the Christians have been called *Dhalleen* (the erring ones) for they suffered no punishment in this world; they missed the way of salvation in the hereafter and are punishable in the after-life. The Jews have been named *maghdhube alaihim* (those who incurred Thy wrath) because of their having earned severe punishment in this world on account of their persistent sinfulness. Of their many afflictions one was plague. The Jews not only rejected the holy Prophets and men of God, they even slew or planned to slay many of them and used harsh language against them. Thus they aroused the jealousy of God at times and were afflicted with different

kinds of torment. On several occasions visitations of plague claimed hundreds of thousands of them as victims and many times thousands of them were slain and taken captives and deported to other lands. In short, after rejecting the Messiah (peace be on him) they continuously incurred Divine wrath. Since Allah knew they were a stiff-necked people, they were repeatedly warned in the Torah of the visitations. They continued to suffer under the terrible wrath of God, for they were given to persecuting the virtuous servants of God with their hands and their tongues. They, therefore, suffered punishment in this world so that their example may be a lesson to those who may, at any time, in the future, take to persecuting and harrassing the Divinely-appointed righteous men or harbour in their minds evil designs to slay or humiliate them. In this prayer there is an implied warning that you should shun the ways and habits of the Jews, and that if at any time a Divinely commissioned person is raised among you, you should not hasten like the Jews to hurt and humiliate him, charging him with heresy lest you should incur the wrath of Allah like the Jews, by discrediting him and subjecting him to persecution of different types and humiliating him through abuse and slander. It is, however, a matter for sorrow that this people also often stumbled and did not draw any lesson from the example of the ill-fated Jews (Ayyamus Solh, pp. 24-25).

These verses of Surah Fatiha show that God Who manifested Himself by the name of Allah in the Quran, is the Source of all beneficence, being *Rabbil aalameen* (the Lord of Universal Providence) and is the Bestower of all gifts, being *Rahman* (the Gracious) and accepts all beneficent prayers and efforts, being *Rahim* (Compassionate) and bestows the final reward of all endeavour, being Master of the Day of Requital (Ayyamus Solh, Footnote p. 18).

Rabbil-aalameen, Ar-Rahman, Ar-Rahim, Malike-Yaum-iddeen, that is He is the God Who sustains all the worlds, Gracious, Compassionate, Master of the Day of Judgment. He has not delegated His authority to anyone (Islami Usul ki Philosophy, p. 62).

Rabbil Aalameen is most comprehensive attribute of all

These attributes are fountains of the four perfect graces of Allah that have descended on the inmates of the earth and the heavens, each attribute being the fountain-head of the grace corresponding to the order of the Universe as determined by Allah to demonstrate the accord between His words and His work, so that it may be a sign for those who reflect. The first of these attributes of beneficence is the attribute that has been named *Rabbil-aalameen* by our Lord, and this attribute is the most comprehensive of all the attributes in its beneficence. It is therefore meet that we should describe the beneficence of this attribute as the most universal grace, for the attribute of *Rabubiyyat* (Providence) comprehends not only animate and inanimate, but also the heavens and the earths. Its beneficence is more extensive than that of any other grace, leaving nothing out of its sweep, neither man nor beast, neither tree nor stone, neither heaven nor earth. Indeed the water of His mercy descended on everything and granted it life. This grace encompasses all that is visible and invisible in the universe. Everything is thus wrought by Allah Who bestowed on each thing its appropriate make and Who began the creation of man from clay. This grace is called *Rabubiyyat* and Allah, the Exalted, sows, by means of it, the seed of good behaviour in every well behaving one. A virtuous disposition, piety, sagacity, righteous inclination and every good quality that characterises one who is rightly-guided is derived from this source. The fortunate and the unfortunate, the pure-minded and the wicked all partake of it as determined by their Lord in the exercise of His *Rabubiyyat* (Providence). It is this grace that makes, whomsoever it determines, a man, and makes whomsoever it determines a donkey; makes one article brass and another article gold. Allah is not accountable to any.

Allah's words are mirrors of His works

This grace is in operation fully all the time. If the suspension

of its operation for a single moment were to be imagined the earth and the heavens and all that exists therein would perish instantly. This grace comprehends the whole and the sick, every height and every depression, every tree and every stone, and all that exists in the universe. Allah, the Supreme, has given it priority of mention in His Book since it has natural precedence in the material universe. This arrangement has not been adopted merely out of considerations of syntax but is a wise device for the purpose of illustrating the order of the Universe, in that the Supreme Lord has made His words mirrors of His works as illustrated in different categories of His creation so that the minds of the discerning may derive satisfaction therefrom.

All that exists in the World is manifestation of graciousness of the Lord

The second of these beneficent attributes has been called Al-Rahman by our Lord. We should, therefore, call this beneficence general grace, or *Rahmaniyyat*. It is next in order after the most universal grace and the sphere of this beneficence is restricted. Only the animate section of the universe can derive benefit therefrom. In dispensing this grace Allah does not take into account any merit or deed or expression of gratitude on the part of the beneficiary. He sends it down on every animate, man and beast, sane and insane, believer and disbeliever, and saves thereby every soul from the ruin that may confront it and bestows on everyone the form that suits them best, for Allah is generous by His very nature and is not miserly. Whatever you see in the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, the rain, the air and whatever you see in the earth, the rivers, the trees, the fruits, the useful medicines, wholesome milk and pure honey, all are manifestations of *Rahmaniyyat* (graciousness) of the Lord of Honour and Glory and are not the result of the labour of any workman. It is to this grace that Allah, the Supreme, has pointed in His words: My mercy encompasses everything (7.157); The Rahman taught the Quran (55.2-3);

Who can guard you at night or during the day against the Rahman (21.43); None supports them save the Rahman (67.20). These are reminders for the righteous. But for this grace no bird could fly in the air and no fish could breathe in the water, no head of family could provide for the needs of his numerous dependents, and no destitute person could have survived. All would face ruin and there would be no way of providing relief, as would be clear to the well-informed in these matters.

Have you not seen how Allah revives the earth after it dies and covers the day with night and covers the night with day and has pressed into service the sun and the moon, all running their respective courses till an appointed term. Verily, in this are signs of *Rahmaniyyat* (Divine Graciousness) for those who reflect. He made for you the night so that you may find rest in it and made the day bright and made the earth for you a habitat and the heaven a canopy and has given you shape and made your shapes perfect and provided you with wholesome foods. This then is the Rahman, your Lord, the Sustainer of the poor. Those who disbelieve in His *Rahmaniyyat* (graciousness) furnish a clear proof against themselves to Allah. They do not esteem Allah as He should be esteemed. They are among the unenlightened. Do they not see the sun coursing from the east to the west. Are its creation and its course the result of any effort on their part or due to the grace of the Gracious One whose *Rahmaniyyat* (grace) extends both to the virtuous and the wicked? So does Allah send down water at the proper time, bringing forth therewith harvests and trees bearing fruits in abundance. Are these gifts the results of the labour of any labourer or the pure *Rahmaniyyat* of Allah, the Supreme, Who has delivered us from the scarcity of means of sustenance and has granted us a ladder to climb up above every want we are apt to suffer and has given us ropes that we may need to quench of our thirst by drawing up water from the wells? Holy is Allah, therefore, Who has showered His bounties on us by the grace of His *Rahmaniyyat* while we had not put forth any effort to deserve it. Indeed, He created His

bounties long before we were brought into being. Look around then; do you see His like among benefactors? In short, *Rahmaniyyat* is a grace common for men and beasts and for everything animate and for every created soul, without its being a reward for any effort or being the right of a creature by virtue of his piety or righteousness.

Rahimiyyat is contingent upon revelation of Book of Allah

Of the attributes of grace, the third is called *Al-Rahim* by our Lord, and we classify it as the special grace and *Rahimiyyat* (beneficence) of Allah, the Noble Lord, marked especially for those who practise virtue, are ever ready to do good and commit no default, and remember Allah and are not heedless and use their eyes and are not blind, and are prepared for the Day of Departure, and guard against the displeasure of the Lord of Majesty, and spend their nights bowing and prostrating and standing in awe before their Lord and fast during the day. They do not forget their death nor their return to their True Lord. They take warning on hearing of the death of any one, and tremble with fear when they learn of the demise of a friend, and are reminded of their own death by the departure of their companions, and piling up earth on the dead bodies of their comrades puts them in fear, and while they grieve for them they are themselves alerted. Separation from their friends reminds them of their own death. They, therefore, turn to Allah and adhere to the path of virtue. You will thus have realized that this grace that comes down from heaven is contingent on good works, virtue, uprightness, piety and faith. This grace is not manifested till after the birth of reason and reflection, and the revelation of the Book of Allah and the definition of the limits prescribed by Him and His commandments. Those who have not been graced with these gifts are not liable to suffer any displeasure or punishment before these pre-requisites have been furnished. It is thus clear that *Rahimiyyat* (Divine beneficence) is contingent upon the revelation of the Book of Allah and its being taught and understood and

that no one is liable to be punished before this, nor is any one exposed to the wrath of Allah until after the manifestation of this *Rahimiyyat*. An evildoer will be called to account for the evil done by him only thereafter.

**Justice cannot be established except after limits have been set
by Allah through His Books**

Herein is a rebuttal of the Christian doctrine. They believe that everyone from Adam down to the end of the world is tainted with sin irrespective of whether they were given the Book from Allah or not, and whether they are blessed with reason or not. They claim that Allah, the Supreme, shall not forgive anyone unless he believes in the Messiah and believe that the door of salvation is shut upon others and that forgiveness cannot be earned through good deeds; and that Allah being just His justice requires that the sinner and the criminal should be punished and that as mankind could not be redeemed through good deeds, Allah sent His pure son so that he may carry the load of mankind's sins on his shoulders and be crucified and thus relieve the sinners of their burdens. Accordingly, the son came and was slain and those who believed in him were saved and entered the gardens of salvation happy and rejoicing. This is their belief. But he who tests it with reason and subjects it to investigation, will find it a chain of absurdities. If you were to wonder at it you would be justified; for there is certainly nothing more surprising than their claims. They do not realise that justice is much more important and much more obligatory than mercy and to let off the guilty and punish the innocent is to destroy both justice and mercy; and no one would be guilty of that save one who is utterly demented.

Again, both promise of reward for good deeds and warning of punishment for transgression are prerequisites of any punitive action. How can then the infliction of punishment on anyone be justified before the promulgation and consolidation of the canons of law and how can the punishment of the former or latter generations be justified for commission of an act that

had not been preceded by a warning that its commission would entail a penalty and with no one being informed of it? The truth of the matter is that no concept of justice can be established except after the revelation of the Book of Allah, and His promise and His warning and His commandments and the limits set by Him and His directives.

Attributing a strict concept of justice to Allah, the Supreme, is utterly erroneous and without a true basis, for, justice is inconceivable until after the establishment of rights and their binding character. But no one has a right against the Lord of the universe. Do you not see that Allah has constrained every animal into the service of man and has permitted its slaughter to satisfy man's simplest needs? If justice were recognised as obligatory on God, there would be no room for Him to enforce such commandments. He would then be accounted unjust. But Allah does as He wills in His dominion, honouring whomso He pleases and abasing whomso He pleases and bestows life on whomso He pleases and causes the death of whomso He pleases; and exalts whomso He pleases and degrades whomso He pleases. The concept of rights would militate against this and in fact tie up His hands. You would realise that your observation rejects this concept. Allah's creation is divided into grades. Thus some of His creatures are horses and donkeys, some are camels and she-camels and some are dogs and wolves and tigers. He granted some of His creatures ears and eyes and created some deaf and some blind. Who then of the animals has a right to stand up and question His Lord why He created him in a certain shape and why did He not create Him in some other form? Allah has, however, charged Himself with rights in favour of His creatures after sending down His Books and the announcements of His promise and His warning, and has given assurance of reward to those who exert themselves accordingly. Whoso then follows His Book and His Prophet and restrains himself from following vain desires, surely paradise is his resort. But whoso disobeys his Lord and His commandments and disregards His injunctions and turns away, will certainly be punished. Therefore, when requital is inci-

dental to promise and prohibition and not to justice as a Divine obligation of Allah, the towering structure erected by the Christians in their fancies collapses utterly. It is thus established that the attribute of the concept of strict justice to Allah, the Exalted, is an utterly false notion. Only the ignorant would entertain it. This demonstrates that basing the notion of vicarious atonement on the alleged Divine obligation of justice is to erect a falsehood upon a falsehood. Ponder this well. This will indeed suffice to demolish the Christian notion of salvation through the cross. In the Book of Allah, the Exalted, this attribute is called *Rahimiyyat* as Allah, the Supreme, in His Mighty Book has said: He is compassionate towards the believers (33.44); and has said: Allah is Most Forgiving, Ever Compassionate. (2.219). This grace concerns itself only with the deserving and seeks out only those who exert themselves. This marks the difference between *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat*. The Quran is full of illustrations in this regard but this much should suffice the wise.

The fourth category of grace is the grace we have called the most special beneficence or the perfect manifestation of *Malikiyyat*. It is the greatest, the best, the highest, the fullest, the most comprehensive and the culmination of all grace and the fruit of all the trees of the universe. It is manifested only after the collapse of the structures of this puny and paltry world (*alam*), the disappearance of its relics and traces, the discolouring of its features, the drooping of the brightness of its countenance and the setting of its stars like all those that set.

Malikiyyat is a very refined state; its mysteries are deep, its lights are abounding and the intelligence of those who ponder it is astounded.

Should it be asked why Allah, the Supreme, called Himself in this context *Malike-Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Requital) and not *Adile-Yaumiddeen* (Just Judge of the Day of Requital), the answer is that the concept of justice does not emerge until after the establishment of rights and no one has any right against the Lord of Universal Providence. Salvation

in the hereafter is a gratuitous bounty from Allah for those who believe in Him, hasten to obey Him, to accept His commands, to worship Him and to know Him, with such surprising swiftness as if they are riding fleet-footed she-camels, in their journeyings by day and by night. They may not have been able to carry their obedience to the point of perfection, nor to perform to the utmost the obligation of worship, nor to attain to the full knowledge of the Divine, yet they must have yearned passionately after them. Those who disobeyed their Lord, though their evil designs did not reach their height, yet they advanced towards them at high speed and continued in their evil courses getting bolder and bolder in their defiance and were not at all inclined to put a period to it, would experience Allah's wrath in proportion to their designs. Whoso turned his face in the direction of the breeze of compassion, will certainly partake of Divine mercy, abiding therein; but whoso was caught in the tornado of wrath, will certainly suffer its blows. This is naught but *Malikiyyat* and not justice which is dependent upon rights. Ponder well, then, lest you should be numbered among the heedless (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 68-74).

Four Attributes support throne of Allah

There are certain Divine attributes that are essential to His Being and on them rests the very existence of the universe. These are four in number – *Rabubiyyat*, *Rahmaniyyat*, *Rahimiyyat* and *Malikiyyat*, as Allah, the Supreme, has indicated in this Surah saying: *Rabbil-aalameen*, *Ar-Rahmanir-Rahim*, *Malike Yaumiddeen*. These attributes take precedence over everything and comprehend everything. From these are derived the origin of objects, of their capacities, their faculties and their progress towards perfection. Anger is not an inherent attribute of Allah, but owes its origin to the failure of some objects to attain to absolute perfection; and similarly the attribute of adjudging some as lost emerges only after the appearance of crookedness in those who go astray.

The number of these basic attributes has been determined as four with reference to their operation in this universe. Do you not perceive that this universe bears witness to the existence and operation of these attributes and that these four attributes manifest themselves in a manner that every discerning person can perceive them without the least doubt, excepting only those without insight. Four will continue to be the number of these attributes till the end of this world. Then another four will emerge from these, but they will manifest themselves only in the hereafter. The sphere of their primary manifestation will be the Throne of the Noble Lord, which has never been defiled by the presence of any other than Allah, the Exalted, and which is the most perfect manifestation of the light of the Lord of Universal Providence. It has four posts – *Rabubiyyat*, *Rahmaniyyat*, *Rahimiyyat* and *Malikiyyate Yaumiddeen*. The Throne of Allah and the heart of the Perfect Man alone are perfect reflections of these four attributes. These attributes are the source of all other Divine attributes of Allah and are like posts for the Throne on which Allah has established Himself. His having established Himself signifies the most complete and perfect reflection of the attributes of Allah, the Best of creators. Each post of the Throne extends down to an angel who upholds it and executes its affairs and becomes the means of projecting its manifestations and distributing them among the inmates of the heavens and the earths. This is the meaning of the Word of Allah, the Exalted: Eight shall hold aloft the Throne of thy Lord on that day (69.18); for, angels uphold the Divine attributes which constitute the Throne. The Throne is not a material object. It is an interposition between this world and the hereafter and the eternal source of the manifestations of *Rabbaniyyat* (Providence), *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness), *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) and *Malikiyyat* (Mastery) for the dispensation of bounties and the fulfilment of requital. The Throne is included among the attributes of Allah, the Exalted, for He is the Lord of the Throne from eternity when there was nothing co-existent with Him. Ponder deep then. The nature of the Throne and Allah establishing Himself on it is a great

mystery from among the mysteries of Allah, the Supreme, which comprises profound wisdom and spiritual significance. The name Throne has been adopted to make it comprehensible to the minds of the people of this world and to bring its understanding nearer to their faculties. It is a medium for the devolution of Divine beneficence and the glories of *Rahmaniyyat* (graciousness) from the Divine Presence to the angels and through them to the Prophets. Multiplicity of the media of grace is in no way derogatory to the Unity of God. Indeed it is a source of blessing for mankind, aiding them in seeking spiritual strength and helping them in their strivings and exercises which are the means of activating the affinities that subsist between them and the higher noumena such as the Throne and abstract wisdom so that they may arrive at the First source and the Cause of causes. Then as the Divine pull and the breeze of graciousness (*Rahmaniyyat*) come to the aid of the seeker the mists begin to clear and he is relieved of the oppressive feeling of being at a great distance from his objective. Intervening obstacles and his afflictions are removed and he is illumined with Divine light and is admitted among those who have arrived at their goal. His arrival at his goal and his vision of it are through his observation and experience of the wonderful sojourns and stages of his spiritual pilgrimage. But thinkers and philosophers of this world have no inkling of these verities and refinements, nor has worldly wisdom a perception of them. These truths and their significance can be appreciated only in the light of the lamp of Prophethood and saintliness. Their fragrance is not perceived by the worldly wise, nor is it possible for any such to tread into these fields save by the grace of the Lord of Universal Providence.

Four Attributes of Allah that are manifested afresh in the hereafter

When the pure and perfect souls depart from their physical bodies, fully purged of all impurity and uncleanness they are presented before Allah, the Exalted, through the angels at the

foot of the Throne, and partake afresh of *Rabubiyyat* (Providence) which is vastly different from the *Rabubiyyat* that preceded it, and taste of *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) which is greatly different from the earlier *Rahmaniyyat*, and partake of *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) which again is very different from the *Rahimiyyat* they enjoyed before and also partake of *Malikiyyat* (Mastership) which is vastly different from the *Malikiyyat* that operated in the world. It is at this stage that the attributes will become eight with eight angels sustaining them by the leave of the Most Excellent Creator; one angel being assigned to each attribute, for due distribution and regulation of its grace. This is indicated in the word of the Most High: We call to witness the angels who regulate the affair (79.6). Ponder over it well then and be not indifferent.

Increase in the number of the angels supporting the Throne in the hereafter is in consequence of the increase in the manifestations of *Rabbaniyyat* (Providence), *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness), *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) and *Malikiyyat* (Mastership) when the recipients of grace shall have multiplied. The souls that have found peace with God after their separation from the world and their resort to the hereafter and to their Noble Lord, experience an augmentation of their faculties and capacities and *Rabubiyyat* (Providence), *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness), *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) and *Malikiyyat* (Mastership) well up according to the measure of their faculties and capacities as is evidenced by the visions and revelations vouchsafed to the seers. If you should chance to be one of those who have been granted an understanding of the Holy Quran you will find in it many statements of this nature. Look into it, therefore, with penetrating insight so that you may find evidence in confirmation of this exposition in the Book of Allah, the Lord of Universal Providence (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 86–89).

**Allah is not merely the prime cause He is the deliberate
Provider and nourisher**

The words of the Most High, *Al-Hamdu lillahe Rabbilaala-*

meen Al-Rahmanir-Rahim-Malike Yaumiddeen comprise an excellent refutation of atheists, deviationists and nature-worshippers who do not believe in the attributes of Allah, the Lord of Honour, and allege that He is merely the prime cause and has no determining will and is not possessed of volition like bestowers of gifts and bounties.

The opening verses of Surah Fatiha challenge them and say: How can they disbelieve in the Sustainer-Lord of creation and deny His deliberate Providence while He nourishes all the worlds, sustaining all with His beneficence and guards the heavens and the earth by His power and His might, and knows well the obedient and the disobedient and either forgives sins or reforms evil-doers through chastisement. For him who comes to him in submission are two gardens and he is enfolded in two joyful bounties, one proceeds from the Divine attribute Rahim (Compassionate) and the other from the Eternal Rahman (Gracious); he is thus granted by Allah, the Most High, a return in the fullest measure and is admitted among the triumphant. These attributes leave no doubt that Allah is worthy of worship and bestower of the gift of happiness. But the mere proclamation of His holiness as in the Gospels does not by itself move the soul to worship and adoration; it leaves it in a state of somnolence.

The purpose of the arrangement that our Lord of Majesty, Glory and Honour has adopted in the Fatiha, drawing attention to His praiseworthy attributes before mentioning prayer and worship, is to remind His servants of the grandeur of the Creator Lord of Excellence and Supreme glory before prayer, pointing out that He is the Master, that He alone is the Bestower of rewards, that He alone is the Lord of Mercy and Master of requital and that all gifts and bounties that are bestowed on man are bestowed by Him. This certainly is the best arrangement benefitting the soul most. It expounds to the fortunate supplicant the bounties of Allah, the Compassionate, and makes him eager and prepares him for the Presence of the Lord of might and beneficence. It stirs deeply the souls of the supplicants, as is well appreciated by the wise. The four Divine

attributes Providence (*Rabubiyyat*), Graciousness (*Rahmaniyyat*), Compassion (*Rahimiyyat*) and Mastership (*Malikiyyat*) which are operative in this world and in the hereafter have been specified as they are the Mother attributes and the source of all the effective attributes of grace. Without a doubt they stimulate greatly the souls of the supplicants (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 97-98).

When a worshipper ponders the attributes that Allah has mentioned as a preface to the Fatiha prayer, and realises that they comprehend all His excellence and glory and incite and stir eagerness and love and knows that His Lord is the source of all bounties, the fountain-head of all beneficence, the shield against every calamity and Master of all requital, that with Him began all creation and to Him shall return all the created and that He is free from all defects, imperfections and ills and combines in Himself all perfections and every type of goodness, he accepts Him as the sole provider of all his needs and as his guardian against every danger. He is then ready to suffer every adversity in the search of His pleasure, even though in this pursuit he be slain by the arrow that does not miss its mark. No affliction can dishearten him and he knows not what fatigue is. His loved One draws him to Himself and he knows that He alone is the Besought, and search for the ways that lead to His pleasure becomes easy for him. He strives hard in His ways, even running the risk of death and is daunted by no tribulation. Indeed he is courageously prepared for every trial. His only occupation is the remembrance of Allah; no other occupation distracts his thoughts. He discards completely his own desires so that he can seek whole-heartedly His pleasure. He constantly explores means that would bring him speedily to the Presence of the Lord of Glory and stays just in His proximity. He does not make any of those dear to him His peer, nor does his heart have any truck with His alleged partners. His constant prayer is: Lord keep my heart secure with Thee and be Thou my only attraction and desire, and let not anyone else's charm beguile me!

This is the result of the prefatory phrases preceding the

supplication set out in the Fatiha (Karamatus Sadiqeen, p. 101).

All that exists is a creation of God and is dependent on HIM

That which God, the Most High, has set out in Surah Fatiha from *Rabbil-aalameen* (Lord of Universal Providence) to *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Requit) comprises, in the light of the expositions of the Holy Quran, four lofty verities. The first is that God, the Exalted, is the Lord of Universal Providence (*Rabbil-aalameen*). This means that God is the Creator and Lord of all the objects in the universe and that whatever has appeared and is seen and felt or is comprehended by reason is His creation and nothing has true existence save the Sublime Creator Himself. In short, the universe, together with all its components, is a creation of God, and there is not a single unit of the components of the universe that is not His creation. God, the Exalted, dominates and rules over every particle of the universe, through His perfect universal providence. His providence is in operation every moment. It is not true that God, the Supreme, made the universe and then abdicated its administration, committing it to the regulations of nature in such manner that He intervenes no more in anything, as the maker of a machine which after its manufacture is completed becomes entirely independent of him, and that created objects are no longer subject to the control of their Maker. On the contrary, the Lord of the Universe (*Rabbil-aalameen*) showers His Providential grace incessantly on the entire universe, without a single moment's interruption. Even after the creation of the universe that Source of beneficence is as indispensable as He was before anything had come into being and the world is as much dependent on His Providence for its survival and support as it was for its coming into being and its taking shape. It is He who takes care of the universe every moment and every particle of it is alive and fresh because of Him. He nourishes everything as He wills and determines, and not passively. In brief, according

to the Holy Quran, all that exists in the universe is a creation of God and is dependent on His Providence in respect of all its qualities and conditions and at all times and there is not a single property, spiritual or material, which any creature is capable of acquiring on its own, independently of the will of the Absolute Sovereign. The Holy Quran also teaches that all Divine attributes such as *Rabbil-aalameen* (Lord of Universal Providence) and others are exclusive qualities of the Supreme Lord and are not shared by any other being. This is well illustrated by *Al-hamdu lillahe*, the opening phrase of this Surah, which means that every kind of praise belongs to Allah alone.

The second verity is Rahman (the Gracious) which has been mentioned next after *Rabbil-aalameen* (Lord of Universal Providence). Rahman means that the Supreme Being has provided and keeps providing, through His general grace, all that is needed for the support and survival of the human and other species and for their development and perfection, without distinction of good and bad. This is a pure bounty and is not related to any human effort.

The third verity is Rahim which is mentioned after Rahman and which means that God, the Exalted, blesses by His special grace man's beneficent effort, forgives the sins of those who repent, bestows on those who ask and opens to those who knock.

The fourth verity is *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Requit). This means that Allah, Lord of Absolute Power, is Master of all requital, which is perfect and complete and is not subject to any kind of trial and test, and is not tainted or beclouded by the interposition of material means, and is free from every kind of stain, dirt, doubt, suspicion or defect and is a manifestation of the highest glory. He is in no way handicapped from manifesting His perfect requital which is as bright as day. The purpose of the Unique Lord in manifesting this sublime truth is:

- (1) To impress upon everyone the certainty that is imposed

on His creatures by the will of their True Lord and that its perfect manifestation is not possible in this life as the why and wherefore of the good and ill that they experience here is not patent to them, nor can they discover by whose authority and under whose command do they undergo that experience. No one hears a voice telling him that he is being accorded his due, nor does any one perceive that all that happens to him is the recompense of his actions;

- (2) To demonstrate that material means are of little consequence and that God determines all and that that Sublime Being is the Source of all grace and the Master of all requital;
- (3) To expound the nature of supreme beatitude and of utter misery. Supreme beatitude is the state in which the perception of light and joy and comfort and felicity pervade the person and soul, and interior and exterior of man, and no part or faculty is left out of participation in the bliss. Utter misery is the painful torment which flames up from the hearts in consequence of disobedience, impurity and remoteness and aloofness from God, envelops the being and generates an intense feeling of burning; and
- (4) To affirm that these grand manifestations cannot take place in this world, for, this narrow confined and dense world which expresses itself only through material means cannot on account of its shortcomings become their vehicle. This world is beset with trials and tests and its pleasures and pains are evanescent and imperfect. Whatever betides a person in this world is cloaked under the cover of material means whereby the countenance of the Master of Requital is veiled. This world cannot, therefore, be the venue of the true, perfect and unveiled Day of Judgment. The true, perfect and unveiled Day of Requital will be the life that will follow this life and that will be the venue of the great and perfect manifestations of Divine glory and grace. Since this worldly

state is not designed as the venue of requital but of trials, therefore all the scarcity and plenty and pain and pleasure and hurt and grief and happiness that are encountered here are not necessarily indices of God's pleasure or displeasure. For instance, the wealth of a person is not necessarily evidence of God being pleased with him, nor are poverty and destitution necessarily evidence of God's displeasure. Both ease and penury are in fact trials, to prove one person through ease and the other through hardship.

These four verities are expounded in detail in the Holy Quran. A study of the Holy Scripture will show that the verses of the Sacred Book flow on like a river in exposition of these truths. Were we to deal with all these verses here at length, the narrative would cover many volumes. We intend, by Allah's grace, to undertake this exposition in another context. We shall, therefore, content ourselves here with this brief exposition of the concise but comprehensive verses of Surah Fatiha.

All these truths are manifest and self-evident and are of a high and sublime nature. Yet at the time of the advent of the Seal of the Prophets (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) they had been totally lost to the world. There was not a single people that adhered to them in their purity, without distortion. When the Holy Quran was revealed, the Holy Word brought these lost truths to light afresh out of obscurity and instructed those in error about their worth and wisdom and propagated them in the world, illumining a whole universe by their light. As proof of this suffice it to say that even today no people, save the faithful of Islam, the valid religion, adheres fully and properly to these verities. If any should claim that there exists such a people, it would be for him to establish this. In addition, there is the evidence of the Holy Quran which being widely spread among friend and foe operates as an estoppel against all adversaries. Such evidence abounds in the Holy Quran. Besides, students of history and other knowledgeable persons cannot be unaware of the fact that by the time the Holy

Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) made his appearance, every people had reached the lowest point of ignorance and error and did not fully adhere to any truth.

**Jews believe the Universe is regulated by fixed laws where
God has no power to intervene**

Take the Jews, for instance. They had started harbouring doubts and misgivings about the perfect Universal Providence of God (*Rabubiyyat*) and, being dissatisfied with the One Lord of the Universe, they had invented for themselves hundreds of lords; that is to say they had taken to rendering to men the reverence and worship due to the Lord. As the Holy Quran says: They have taken their priests and monks as lords besides Allah (9.31). They looked upon them as having the power to provide for their needs. Many of the Jews believed with nature-worshippers that the system of the universe was regulated in terms of a fixed law in which God had not the power to intervene effectively. In other words that His hands were tied up and that He could neither make nor unmake anything which was not in consonance with that law; and that since the time He had done with the creation of this universe, following a particular pattern, this mechanism was running on through the inherent adjustability of its components and that the Lord of the Universe exercised no further control of any kind over its working. They did not believe that He had any power to manifest His Providence (*Rabubiyyat*) on the basis of His pleasure or displeasure in different degrees or to make any change or alteration by His special determination. In fact, they had come to believe God to be a corporeal being and as such partaking of some of the characteristics of the physical world as a part of it, and in their defective estimation they considered what was true of creation was equally true of the Creator. They had ceased to believe that He was altogether Holy and Transcendant. Their Torah, which had become perverted and distorted contained several references to God, altogether inconsistent with His Majesty. For instance it is

said in Genesis, Chapter 32 (24–29) that God wrestled with Jacob the whole night through till the morning and could not prevail against him. Similarly, in contravention of the truth that God is the Creator-Sustainer of all that exists in the universe, they have called some men sons of God and in some places women are called daughters of God and in some passages they have all been called gods. The truth of the matter is that the Christians adopted human worship from these very teachings. When they found that the Bible made many men and women sons and daughters of God, and even gods, they were encouraged to include the son of Mary among them so that he may not be lower in grade than the other sons. It is because of this that the Holy Quran says that by describing the son of Mary as the son of God, the Christians did not do anything original; they only followed the earlier disbelieving polytheists. In short, at the time of the advent of the Seal of the Prophets (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) the Jews were steeped in human worship and had alienated themselves to an extreme degree from right beliefs, so much so that some of them shared with Hindus belief in metempsychosis and some totally disbelieved in the Judgment and some limited it to this life and did not believe in the resurrection and there were yet others who followed the Greeks in holding souls and matter as eternal, self-existing and uncreated and some like the atheists considered the soul mortal and some agreed with the philosophers that God, the Exalted, was neither the Lord of Universal Providence nor did He regulate the universe of set purpose. In short, all their thinking had become diseased like the body of a leper. They believed no more in the perfect attributes of the Supreme God, in His Universal Providence (*Rabubiyyat*), His *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness), His *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) or His *Malikiyyate Yaumiddeen* (Mastership of the Day of Requital); nor did they believe that these were His exclusive attributes or that they were found in Him in perfection. Their beliefs were vitiated with a variety of doubts, discrepancies and impurities and they had distorted the teachings of the Torah and had become the propagandists of polytheism and

of vice. They were thus the forerunners of most of the polytheists in holding God as a corporeal being, with a material body and in believing that His Providence, Grace and Compassion and other attributes had become atrophied and were shared by other beings.

Christians ascribe Divine attributes to son of Mary

So much for the Jews. It is unfortunate that the Christians put themselves in much worse case in a short while, rejecting all the above-mentioned verities and ascribing all perfect attributes of the Divine to the son of Mary. The sum of their beliefs is that God, the Supreme, is not the Creator-Sustainer Lord of all that is comprised in the Universe, the Messiah being outside the scope of His Providence (*Rabubiyyat*), and that in fact the Messiah is Himself the Lord of Providence. According to their fallacious thinking whatever came into existence in the universe, is not, as is the general principle, a created object, but that the son of Mary, though born in the world and being manifestly a created person, is yet a non-creature and equal to God, in fact, God in his own being. He combines in his person several contradictory features. Being mortal, he is yet eternal and notwithstanding his own confession that He is subordinate to the Self-existing God and His subject, he is yet himself self-existing and absolutely independent and not subject to any one. By his own admission, he is weak and powerless, yet according to the baseless assertion of the Christians, he is the Absolute Lord and lacks no power. According to his own statement, he has no knowledge of future events and does not know when the Judgment would be and yet the Christians fancifully believe that he has full knowledge of the future. Though he confesses and so do the scriptures of the Prophets testify that he is a humble creature, he is God in the eyes of the Christians; and notwithstanding that according to his own confession he is not good and sinless, in the eyes of the Christians he is good and without a sin. In short, the Christians

are a strange people indeed, who adhere to two sets of contradictory beliefs and consider such contradiction permissible. Even though the doctrine fashioned by them exposes the Messiah to the charge of having been untruthful they adhere obstinately to it. They set up a weak and humble servant as the Lord of Universal Providence, yet permitting for him every kind of humiliation like death, pain, suffering and even incarnation and subrogation and change, transformation, mortality and birth. They have made even God a plaything. The Christians, however, are not alone in that respect. Many a humble person was deified long before their time. Some claim Rama-Chandra was God; some others declare Krishna a bigger god than him. In the same way, some have installed Buddha as God and others have other gods. In like manner these simpletons of the latter ages, following in the footsteps of the earlier polytheists, proclaimed the son of Mary son of God, even God Himself. Thus in truth the Christians do not believe God to be the Lord of Universal Providence (*Rabbil-aalameen*), or *Rahman* (Gracious), or *Rahim* (Compassionate), nor do they believe that Judgment rests in His hands. In fact, according to them it would seem that the heavens and earth are devoid of the presence of the True God and that the son of Mary is all in all. He alone is the Lord, the Gracious, the Compassionate and the sole master of requital.

Aryas do not accept God as creator and Lord of souls

Similarly, the mass of Hindus and Aryas also repudiate the truths expounded above. The Aryas do not accept God as the Creator and do not believe Him to be the Lord of their souls. The orthodox Hindus do not believe that the attribute of Universal Providence (*Rabbil-aalameen*) belongs exclusively to Him. They set up 330 million deities as partners with Him in Providence and beg favours of them. Both these groups deny God the attribute of Graciousness (*Rahmaniyyat*) purporting to base themselves on the Vedas for the belief that He does not at all possess any beneficence and that whatever He made

for mankind, He had to make in consequence of their good deeds and that He can do no good to anyone nor ever did any by His own volition. By the same token, they do not accept God as Rahim (Compassionate). They believe that howsoever sincerely a sinner were to repent and engage himself in humble and earnest supplication and righteous action, God will not forgive his sins until he has atoned for them by going through myriads of incarnations. Once a person commits a sin, he cannot avail himself of the benefit of repentance, or worship, or fear, or love of God or of a virtuous life. In other words he is as good as dead, though yet alive, and utterly without hope of God's Compassion. In the same way these people do not believe truly in the Day of Judgment, by reference to which God is called the Lord of the Day of Requit (Malike Yaumiddeen). They disbelieve in the manifestation of perfect beatitude and believe in utter misery to which man attains through the aforementioned methods, and they consider final salvation a chimera. They do not believe in eternal salvation and allege that man can have everlasting peace neither here nor in the hereafter. In their false notion, this world is as good a place of requital as the hereafter. According to them one who is given great wealth in this world is so rewarded for the good deeds he had done in a preceding incarnation and is entitled to spend it in seeking satisfaction of all his desires. It is obvious that the grant of wealth to a person who believes that it is the reward of his deeds in a previous incarnation and that he is entitled to spend it as he may choose in eating and drinking and in pursuit of enjoyment of every kind would be so reprehensible that it would be blasphemy to attribute it to the Supreme Being. For, it would predicate that the God of the Hindus deliberately incites people to immorality and vice; and before their spirits are cleansed opens wide to them the doors of self-indulgence and rewards them for the good deeds done by them in their previous incarnation with means of enjoyment so that in obedience to their evil-bidding egos, they may once more go down to the nether regions. It is obvious that one labouring under the impression that all the wealth

and prestige and authority that he enjoys represent the rewards of his earlier deeds, would be inclined towards extreme self-indulgence. But if he were to realise that the world is a testing ground and not a place of requital and that whatever he has been granted is by way of trial so that he may be tested as to what use he makes of it and that there is naught that is his property or his right, he would seek his salvation through investing it in virtuous undertakings and would at the same time be deeply grateful. For, it is only the person who realises that whatever he has is pure bounty without any merit on his part who can be sincerely and lovingly grateful. In short, God, the Supreme, is neither Lord of Universal Providence nor Gracious nor Compassionate nor Master of Requital, according to the Hindus and Arya Samajists.

**Brahmos believe the universe is performing its functions
independently of God**

Now we propose to examine the views of the Brahmo Samajists to see whether they subscribe to these four verities or not. The Brahmo Samajists, it appears, do not base themselves firmly on them. Indeed they have no clear concept of the significance of these high verities. First, the concept of the Universal Providence of God which expresses the perfection of His Providence appears to be still somewhat obscure to the understanding and intelligence of the Brahmo Samajists. They do not consider the operation of Divine Providence as extending further than that God created this universe equipped with all its forces and capacities which they say are constantly performing their functions quite independently. According to them, God, the Supreme, has no power to intervene or to bring about changes and alterations. In their false notion the firm and permanent basis of the laws of nature has rendered the All-Powerful redundant and idle, with no way left to Him to intervene. For instance, He knows of no way to restrain the heat-effects of a fiery object or to restrain the coldness of a freezing object or to stop the manifestation of the consuming

quality of fire; and if He knows of some such device, His knowledge in that respect does not extend beyond the frontiers of human knowledge in that context. In other words, that which man has discovered about the properties and nature of the cosmos and which has come within the purview of human experience defines the limits of God's powers and His absolute might and universal Providence cannot travel beyond those limits. That is to say, His powers and His wisdom are entirely confined to the discoveries so far made by man. It is obvious that such a belief is a total negation of the concept of His Universal Providence and Omnipotence, which are as unlimited as is His own Being and cannot be confined within the limits of any human law or regulation. The manner of the manifestation of Divine power is not limited. To define and limit the powers of God is tantamount to a claim of Divinity.

Powers possessed by the limitless Being must by their very nature be unlimited

It must be understood that the unlimited and limitless cannot be encompassed within the purview of any law. An object which is confined from beginning to end within known and understandable laws and no single aspect of which is outside their sphere being either unknown or unfathomable, must in its nature be a limited object. If, therefore, the Omnipotence and Universal Providence of the Supreme Lord are to be conceived as being within the province of limited and restricted laws, then that which has been accepted as being unlimited becomes necessarily limited. It is a colossal error of the Brahmo Samajists to try to confine the unlimited powers and Providence of God, the Exalted, within the compass of their narrow and limited experience, not realizing that matters which fall within the purview of a known fixed law, must necessarily be conceived as limited, while the wisdom and powers possessed by the limitless Being must by their very nature be unlimited. Can any sensible person claim that the Absolute Lord of might knows this or that method of creation and has no idea beyond

that? Are His unlimited powers to be assessed by human measures or can His unlimited and dominant wisdom fail to hold in its grasp the universe at any time? Without a doubt, His mighty hand has grasp of everything and the existence and survival of every particle of creation depends not on its own stable sources of birth but solely on His support and help. In front of His Divine Might extend endless fields of Power-manifestation, there being no frontier, internal or external. As it is possible that to mitigate the intensity of a flaming fire God may create external agents that could achieve that purpose, it is equally possible that the Supreme Lord might create an agent in the body of the fire to mitigate or nullify its property of combustion for there is nothing impossible for His limitless wisdom and powers. Having agreed that His wisdom and His powers are without limit, we must perforce accept that it is not possible to attain comprehensive knowledge of His wisdom and powers. We cannot, therefore, devise a law for His limitless wisdom and powers, for we cannot measure an object the boundaries of which are beyond our ken. We are a small and tiny speck of the world of man and are deficient in our knowledge of even this sphere. It would be mean and foolish on our part to seek to measure with this insignificant yardstick the endless wisdom and powers of the Almighty. The upshot of it is that the Brahmo Samajists do not believe in the Universal Providence of the Supreme Lord and His Perfect might which sustain and nourish the life of every particle, every moment and all the time and Whose subtle and impenetrable methods of control and regulation adopt incomputable numberless forms. Besides, the Brahmosamajists do not regard the Providence of God perfect and supreme even in the spiritual realm, for they consider God, the Supreme, too helpless and feeble to transmit His clear and undoubted word for the guidance of mankind as a manifestation of His Universal Providence.

They likewise do not believe completely in the *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) of God, the Exalted. Perfect *Rahmaniyyat* demands that as God, the Supreme, brought into being by His

special Might all the means needed for the development and sustenance of our physical bodies, and fashioned by His power hundreds of things like the sun and the moon and stars and air and clouds for the comfort of this evanescent life, similarly He should have sent His holy and luminous Word for our spiritual development and sustenance and for our comfort in the hereafter where misery and bliss are prolonged beyond count and should have bestowed on eager souls the knowledge they need, in full measure, thus delivering them Himself from all doubts and misgivings that spell death for them. The Brahmosamajists do not believe in this type of perfect *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness). In their view, God provided every kind of help to stuff the stomach of man and spared nothing in that respect, yet he could not provide any spiritual sustenance for man. In other words, God deliberately neglected the spiritual care of man, the only true and real care, and did not provide for that purpose means strong, powerful and effective such as He created for the sustenance of bodies, and left man at the mercy of his defective reason without providing from Himself a perfect light to aid human intelligence, which would have illumined its beclouded vision, thus enabling it to select the right path and to safeguard itself against the fatal consequences of error and unawareness.

The Brahmosamajists do not completely accept the *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) of God, the Supreme either. For, perfect *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) means that God, the Exalted, may be pleased to fill with clear and unveiled insights the eager souls in a measure corresponding to their spontaneous zeal, their enthusiastic sincerity and their earnest endeavours, and to open wide to them the heavenly gates corresponding to their opening of their hearts and to give them to drink in proportion to the degree of their thirst the delicious elixir of certitude that drinking their full they may be saved from death brought on by doubts and misgivings.

Brahmos conceive God as miserly and weak

The Brahmosamajists reject this truth. They consider that man

is so unlucky that even if he may yearn for union with the True Beloved with a river flowing out of his eyes and even if he were reduced to dust in his effort to meet that Loved Friend, he will not find Him. According to them God is so hard that He has no compassion for His seekers and would proffer no tranquillity to those who search Him through His special signs, and would not heal through His loving manifestations the stricken ones and leaves them to flounder in their own ideas and would not grant them aught of insight except their own random guess-work, until having spent their lives in their pursuit they perish in the end in their own darkness. But is it true that God, the Noble, is that hard or so devoid of compassion or so miserly or weak that He leaves His seekers floundering and dazed and keeps His door shut against those who knock and is not moved to compassion for those who run to Him in utter sincerity and would not grasp their hand and suffers those sincere seekers to fall into the pit and would not move forward a few paces towards them, refusing to cut short through His special manifestation the long tale of their hardships? Indeed, not so. Holy is He and far above that which they say about Him (6.101).

Similarly, the Brahmosamajists are unaware of the Divine attribute *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Requit). For, the true nature of Mastership of the Day of Requit is that the perfect Mastership of God, the Supreme, which calls for His sublime manifestations, should appear to render to men their dues in fullest measure, conforming to the dignity of His total Mastership. That is, first, the evidence of the total sovereignty of that True Master should be obvious in such perfect degree that all normal instrumentalities should drop out of the way with complete elimination of every kind of intervention and the Presence of the One Dominant Lord should be perceived clearly. When this perfect realisation has been experienced the requital should follow in its fullest measure. In other words, it should be perfect in both aspects as to its nature and as to its effect. As to its nature in the sense that every recipient of the requital should realise simultaneously

with the enforcement of the award, that it is in fact the requital of his deeds and at the same time it should be borne in upon him that the Executor of the award is, in truth, the Noble Lord of Universal Providence and none else. Certainty in both these respects should be such as to leave no room for doubt. As to its effect it should be so complete that it should encompass the heart and the soul and the exterior and the interior and the body and the life and every spiritual and bodily faculty and should be felt to be at once everlasting, unmitigated and without end so that one who has excelled in virtue may attain to his supreme beatitude which is the apogee of all bliss and one who has excelled in vice may reach the nadir of his misfortune, so that each group may attain to the superlative degree of requital that is within the range of possibility for it, that is, it should attain to a full and lasting requital which cannot manifest itself in this transient and deteriorating world, the pleasures and pains of which end with death. For its fullest dispensation the Sovereign Lord, has, in order to manifest His compassion and His wrath, in perfect measure, in other words in order to give complete expression to His attributes of grace and His attributes of glory, assigned another plane which is eternal and immune from decline, so that the Divine attribute of requital which cannot find full expression in this constricted and evanescent world, should come into full display in that eternal and vast plane, and that through those perfect and complete manifestations man may attain to the highest level of perfect observation that is within the range of possibility of his human capacities.

Since the highest degree of requital, even rationally, calls for an award pervading the exterior and interior and body and life of the subject, fully and completely, perpetually and compulsorily, and at the same time the highest degree of faith in the existence of the True Sovereign is contingent on His open appearance after total annihilation of all instrumentalities, this sublime truth which comprises the utmost limit of insight and utmost award will be realised only when all the above-mentioned conditions which reason endorses as its char-

acteristics, have been established. For, the highest degree of insight is not possible of attainment unless the beauty of the True Sovereign is observed with the highest degree of certitude; in other words, the expression and manifestation should be so perfect and complete as to admit of no imaginable increase. By the same token, utmost requital is not possible unless both body and soul should, at the time of requital, be rewarded or punished, according to the degree of their obedience or disobedience and arrogance in their early life, and the heaving ocean of consummate Judgment should encompass equally the exterior and the interior by its full encirclement.

The Brahmosamajists reject this verity also. In fact the very phenomenon of this supreme truth is, according to them, beyond the pale of verification and, according to their conception, man is not destined to attain to the loftiest insight nor to suffer consummate requital. In fact, Judgment is, in their view, a fanciful idea which has no more solid foundation than fertile imagination, and that in fact no reward and no punishment will be meted out to man by God. Only wishful thinking will assume the shape of happiness and misery and there would be no internal or external reality that would descend on good persons as bliss and on evil persons as visitation, by the special determination of God, the Supreme. It is thus no part of their belief that God is the Dispenser of requital and that He would, by His express design, favour His virtuous servants with beatitude and perpetual grace, the perfect taste of which these fortunate ones will enjoy not only subjectively but also experience in observable and palpable shape and no human faculty, external or internal, shall be excluded from its enjoyment, appropriate to its condition, and the body and the soul shall both participate, in torment or enjoyment, as the case may be. In short, their doctrine is altogether averse to this truth and is totally opposed to this concept, so much so that because of their lack of inner sight they take exception to the mention of physical appurtenances of salvation in the hereafter detailed in the Holy Quran as necessary in reference to the external capacities, for the consummation of the sublime beatitude,

and, similarly to the mention of physical appurtenances of punishment, in the hereafter, detailed in the Holy Quran as necessary for the consummation of the great misfortune. How woeful is the mentality that finds fault with an obvious and perfect truth! It is a pity that these people fail to appreciate that, for attainment to sublime bliss or being subjected to the great misfortune, the only course is that God, the Most High, may be pleased to confer requital in full measure which means that Judgment should be overwhelming both internally and externally, and that no external or internal capacity should be left out of its reach. This is the same climax of the Great Requital which has been called in the Holy Quran by its other names, heaven and hell. It has been stated, in His Perfect Writ, that heaven and hell comprise both physical and spiritual types of Requital and it has dealt with both kinds in detail, in its text, dilating fully on the nature of both the sublime beatitude and the great misfortune. But as we have just stated, the Brahmosamajists have not the least inkling of this great truth or of any other truth dealt with above (Baraheen Ahmadiyyah, pp. 382-438, Footnote 11).

The grace of Providence (*Rabubiyyat*) is vaster, more perfect and more comprehensive than any other that can be imagined by the mind or talked about by tongues. Next to it is the general grace operative exclusively in respect of beasts and men and this is the grace of the attribute *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness). Allah has mentioned it in His word Ar-Rahman and has specified it for the animates, excluding altogether minerals and vegetables. Next to it is another exclusive grace, that of the attribute *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) and this grace descends only on a person who strives hard to earn the expected beneficence. It is thus reserved for those who believe and obey their Noble Lord as has been made clear in His word: He is Compassionate towards the faithful (33.44). It is thus confirmed by the text of the Quran that *Rahimiyyat* is reserved for the believers. As for *Rahmaniyyat*, it certainly extends to all the animates, so much so that even Satan partook of it by the leave of the Lord of the universe. Thus *Rahimiyyat*

comprises beneficence that is contingent on effort, and is reserved for the believers to the exclusion of the disbelievers and the misguided. There is yet another grace, besides *Rahimiyyat* and that is the grace of total award and requital – and the attainment by the virtuous of the consequences of their acts of virtue and good deeds. It is to this that the Lord of Honour has referred in His word *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Requital). This indeed is the last of the graces of the Lord of Universal Providence. There is no mention of any other grace after this in the Book of Allah, the All-Knowing.

The difference between this grace and *Rahimiyyat* is that *Rahimiyyat* in truth leads the wayfarer to the point which is the means of receiving the bounty, and the grace of *Malikiyyat*, the grace of the Master of Requital, leads the wayfarer to the bounty itself, the final award, the ultimate desire and the extreme objective. Thus it is evident that this is the extreme grace of the graces from the Divine Presence and the ultimate object of human creation. All graces terminate with it and the circle of insight and the circle of dispensation is thereby completed.

Have you not known that the chain of Mosaic succession ended at the *Malike Yaumiddeen* stage and Jesus appeared at this last stage and injustice and tyranny were changed into justice and benevolence without war and warriors as is implied in the word *Ad-Deen*. This word is used in the sense of forbearance and clemency in Arabic idiom and according to all Arabic scholars.

Advent of Promised Messiah resembles the Hour of Resurrection

The similarity between our Prophet (on whom be the peace and blessings of Allah) and Moses and the similarity between the Successors of Moses and of our Noble Prophet entailed that there should appear, during the latter period of this Dispensation, a man in the likeness of the Messiah, who should

call people to Allah with kindly admonition, dismiss war, sheathe the sword that destroys and grant new life to people through the bright signs of the Gracious One (Rahman) and not by sword or spear. His time will thus be like the Hour of Resurrection and the Day of Requit. He will fill the earth with light even as before him it was filled with tyranny and falsehood. Allah had determined that He would show mankind a sample of the Day of Requit before its actual appearance and bestow new life on mankind after the death of righteousness. That is the very time of the Promised Messiah, that is to say, of this humble servant, and it is referred to in the phrase *yaumiddeen* (Day of Requit) in this verse. So let those reflect who are given to reflection.

Day of Requit means drawing forth from their graves the spiritually dead

The revelation of these Divine attributes had among its purposes the one that the Supreme Being meant to expound to His Prophet, namely, their reality and the demonstration of their nature through a variety of illustrative signs. He, therefore, sustained and nurtured His Prophet and his companions in a special manner proving thereby that He was the Lord of Universal Providence (*Rabbil-aalameen*). Next, He bestowed upon them, in full measure, His blessings by means of His *Rahmaniyyat* (gratuitous grace), independent of any effort on their part, thereby proving that He was the Most Gracious of all the gracious ones. Then through His *Rahimiyyat* He showered His support on them at the time of their striving and helped them with his spirit by His clemency and granted them peace of mind and sent down on them perpetual tranquillity. Next, He determined to show them a sample of the Day of Requit, and He conferred on them sovereignty and *Khilafat* and joined their enemies to those doomed to destruction and annihilated the disbelievers, wiping them out totally. Then He rehearsed the Resurrection, drawing forth from their graves those spiritually dead and reanimated them so that they entered

the faith of Allah in legions, hastening to it singly and in groups. The Companions of the Holy Prophet thus witnessed the dead coming to life and experienced plentiful rain after a period of drought. That period was named the Day of Requital, for therein the truth triumphed and hosts of disbelievers joined the faith. Allah also determined to demonstrate these attributes among the latter generations of the Muslims so that the latter portion of the followers of Muhammad (on whom be the peace and blessings of Allah) should resemble their first part, qualitatively, so that the similarity of Muslims with former people may be established, as indicated in this Surah in His words: The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. Now then ponder deeply the words of this verse.

The time of the Promised Messiah has been termed the Day of Requital for it is the time of the revival of faith when people will be gathered together to march ahead with the certainty of conviction. It is a patent fact and there can be no doubt about it that He has sustained and nourished us in our time in a variety of ways and has showered on us His graces of *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* in an ample measure as He showered them on His former Prophets, Messengers, saints and friends.

Remains the fourth of these attributes, namely, the manifestation of the role of Sovereign or Master of the Day of Requital. He has appointed this manifestation as one of the miracles in support of the Promised Messiah and has appointed him judge and a representative of the Heavenly Government, supporting him with invisible aid as well as with brilliant signs. You will presently learn its meaning when we arrive at the exposition of: Those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. I say not this on my own but I have been granted these profound truths from the Presence of My Lord. He who ponders these with deep deliberation and reflects over these verses will realise that Allah has foretold in them the advent of the Messiah and indicated the time of his appearance, a time full of blessings.

Know then that these verses are, as it were, like a drawing

of the semblance of Allah the Creator of the universe, though in truth Allah, the Supreme, is far above any semblance. This also helps to illustrate the meaning of the credo: There is none worthy of worship save Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger; which is the foundation of faith and bliss. Because of these attributes Allah becomes entitled to obedience and worthy of exclusive worship, for, He sends down these graces deliberately. When, therefore, you proclaim: There is none worthy of worship save Allah; it means that worship is not permissible of any deity, male or female; it is due only to the Being Who is far above the reach of the senses and comprehends all those attributes, especially *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat*, which are the premier requisites of the Being worthy of worship.

Know then that Allah is a substantive noun and no one can comprehend its nature, for, it is the substantive name of the Being and the Being is not a matter within comprehension. Those who treat the word Allah as a derivative and proceed to define and interpret it only spin out falsehood and nonsense. The nature of the Creator is far above imagination and beyond the reach of conjecture.

Meanings of Muhammadiyyat and Ahmadiyyat

When you proclaim Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, it means that Muhammad is the mirror of the attributes of the Supreme Being and His Vicegerent in respect of them and the completer of the circle of Divine reflection and seal of Divine revelations. The upshot then of all that I see and experience is that our Holy Prophet is the best of all created beings and is the manifestation of the two attributes of our Lord Most High, that is to say *Muhammadiyyat* and *Ahmadiyyat*. His Companions inherited the substance of the glory of Muhammadiyyat, as you have learnt from that which has already been said. Their swords are highly esteemed for their cutting off the root of the polytheists and their memory is not forgettable by the worshippers of created beings. They acquitted themselves

worthily of the attribute Muhammadiyyat and caused many to taste of their valour in war.

Then there is the attribute of Ahmadiyyat which is dyed in the colours of grace and is aflame with the light of love. This is inherited by the Messiah who was raised at the time when all material resources had been cut off and the Muslim people had been rent asunder. There were few helpers and friends and an abundance of foes who had embarked on the offensive. The Messiah has been raised at such a time so that Allah may show a sample of the Day of Requital after the nights of darkness and the break-up of the might of Islam and of the majesty of Muslim kings and in the period of utter helplessness of the Muslims. In this age our faith has become an alien on earth. Its rule is confined to the heavens. The people of the earth have not recognised its worth and are arrayed against it like enemies. Therefore, at this hour of weakness and decline of power, a servant from among His servants has been raised so that he may revive this drought-stricken age like rainfall. He is that Promised Messiah who has come at the hour of the infirmity of Islam, so that Allah may show a sample of the Gathering and of the Resurrection and of Doomsday and of the Day of Requital, a bounty from Him after the spiritual death of mankind like beasts. Know then that this is the Day of Requital. You will appreciate the truth of that which we have said, though after a little while.

Age of dominance of disbelievers prophesied by Holy Quran

Here is a point that has been revealed to me, so listen to it with deep attention. It is that Allah has chosen these four attributes for Himself in order that He may demonstrate them in this very world, this side of death. So He indicated in His word: To Him belongs all praise in the first period and in the last (28.71); that this demonstration would be vouchsafed in the beginning of Islam as well as in its latter period after the decline of the Muslims. In the same manner at another place He has said (and He is the most truthful in speech): A large

party from among the early believers and a large party from among the later ones (56.40–41). Thus He divided the time of guidance and help and support in two periods, the period of our Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and the latter period, the period of the Messiah of the Muslims. He has also said: And among others from among them who have not yet joined them (62.4); indicating the Promised Messiah and his community and those who follow them.

It is thus established through the clear verses of the Quran that these attributes were manifested in the day of our Holy Prophet and will also be manifested in the latter days. That is the time when sin and vice will flourish and virtue and truth will become scarce. Islam will be uprooted as a tree is uprooted. It will become like a person bitten by a snake and Muslims will be like the dead. Faith will be pounded beneath terrible disasters and a succession of calamities. That is what you are witnessing in this age. You are witnessing all kinds of sinfulness and disbelief and polytheism and rebellion and you can see how the wicked have become numerous and the virtuous and sympathisers have become scarce. It looks as if the law would disappear and the Muslims be submerged. This is a catastrophe that has befallen suddenly and a calamity that is overwhelming and an evil that has erupted instantly and a fire that has consumed Arab and non-Arab alike. Notwithstanding all this, our age is not an age calling for war nor a time for sharp swords nor for slashing throats and binding in fetters nor for dragging the misguided ones in chains and shackles and enforcing decrees of death and destruction. This indeed is the age of the dominance of the disbelievers and of their glory. The Muslims have been afflicted with humiliation because of their deeds.

By Day of Resurrection is meant day of Promised Messiah—final triumph of Islam

How can there be an occasion for war when no one is interdicted from fasting and prayer and pilgrimage and payment of *zakat*

nor from chastity and piety; nor has any disbeliever drawn his sword to force the Muslims to renounce their faith or to cut them into pieces. Justice demands that sword should be raised only to meet the sword and pen to counter pen. Today we grieve over the falsehoods that tongues and pens have broadcast. By means of falsehoods have the Books of Allah been maligned and their truths been covered up. The mansion of the Muslim people was attacked and demolished and it became like a town with its battlements breached, or like an orchard with its plants burnt out, or like a garden with its fruits and flowers destroyed and its buds plucked and scattered, or like a country that was once prosperous whose streams have now run dry, or like fortified castles now ruined with not a vestige left, the vandals having shattered them to bits. It began to be said about the Muslim people that it had perished, and the announcers pronounced its obituary and its story was told and the publishers gave it due publicity.

But every tide must ebb and every rise has a decline. As is well known when a flood reaches a firm mountain it halts; and when night approaches daybreak its darkness is dissipated, as Allah, the Supreme, has said: Witness the night when it approaches its end, and witness the dawn when it begins to spread (81.18-19). Allah has made the break of dawn a necessary corollary of the extreme darkness of night. Similarly in His command: Earth, swallow up thy waters (11.45) He has made the height of the flood a sign of its decline. Accordingly, Allah resolved to restore to the believing Muslims the days of their earlier glory and to show them that He is their Lord and that He is *Rahman* (Gracious) and *Rahim* (Compassionate) and Master of the Day of Requit, the day when the dead will be raised. You are certainly witnessing the *Rabubiyyat* (Providence) of Allah, the Bountiful, during this period and His graciousness for men and beasts in the physical sphere. You see how He has provided new means and beneficial resources. Industries and manufactures abound, the like of which was not known in the past, and wonders unparalleled in the earlier ages. You find a novelty in everything that

concerns a voyager or a resident, a native or a stranger, a healthy person or a sick person, a belligerent or a forbearing peace-loving one, enjoyable things or hardships, as if the world has indeed undergone a total change. Doubtless all that is the manifestation of His Supreme Providence (*Rabubiyyat*) and pure Graciousness (*Rahmaniyyat*). In the same way you witness this *Rabubiyyat* (Providence) and *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) and *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) in the sphere of religion. All these matters have been facilitated for the seekers of the knowledge of the Divine and the work of propagation and dissemination of spiritual sciences has been made universally easy and signs have been sent down for those who worship Allah and seek tranquillity from the Presence of the Supreme Being. The sun and the moon were eclipsed in the month of Ramadhan and camels have been discarded as a means of rapid transport, except in rare instances, and you will in a short while see new means of transport on the Mecca-Medina road. The learned and the learners have been helped with abundance of books and many means of acquiring knowledge; mosques are frequented and worshippers are protected and ways of peace and propagation of the faith have been opened up. All this is the grace of *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion). We are bound to testify that these facilities and amenities had no parallel in the past ages, that no ear had heard of their like nor had any eye seen their equal. Mark well then this *Rahimiyyat* of our Sublime Lord. It is due to His *Rahimiyyat* that we can now publish a whole lot of books on our religion in the space of days which our predecessors could not do in years; and today we are able to get news of the farthest parts of the earth in hours which our fore-runners could not have obtained except after years of hardships and effort. Verily, the gates of *Rabubiyyat* and *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* have been opened wide for us for gathering every kind of good and the ways towards it have been multiplied to such a degree that it is beyond the power of man to compute them. When did such facilities ever exist for our predecessors, preachers and callers to Islam? Verily the earth has been given a good shaking for

our benefit until it has disgorged its hidden treasures. Canals have been dug and rivers have dried up and new means of transport have been invented and camels have been discarded. Our forerunners did not see the bounties that we have seen and at every step there is a new bounty, so much so that they are beyond counting. With all this the hardening and death of hearts has become widespread, as if all men had died and there was not left aught of spiritual insight in them, except in a very few of them whose number is negligible because of its smallness. We have realised through these bright manifestations of the attributes of *Rabubiyyat* (Providence), *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) and *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) which are like portents and by the multiplicity of deaths by the poison of misguidance that the Day of gathering and resurrection is certainly nigh, nay, is at the door, as has become manifest from the appearance of these facilities and signs. Verily *Rububiyyat*, *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* are billowing like the waves of the oceans and are manifesting themselves continuously, running like mighty rivers. Thus there is not the least doubt that the hour of gathering and of resurrection has arrived. This is the way of Allah, and it has manifested itself in the time of the Companions in the choicest of all creation, the Holy Prophet of Islam. Nor is there any doubt about its being the Day of Requital and the Day of Muster and the Day of the total Lordship of the Lord of Heavens and of the manifestation of its signs in the hearts of the dwellers of the earth. There is no doubt also that this day is the day of the Messiah, the Judge appointed by Allah, the Best of judges, and verily it is the resurrection after the death of mankind and its parallel truly appeared in the time of Jesus and in the time of the Seal of the Prophets. Reflect hard then and be not one of the heedless (Ijazul Masih, pp. 136–160).

What is the secret underlying the introduction of the Fatiha by the Holy Quran with the attributes *Al-hamdu lillahe*, *Rabbil aalameen*, *Ar Rahmanir Rahim*, *Malike Yaumiddeen*? It adopted this style to refute those who deny the existence of God and His attributes Rabb (Lord of Providence), Rahman

(Gracious), Rahim (Compassionate), Malike Yaumiddeen (Master of the Day of Judgment). Remember, he who does not pay due heed to the words and phrases of the Holy Quran which are canonical, does not truly appreciate the value of the Quran (Al-Hakam, Nov. 10, 1900, p. 4).*

These four attributes of God, the Supreme, namely *Rabbil Aalameen, Ar Rahmanir-Rahim, Malike Yaumiddeen*, mentioned in Surah Fatiha, though they manifest themselves continuously in the cosmos, in fact embody prophecies which receive scant attention from people. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) illustrated the operation of these four attributes in his own person, for it is not possible to grasp a truth clearly without illustration. How was the attribute Rabbil-aalameen illustrated in the life of the Holy Prophet? He grew up in a state of extreme adversity. There was no school or seminary where he could have the opportunity of developing his religious talents or his spiritual faculties. He had no contact with any cultured people nor did he have a chance of acquiring elementary general education, nor leisure to obtain knowledge of the subtle and abstruse sciences of philosophy. Yet he was granted a bounty in the shape of the Holy Quran in contrast with whose high and righteous instruction all other sciences pale into insignificance. One who studies the Holy Quran with some attention and reflects over it will at once appreciate that all the philosophies and sciences of the world are as nothing compared to it and that all the wise men and philosophers are left way behind it (Al-Hakam, April 17, 1900).

Holy Prophet Muhammad was perfect manifestation of principal Divine attributes

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him)

*Note: Here He also said *Rabbil-aalameen* (Lord of Universal Providence); He said this to show that He is the Lord of the elements as well as of the compounds, for elements owe their origin to command and compounds to the process of creation.

was the perfect manifestation of the four attributes of Allah, the Most High, described in Surah Fatiha. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was the manifestation of the first attribute *Rabbil aalameen* Lord of Universal Providence) as Allah, the Supreme, has said; We have sent Thee as a mercy for the Universe (21.108). As *Rabbil aalameen* signifies universal providence, the grace, blessings, guidance and the message of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) were assigned to the whole world and the entire universe. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) became also the manifestation of the next attribute Al-Rahman, for there was no return or recompense for his beneficence and benevolence: I seek from you no recompense for it (25.58). Again, he is the manifestation of the attribute *Rahimiyyat*. The hardships suffered by him and his companions in the cause of Islam and the pains they endured in this behalf were not in vain. In fact, they were all rewarded and the expression Rahim was applied in the Holy Quran to the Prophet of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). He is also the manifestation of the attribute *Malike Yaumiddeen*. Its full manifestation occurred on the day of the fall of Mecca. Such a perfect manifestation of the four Divine attributes which in fact are Mother attributes never took place in the case of any other Prophet (Al-Hakam, August 10, 1903).

The manifestation of *Al-hamdu lillahe* (All praise belongs to Allah) took place in the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) in a dual capacity, namely, as Muhammad and as Ahmad. By recounting the four attributes of the Perfect Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), He ascribed them to his honoured companions also – in other words, Allah, the Exalted, desired them to reflect His own attributes. Fana fillah – losing oneself in Allah – implies, therefore, that man should seek absorption in Divine attributes. Now, observe how He demonstrated the practical exemplification of these four attributes in the honoured companions.

Holy Prophet manifested Rahmaniyyat through his example

When the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was born, the people of Mecca were weak and helpless like an infant dependent on milk feed. In other words they were in need of providential care. They lived like barbarians and beasts. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) fed them on milk like a mother, to nurture them. Then, Allah, of His *Rahmaniyyat* granted them means totally independent of any effort on their part. He granted them a bounty like the Noble Quran and an example like the Noble Prophet. Then He showed them a manifestation of *Rahimiyyat*. Whatever effort they put forth He rewarded it. He accepted their faith, granted them steadfastness and perseverance and did not let them slide into misguidance like the Christians. Effort is blessed in that God bestows steadfastness in return. None of the companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) ever turned on his heels and abjured the faith while thousands of the associates of other Prophets turned back. Five hundred followers of Jesus turned back on a single day and of the highly trusted disciples one betrayed him for thirty dirhams and another cursed him three times. The truth of the matter is that the capacity and strength of the preceptor surely affect the disciples; the more effective and perfect is the preceptor, the more effective and durable will be the results of his fostering care.

This is another proof of the perfectness and superiority over all others of the purifying qualities of our Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) that the people trained by him were so steadfast and resolute that when they were tried they did not spare their properties or their lives in serving him. On the other hand, it is clear evidence of the immaturity of Jesus that the very people he had trained betrayed him to death and cursed him. In short, it was the effectiveness of the *Rahimiyyat* of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) that his companions were so steadfast and so resolute.

Party of Promised Messiah included among Companions of Holy Prophet

The practical demonstration of the attribute *Malike Yaum-iddeen* (Master of the Day of Requit) in the case of the Companions of the Holy Prophet was that God bestowed upon them a distinction in comparison with their enemies. In other words, the perceptiveness of and love for the Divine that they were granted in this world was their reward in this life. These four attributes were thus manifested in the Companions. It is a matter for deep reflection, however, that the group of Companions was not confined to those who passed on in the early age of Islam; there is yet another party mentioned by Allah, the Exalted, in the Holy Quran who are included among the Companions. These will be the ones accompanying the manifestation of the name Ahmad, as has been said: And among others from among them who have not yet joined them (62.4). That is to say the Group of Companions is not restricted to this party only, the party of the Promised Messiah will also be included among the Companions. The commentators are agreed that this verse refers to the party of the Promised Messiah. The words 'from among them' signify that their spiritual concentration and grace-absorbing qualities will be like those of the Companions. The process of the training of the Companions by the Holy Prophet was visible. But these will also be under the fostering care of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) though in their case the process will not be visible. That is why all the Divines have applied the name Companions to this party also. The manner in which the four attributes found their manifestation through the Companions was bound to be repeated in the case of those from among them who have not yet joined them (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1901).

These four attributes are not mere words. In fact Allah has through them disclosed the doctrinal confusion in the world. There are some who deny His attribute of Creation, some reject His *Rahmaniyyat*, some repudiate His *Rahimiyyat* and

some His attribute *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Requit). Such conflict of beliefs is found in all faiths. Islam alone is the perfect faith that has set forth all the perfect attributes. This Surah, which is called the Mother of the Book, is recited several times in each of the five daily services so that the worshippers may reflect on how blessed is the religion of Islam that furnishes this teaching. The God of Islam is not such that He was born of a woman as was Jesus who has been deified; nor such that He is incapable of creating; nor such that He must withhold the grant of eternal salvation, there being only a limited number of self-existing souls that He repeatedly brings back to the world and were He to grant them eternal salvation there would be nothing left with which He could carry on the world.

Islam expounds such perfect Divine attributes that if the whole world were to combine in finding fault with them it would not be able to do so. If He suffers from so many shortcomings, as is alleged by the followers of different faiths how can He undertake to guard every one? God must possess perfect attributes. If that were not so, how could one put any hope in Him, and what could one ask of Him? Our Lord has all the perfect attributes. Pray to Him, therefore: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. Indeed, Allah, the Exalted, by setting out His four attributes, teaches us how to pray: Guide us along the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, and not of those with whom Thou hast been wroth, nor of those who have gone astray. This is not a mere hypothesis. Allah, the Supreme, knew what was to happen. Therefore, He warned: You will be punished in the same way as the earlier people were punished if you behave like them. That is, if you do not keep straight in the way of God, you too will incur His wrath (Al-Badr., Jan. 9, 1908).

If one ponders these attributes of God, the Supreme, *Rabb* (Lord), *Rahman* (Gracious), *Rahim* (Compassionate) *Malike Yaumiddeen* (Master of the Day of Requit) one is filled with wonder: how marvellous is God. Under the care of such a Lord

one could never be bereft or unblest. *Rabbil-aalameen* (Lord of the worlds) indicates that His fostering care will be operative in the hereafter also (Al-Badr, Nov. 24, 1904).

All Divine attributes and Divine works mentioned in the Holy Quran are qualities of the name Allah. It is, for instance, said *Alhamdu lillahe Rabbil-aalameen* (All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of Universal Providence) (Haqiqatul Wahi, p. 142).

Meaning of settlement of God on throne

God, the Supreme, has four attributes which manifest His glory in full splendour and reflect perfectly the countenance of His eternal everlasting Being. After describing His four attributes in Surah Fatiha, God, the Exalted, has directed man to acknowledge His title to his worship in the words: We worship Thee alone and implore only Thy help. In other words: O God, Possessor of these four attributes, we worship Thee alone, for Thy Providence (*Rabubiyyat*) comprehends all the worlds, Thy Graciousness (*Rahmaniyyat*) comprehends all the worlds, Thy Compassion (*Rahimiyyat*) comprehends all the worlds and Thy power of requital (*Malike Yaumiddeen*) comprehends the entire universe and no one shares in Thy beauty and beneficence, and we associate no one in Thy worship. Now it should be clearly understood that in this Surah God, the Most High, has declared these four attributes as constituting a complete manifestation of His Divinity and He has based on this description the conclusion that the Divine Being, possessing these four attributes, is alone worthy of worship. Indeed, these four attributes are perfect in every respect and encompass like a circle all the essentials and fundamentals of Divinity, for they comprise His originaive attribute, His medial attributes of *Rahmaniyyat* and *Rahimiyyat* and also His final attribute of requital. In principle, nothing that proceeds from Allah, the Sublime, is outside the range of these four attributes. These four attributes thus reveal the countenance of God, the Supreme, in full excellence. *Istawa alal arsh* (He settled

Himself on the Throne) signifies that when these four attributes of God, the Supreme, manifested themselves through the creation of the universe, then God became fully settled on His Throne with no essential attribute left out, all the attributes being resplendent in full glory as, when a king sits on his throne, all his glory is displayed at the time of his installation. A command goes forth to prepare a host of things to meet royal requirements and they are prepared forthwith and that is the true nature of Universal Providence; then those in attendance are loaded with gifts and bounties, purely as an act of princely grace without any service on their part. Thirdly, those who are engaged in service are aided with the necessary means to discharge their assignments properly; and, fourthly, the gates of requital are opened wide, some are doomed and some are set free. These four attributes are concomittants of assumption of the throne. The Divine enforcement of these four attributes over the universe means the settlement of God, the Supreme, on His Throne which is named *arsh*.

The meaning of the expression that four angels uphold His throne is that four angels are assigned as functionaries of these four attributes to manifest them to the world. Under these angels are four stars called sustainers of species which have been called gods in the Vedas. They distribute the essence of these four attributes in the cosmos and are, so to say, upholding the spiritual Throne. The idolators believed, as appears from the Vedas, that these gods possessed these four attributes independently. That is why they have been so lavishly praised and magnified in the Vedas and Prayers and supplications have been addressed to them. Here God, the Exalted, has expounded that these four whom the idol-worshippers regard as their deities, are not at all worthy of worship but are, all four of them, servants bearing the Throne of God, the Supreme, that is to say, they reflect these Divine attributes as through a mirror and that *arsh* (Throne) signifies the attributes that are concomittants of assumption of the throne as has just been explained.

Idolators describe Divine attributes as gods

We have just stated that Rabb means *devta*, or Lord. The Holy Quran thus commences with the Surah which says: All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of Universal Providence, that is, all magnification and praise should be addressed to God Who is the *devta* of all the worlds. He is the Rabb of the Universe, the Rahman of the Universe, the Rahim of the Universe and the Malik of Requital of the Universe. There is no God other than He.

At the time when the Holy Quran was revealed the worship of a multiplicity of deities was rife. The Greeks had coined a name for gods of every species and the expression God of species was synonymous in India with the word *devta*. The Word of God, therefore, first dealt with these false gods and proclaimed: All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. In other words, He is the Lord of all species and not of one or two and He alone should be worshipped and magnified and praised. It is wrong to extol the praises of others or to worship them.

Thus the attributes that the idolators had assigned to the four *devtas* (deities) were proclaimed as belonging to Allah, the Supreme, and His Being was proclaimed as the sole source of these attributes.

The idol-worshippers had from antiquity believed that God had four basic attributes, the source of all other attributes – creating, granting the necessary means, fostering those who strived and at the end awarding reward and punishment. They ascribed these four attributes to four *Devtas* (deities). The people of Noah also had four deities and in terms of these attributes the idolators of Arabia had set up Lat, Manat, Uzza and Hubal. They believed that these four sustained the world by their volition, each according to his special power, and that they were their intercessors, leading them to God. This is evident from the verse: We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah (39.4).

Holy Quran destroys all deities set up by followers of various religions

As we have said, the Vedas also inculcate the praise and adoration of these four deities. Other deities are also mentioned, but the principal deities who gave birth to other deities or whose off-shoots are the others, are only four, for the number of their functions is also limited to four. The first aim of the Holy Quran, therefore, was to destroy the deities of the Vedas and of other creeds and to demonstrate that these were pure misconceptions that people had set up gods of different species and that these were in fact four exclusive attributes of God, the Supreme. In a manner these lifeless *devtas* uphold these four attributes which constitute the Throne, like servants and servitors.

Thus the Muslims worship God, the Master; but the Arya Samajists regard as deities their false gods who uphold the Throne, that is to say, the four attributes of God, the Supreme, like servants and serfs and bondsmen. In fact they are servants of servants, for there are other powers that are dominant over them which have been called Malaik (angels) who sustain the powers of these *devtas* (deities), of whom one is called, in the language of the law, Gabriel, another Michael, another Izrael, and yet another Israfeel. The Sanatanists also believe in angels of this type and call them *jum* (Nasime Davat, p. 85. Footnote).

Fatiha Rebuts Aryas and Sanatanists

The Surah Fatiha which is recited in every *rakaa* of the five daily services deals implicitly with all creeds. For instance, it proclaims: All praise belongs to Allah the Lord of the worlds. That is to say, all excellences pertain to God, the Creator of all the worlds; the *Rahman*, that is, Creator without reference to any previous deeds and Bestower of bounties without reference to any effort on the part of the subject; the *Rahim*, rewarder of effort; *Malike Yaumiddeen*, Master of the Day of Requital. These four attributes refute all creeds. Some reject

the idea that God is the Creator of the worlds. They assert that souls and matter are self-existing and eternal like God and that souls and all their capacities, faculties and properties which have been described in large tomes, and particles of matter and all their potentialities are like-wise self-existing and yet in spite of their inherent qualities of mutual attraction and repulsion, they needed God to put them together. This is the sect to whom Allah, the Most High, has pointed and refuted in the phrase *Rabbil-aalameen* (the Lord Creator-Sustainer of the Universe).

Another sect has been refuted in the phrase Ar-Rahman. This is the Sanatan Dharm sect. They believe that everything emanated from God but they aver that there is no such thing as Divine grace. According to them, all He does is to reward works. If a person is born a male it is so because of his deeds in a previous incarnation, and if a person is born a female it is so because of her deeds. Even the necessities of life like beasts and vegetables owe their existence as such to their respective deeds. In brief, these people deny God His attribute Rahman (Gracious), the God who created the earth, the sun, the moon and stars and air for us to breathe and to hear. For light He created the sun and the moon and for breathing air, and created them at a time when even a trace of those who breathe and walk about did not exist. Can then one boast and assert that all this was created because of one's deeds? Can one claim that the sun and the moon and air are the rewards of one's efforts? The Divine attribute of *Rahmaniyyat* (graciousness) refutes the sect that does not regard God as the Bestower of bounties without reference to our works and efforts.

Next is the Divine Compassion and Judgment of God, but as they know no God how would they believe in Judgment? After enumerating these four attributes, God directs: O you who believe affirm: We serve Thee alone and implore Thee alone for help. In other words: O Lord of these four attributes we worship Thee alone and seek Thy help in performing it.

The observation that four angels uphold the Throne of Allah, the Supreme, means that the manifestation of these four

attributes is clearly perceivable and that if these four were not in operation or even if one of them were not in operation it would mean a drawback in the Divinity of the Divine (Al-Hakam, Jan. 2, 1908).

Fatiha Rebuts False Religions

By describing His four perfect attributes in the Fatiha, Allah, the Supreme, has refuted all current false creeds which are widespread in the world. This Surah which is called the Mother of the Book is recited in every *rakaa* of the five daily services, for it comprises the whole teachings of the Islamic faith and is an epitome of the Holy Quran. By describing these four attributes the Sublime Lord desired to highlight the fact that Islam is a highly blessed religion. It invites to the God who was not born of a woman like the god of the Christians. Nor is He like the god of the Arya Samajists who has no power to grant eternal salvation and pleads falsely the excuse of the limited character of human deeds, while the truth of the matter is that he has no power to save. Souls being self-existent like him he has no power to create any more. Were he to grant eternal salvation to deserving souls a time would come when all souls having been saved would go out of his control and his mastery over them would terminate. Therefore, he keeps in the balance one sin outstanding against each soul, and thus keeps the world running in cycles of existence. The God of Islam, however, is so Holy and Almighty that if the whole world were to join hands to find the least fault with Him it would not succeed in doing so. Our God is the Creator of all the worlds. He is free from every defect and shortcoming. For, how could one suffering from a fault be God and how could we pray to him and what hopes could we repose in one who is imperfect and far from being perfect? But Islam proclaims the Mighty God free from every fault to Whom we may address our prayers and in Whom we can place all hope. That is why He has taught us in the Fatiha to address the prayer to Him: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. He has taught this prayer so that you

may not rest content with mere profession of faith, but should strive in a manner that should make you recipients of such favours as He bestows on those of His creatures who win nearness to Him (Al-Hakam, Jan. 6, 1908).

Evil doers suffer a living death and pass on prematurely

If we were to try to count the blessings of God, the Exalted, and to take stock of His favours and bounties, we never could number them. His blessings both spiritual and physical are all-embracing. In Surah Fatiha, the first chapter of the Holy Quran, of which the rest of the Quran is a detailed exposition and a commentary and which is recited repeatedly in the five daily services, He is named *Rabbil-aalameen*, that is, One from Whom, through His Providence, mankind receive life and progress in every state and every place. Deep reflection would reveal that the survival, prosperity, comfort, tranquillity, security and happiness of man are indeed derived from this Divine attribute. Then, if Allah were to suspend for a moment the operation of His *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness), the universe would suddenly go to ruin. Allah is Rabb, that is the Maintainer and the Sustainer. Allah has invested man with both spiritual and physical capacities. If capacities had not been bestowed what progress could man have made? Even for physical advancement one should sing His praises that by His grace and mercy, He endowed man with talents and equipped him with the capacity to advance. Then He is *Malike Yaumiddeen*, Master of the Day of Requit. In a manner requital takes place in this world also. It is our daily observation that a thief commits burglary and gets away with it once or twice but is one day apprehended and suffers for his misdeeds in jail. The same is the case with the adulterer, the drunkard and others who indulge freely in different types of vice. God exercises His forbearance and overlooks their defaults and covers them up for a while. But if they persist they suffer different kinds of

afflictions and their lives become a misery. This is a foretaste of the hell of the hereafter. In the same way, God does not let go waste the righteous conduct of those who pursue virtue steadfastly and observe the commands of God as the primary mission of their lives. Their righteousness bears fruit in good time and becomes the means of procuring for them a replica of paradise in this very life. The evil-doers, adulterers, drunkards and the vicious not only have no time to think of God or of the Day of Requit, they lose their health, well being, peace and higher capacities in this very life and spend the rest of their days in great anguish and utter despair. They become afflicted with tuberculosis, ptosis, palsy and all manner of dangerous and painful maladies. Thus they suffer a living death and at last pass on prematurely (Al-Hakam, July 14, 1908).

Surah Fatiha begins with *Al hamdu lillahe* (All praise belongs to Allah); then we are told He is the Lord of Universal Providence (*Rabbil aalameen*) and *Al-Rahman* (the Gracious); that is, He bestows grace without reference to human deeds. He is *Ar-Rahim*; that is, His compassion is such that He blesses human effort with results; He is *Malike Yaumid-deen*, all requital rests in His hands. This description makes the worshipper conscious that God the Great who is *Rabb, Rahman, Rahim*, is ever present. He is then ready with his supplication: Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help: Guide us along the straight path; that is the path of those whom Thou hast favoured with Thy bounties; in other words, the path that has Thy approval, by treading along which one can be sure of Thy favour and pleasure, and not the path of those who earn no grace and no honour but are liable to incur Thy displeasure (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1903).

Branches of Divine Commandments

Worship of God and Divine commands fall under two heads – honouring Divine ordinances and compassion for mankind. In the Holy Quran this classification has been repeatedly and

very clearly explained but I desired to know how it had been touched upon in Surah Fatiha. It suddenly flashed upon my mind that the Surah also expounds it clearly: All praise and glorification are due to Allah alone who is the Sustainer of all the worlds, in all stages and conditions; then He is the Gracious (*Rahman*) and He is the Compassionate (*Rahim*) and *Malike Yaumiddeen*. Next when the worshipper says: Thee alone do we worship; he must, through his adoration, assimilate in himself a reflection of the Divine attributes of *Rabubiyyat*, *Rahmaniyyat*, *Rahimiyyat* and *Malikiyyate Yaumiddeen*. For the highest goal of a worshipper is that he should become a manifestation of Divine attributes. Till he achieves this goal he should neither get tired nor give up. Thereafter he develops an overpowering yearning which pulls him towards Divine worship and he is numbered among those who carry out whatever they are commanded (Al-Hakam, May 24, 1903).

Beauty and Beneficence are the only two incentives of love. The epitome of Divine attributes of beneficence is set out in Surah Fatiha. Perfect beneficence on the part of the Supreme Being is that He created His servants from a state of non-existence and then His providential care encompasses them all the time and He supports everything and all kinds of His mercies come into operation in favour of His servants and His benevolence exceeds all bounds and is beyond reckoning. God has drawn attention to all this beneficence many times; for instance: If you were to try to count the favours of Allah you shall not be able to number them (14.35) (Report of the proceedings of the Great Religious Conference, p. 186).

The Holy Quran propounds this teaching in Surah Fatiha: Allah, the Lord of glory, is the Sustainer of all the worlds, that is, He is the Cause of all causes of every kind of providence. Next, He is the Gracious (*Rahman*), that is, without requiring any action on their part He bestows all kinds of bounties and favours upon His creatures; He is also *Rahim* (Compassionate) in that He helps the righteous and leads them to the attainment of their goals; He is also *Malike Yaumiddeen*, every reward and punishment rests in His hands; He may deal with His

servants as it may please Him; He may punish them in proportion to their defaults; He may, if He so chooses, provide them with means of attaining forgiveness (Jang-i-Muqaddas, pp. 43-44).

His basic attributes which are the source of all His other attributes are four and all four comprise beneficence and magnanimity. They are mentioned in the first three verses of Surah Fatiha viz.: *Rabbil aalameen*, *Rahman*, *Rahim* and *Malike Yaumiddeen*, that is, Master of the Day of Requit. Through all these attributes runs the Divine intent of total kindness towards mankind. First, creating and sustaining which is called *Rabubiyyat* (Providence); then providing means of comfort without any entitlement, which is called *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness); thirdly, rewarding virtue, righteousness and faith with safeguards against pain and adversity which is characterised as *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion); and finally, in return for a virtuous life, that is to say, worship, fasting, prayer, sympathy, charity and self-sacrifice, elevating man to the state of abiding pleasure and comfort and well-being which is good requital from the Master of the Day of Requit. It is patent that none of these four attributes of God is designed to operate to the prejudice of man. On the contrary, they are all designed to operate to his entire good. But if a person should place himself beyond the operation of these attributes, through his misdemeanours and vicious conduct and should thus degrade his own nature, these very attributes would begin to operate to his damage because of his own transgression. Thus the aim of *Rabubiyyat* (Providence) becomes annihilative and destructive, *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) manifests itself as anger and wrath, the intent of *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) changes into vengeance and harshness and requital assumes the dreadful visage of punishment and retribution. This change in the character of Divine attributes is brought about by the change in the character of the creature himself. Since punishing or threatening to punish is not a characteristic of the basic Divine attributes, for He wills only good for man, therefore, even a Divine threat to punish does not assume the character

of a final decree so long as the person concerned is alive and is capable of making amends. Therefore, a revocation of such a threat cannot be characterised as falsehood or breaking of a promise on the part of the Divine. Even if a threat is expressed unconditionally it is subject to inherent conditions emanating from the Divine will, except, of course, when Divine revelation specifies that the Divine decree is final and irrevocable. This is a matter of the highest import which is implicit in Surah Fatiha (Anjam Aatham, pp. 8-10, Footnote).

This holy and singular teaching of Islam is justly a matter of great pride for it does not stop short of making a person a devoted worshipper and a whole-hearted believer. In this unclean abode everyone seeks security and tranquillity. In this pursuit some have grabbed at one thing and others at another. Eminent philosophers have held forth on the subject, spelling out, through sheer intellectual effort, ways and means that could lead to happiness; but all in vain. Many of these misguided ones departed from this world totally embittered; some quaffed the galling cup of suicide, and the lives of many reveal moments full of anguish and tribulation.

In truth there is only one way and only one which can grant one complete steadfastness, serenity and tranquillity in this winding and baffling world and that is perfect and delicious faith in God, the Exalted, and in His Perfect attributes. The practical expression of such insight bestowing faith is: *Alhamdu-lillahe, Rabbil Aalameen, Al-Rahmanir, Rahim, Malike Yaumiddeen* (Al-Hakam, Sept. 24, 1900).

The first day of a person's heavenly birth is the day when his satanic life suffers death and his spiritual life takes its birth as does a child. It is to this birth that Allah, the Sublime, has referred in the first verses of Surah Fatiha. These four Divine attributes describe the God Who possesses all excellences, there being no excellent quality that one could think of and imagine that is not to be found in Allah, the Supreme. Indeed man is not able to compute the qualities and excellences that are to be found in Allah, the Magnificent. The God that Islam presents to the world is alone the Perfect and True God and

that is why the Quran begins with: All praise belongs to Allah (Al-Hakam, Jan. 10, 1901).

Lesson in Fatiha

The first attribute mentioned in Surah Fatiha is *Rabbil-Aalaameen* (Lord of universal Providence), which comprises creation of every kind. This indicates that the field of a believer's sympathy and compassion should, at the outset, be so vast as to comprehend beasts, birds and all creation. The second attribute mentioned is *Rahman* (Gracious). This indicates that all animate beings should specially enjoy one's sympathy. Then *Rahim* (Compassionate) inculcates sympathy with fellow beings. Thus the attributes of Allah, the Supreme, described in Surah Fatiha, illustrate Divine ethics which man should cultivate diligently. Everyone in a position to do so must help his fellow beings in every possible way. No one should be rude to or treat as a stranger, any other fellow-being, whether a relative or any other person. One must respect all the duties one owes to one's fellows. Whatever is due to a relative must be fully discharged (Al-Hakam, Aug. 24, 1902).

Gospel and Fatiha Contrasted

The prayer of the Gospel makes people despair of God and makes Christians unmindful of His Universal Providence (*Rabubiyyat*) and grace and requital and does not regard Him capable of giving any help on earth until His kingdom comes to it. In contrast the prayer that God taught the Muslims in the Holy Quran does not represent God as helpless so far as the earth is concerned like a monarch who has abdicated. His *Rabubiyyat* (Providence), *Rahmaniyyat* (Grace), *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) and judgment are operative in the world all the time. He has the power to support His devotees and to annihilate offenders in His wrath. That prayer is the Fatiha. It may be rendered thus: It is God alone Who is worthy of all praise, that is, His Kingdom is without fault and His attributes

are perfect, not awaiting the happening of any contingency at a later date and none of the accessories of His kingdom is without purpose. He is the Sustainer of all the worlds. He bestows His grace without reference to human effort and also fosters righteous action. He decrees requital at the appropriate time; Him do we worship and His help do we seek and we pray to Him to show us the paths of all His bounties and to keep us away from the ways that merit His anger and from the ways of error.

This prayer in Surah Fatiha is in contrast with the Prayer of the Gospel. In the Gospel according to Matthew, Chapter 6, verses 9–10, God's kingdom has not yet arrived on the earth, and consequently the Providence of God, His *Rahmaniyyat* (Grace), *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) and His power of requital, are not yet in operation on the earth. But Surah Fatiha shows that His Kingdom is operative on the earth and that is why all the appurtenances of sovereignty have been set forth in the said Surah. It is obvious that a sovereign should have the power to provide for his people. The phrase *Rabbil-aalameen* (Lord of Universal Providence) in Surah Fatiha establishes this attribute. Another function of a sovereign is that he should provide his subjects, purely as an act of royal grace, with all the facilities they need for the promotion of their welfare without any service on their part. This quality is established by the phrase *Ar-Rahman*. The third quality of a king is that he should aid his subjects in the completion of projects which they cannot achieve by their own efforts. The phrase *Ar-Rahim* establishes that attribute. The fourth quality of a sovereign is that He should have the power to reward and punish so that civil administration should be carried on smoothly. The phrase *Malike Yaumiddeen* establishes that attribute. In short, this Surah sets out all the attributes of royalty which testify to the operation of God's sovereignty on earth and of His effective royal authority, His providence, His grace, His compassion and help and His power of requital. In a word, all the ingredients of God's sovereignty on earth are in operation and not a particle is outside His control. Every reward is in His hands

and so is every mercy. But the Gospel teaches that His kingdom has not yet arrived on earth and that they should pray for it to come. In other words, their God is so far not the master and sovereign of the earth. What can then one expect from such a God (Kishti Nooh, pp. 35–37)?

Our Lord of Honour and Majesty did not mention either heaven or earth in Surah Fatiha and by saying that He is the Lord of Universal Providence conveyed to us the knowledge that He is the Creator-Sustainer of all habitations and all creatures, whether bodies or particles or souls and maintains them all the time and provides for them according to their requirements; and that His Providence, His grace, His mercy and His judgment are operative at all times, constantly, in all worlds (Kishti Nooh, pp. 38–39).

The Surah Fatiha prayer teaches us that God has the same power and authority over the earth all the time as He has over other worlds. His perfect attributes of power have been set out in the very beginning of Surah Fatiha. No other Book has set out so clearly that Allah, the Supreme, says He is *Ar-Rahman* (Gracious), *Ar-Rahim* (Compassionate) and *Malike Yaum-iddeen* (Master of the Day of Requital). Then there is the exhortation to pray to Him. The Prayer that has been taught is not like the prayer taught by Jesus confined to a petition for daily bread but is one that covers every capacity human nature has been eternally endowed with and seeks to quench every thirst it feels. That prayer is: O Lord of these perfect excellences and O generous Bestower Who sustains every particle which receives its nourishment through Thy grace, compassion and power of requital, make us successors of the past righteous ones and grant us all the bounties Thou bestowed on them and save us from incurring Thy displeasure through disobedience and safeguard us lest forfeiting Thy support we should go astray. Amen (Kishti Nooh, p. 40).

Allah, the Sublime, says: *Alhamdu-lillahe Rabbil-aalameen Al-Rahmanir Rahim Malike Yaumiddeen*. Here four attributes of Allah, the Exalted, which are His principal attributes, have been set out. *Rabbil-aalameen* (Lord of Universal Prov-

idence); means He sustains every particle. *Alam* means anything that can be known. This shows that there is nothing in the world which He does not sustain. He takes care of everything, souls, bodies, and everything else. He is the One Who nourishes everything in a manner appropriate to its nature. While He nourishes the body He bestows insight and reveals truths for the nourishment and satisfaction of the soul. Next He says He is *Rahman* (Gracious), that is, His bounties precede human effort. Before man is born, all that he needs, the earth, the sun, the moon, air and water, etc., is provided. Then Allah is *Rahim*, that is, He does not let go waste the good deeds of any one; He rewards effort. Then He is *Malike Yaumiddeen*: that is, He requites conduct and is alone the Master of the Day of Requit. After describing these Divine attributes, prayer has been urged. When one believes in the Existence of God and in these attributes of His the soul is moved and stirred and is impelled to bend down to Allah, the Sublime, in supplication. It is, therefore, urged to implore: Guide us along the straight path. This shows that prayer is an essential requisite for the manifestation of the glory and mercy of God the Most High. Therefore, be eagerly, constantly in prayer and never be weary of it (Al-Hakam, Jan. 17, 1905).

The principal moral qualities of God are four, which are enumerated in Surah Fatiha: (1) *Rabbil-aalameen*, the Sustainer of all; (2) *Rahman*, the Dispenser of grace, of His own accord, without reference to human action; (3) *Rahim*, the Bestower of honour and largesse in return for service and acceptor of service rendered, not letting it go waste; (4) Dispenser of judgment among His servants (Arbaeen IV, p. 16).

Nature of Divine Throne (Arsh)

When the Supreme God withdraws into the state of His Holy Supremacy, that is, when His attribute of Holiness covers up all His other attributes, placing Him far beyond every reach and totally hidden, the state called *Arsh* (Throne) in the

language of the Holy Quran, God is then far above the ken of human intelligence and reason has not the strength to find Him. Then His four attributes, which have been termed four angels, are in operation in the world and disclose His concealed Being. The first of these is *Rabubiyyat* (Providence) by means of which He perfects the spiritual and physical being of man. The existence of soul and body is, accordingly, due to the operation of *Rabubiyyat* and so also divine revelation and divine signs. Secondly, the *Rahmaniyyat* of God, that has come into operation through bounties it has provided for man without reference to any action on his part, uncovers His hidden Being. Thirdly, God's *Rahimiyyat*. First through His *Rahmaniyyat*, He bestows capacity on His creatures to work righteousness and then through His attribute *Rahimiyyat* He enables them to do good deeds and thus saves them from tribulations. This attribute also uncovers His hidden Being. Fourthly, His attribute Master of the Day of Requitall also reveals His veiled Being through His dispensation of reward to the good and punishment to the wicked. It is these four attributes that uphold His thorne, that is, His hidden Being is known in this world through the operation of these attributes. This insight would be duplicated in the hereafter, and thus there will be eight instead of four angels (Chashma Maarifat, pp. 266-267).

Duties of Members of the Movement

Whoever from among the mass of Muslims joins our Jamaat (community), his foremost duty is that, as he reiterates in his recital of Surah Fatiha of the Holy Quran in his five daily Prayers that God is the Lord of Universal Providence, and God is Gracious and God is Compassionate and God is the Just Judge, he should develop these four qualities in himself. Otherwise, he would be false to his prayer, that he offers every time in the words of this Surah: O Allah, Possessor of these four attributes, I am Thy worshipper and I prefer Thee above all else. The Providence of God sustains man and beast and

leaves not even the least among the animates outside the range of its care. One who professes to adore God, if he loves this attribute of the Divine and is appreciative of it to the degree that he worships it, must make it incumbent on himself to develop this quality in his own person so as to take on the complexion of his Adored One. Similarly, the *Rahmaniyyat* of God, that is, beneficence towards His creatures, without reference to any service on their part, is also a matter of concern to a true worshipper who claims to obey God in every respect. He must develop this quality also in his person. The same is the case in the matter of *Rahimiyyat*, that is to say, aiding another in achieving a beneficent objective. A true worshipper who is a lover of this Divine quality must strive to develop it. In the same way the justice of God, which is inspired by the pure concept of equity and not by any emotional upsurge is a quality which a true worshipper who is keen on imbibing all the Divine attributes, can hardly afford to leave out. It is a characteristic of righteousness to choose for oneself that which one loves in God.

Surah Fatiha inculcates this but today the Muslims are heedless of it (Ishtihar wajibul Izhar, pp. 1-2, vide Tiryaqul Qulub).

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ۝

Verse 5: Thee alone do we worship, and Thee alone do we implore for help

The sixth verity set forth in Surah Fatiha is *Iyyaka nabudu wa Iyyaka nasta'een*, which means: O Thou Lord of perfect attributes and source of the four graces, we worship Thee alone and in the due performance of duty of worship and in other calls and needs we seek only Thy help. Thou art our only God and in order to reach Thee we choose no other deity as our medium, neither man nor idol, nor do we rely on our wisdom or our knowledge; in everything we implore Thee, the Absolute Almighty, for help.

This truth is also hidden from the eyes of our opponents. The idolators worship many objects other than the Supreme,

the One God. The Arya Samajists believing that their spiritual powers were not created by God seek salvation through them. The Brahmosamajists have turned their backs on the light of Divine revelation, and have made their reason their goddess which, in their distorted fancy, has full power to lead them to the Divine and has comprehensive knowledge of and control over all Divine secrets. Therefore, instead of addressing their prayers and their petitions for help to God, they address their reason with: From thee do we seek help; and are thus involved in and practise a veiled form of polytheism. When they are sought to be dissuaded, they retort that reason is a Divine gift which has been bestowed for employment in man's undertakings to procure a living and in his other enterprises and that making use of a Divine gift cannot be accounted as polytheism. In this they are in error. It has been repeatedly explained that reason cannot be the means of attaining to the perfect certitude and true insight, on which depends our salvation. It can, however, appreciate the reality and truth of those insights after they have been attained. That clear and perfect revelation is attainable only through the refulgent light which proceeds from God, the Sublime. The dim and imperfect light of human reason is inadequate for that purpose. The element of polytheism arises when the Brahmosamajists turning their backs on the bright word of God, which is the culmination of true and perfect revelation, make their imperfect reason their sole and absolute guide and base everything on it. Their diseased minds suffer from the delusion that their reason will lead them to the lofty goal to which Divine powers and Divine manifestations alone can lead. Is it not polytheism then when human reason is not only equated with Divine might but is placed even higher? Thus it is true that instead of imploring God with the Prayer: We seek Thy help; they address it to their own intelligence. One need not expatiate upon the attitude of the Christians. It is well known that, instead of devoting themselves to the whole-hearted worship of the Supreme God, they occupy themselves with the adoration of Jesus and, instead of seeking the help of God in their affairs, they seek it of Jesus. Our Lord

Jesus, our Lord Jesus, is their constant cry. They have debarred themselves from practising: We worship Thee alone and seek only Thy help; and are thus banished from the Divine Presence (Baraheen-i-Ahmadiyyah, Vol. IV, pp. 439–445 Footnote II).

There is no bifurcation between: We worship Thee alone; and We seek only Thy help; though the former precedes in time. For, when He gave us human shape and granted us different kinds and types of capacities there had been no petition from us; it was the pure grace of God and this has precedence (Report of the Annual Conference 1897, pp. 148-149).

Employ your faculties before supplications

In the juxtaposition: We worship Thee alone and we implore only Thy help; We worship Thee; takes precedence over: We implore only Thy help; for, man approaches God, the Supreme, in prayer, after having involved all his faculties in the subject matter of the prayer. It would be impertinent and insolent on his part to come to Him without using his faculties and without observing the requirements of the Law of nature. For instance, if a cultivator were to pray to God to bless his field with a plentiful harvest without preparing it and sowing any seed in it, he would be guilty of insolence and mockery. This is what has been called testing and trying God and that is forbidden. It has been said: Do not put God to trial; as has been explained in the context of a request made to Jesus (Peace be on him) by the disciples to pray for a banquet (5.113–116). Deeply ponder it and reflect well. It is true that one who does not use his faculties and available means and rushes into prayer does not pray – he in fact tries God. It is, therefore, necessary to employ all one's faculties before submitting one's petition and this is the real significance of this prayer. It is necessary that one should first take stock of one's beliefs and effort. It is the way of God to bring about a desired change through change in the means. He creates some factor which becomes the means of the desired improvement. Those who consider that if prayer

is available means become irrelevant should ponder this seriously. They should realise that prayer is in itself a means which activates other means. The precedence of: We worship Thee alone; over: We implore only Thy help; which is a supplication, emphasises this (Report of the proceedings of the Annual Conference 1897, p. 145).

Allah, Lord of Honour and Majesty, has placed the phrase: We worship Thee alone; before the phrase: We implore only Thy help; as a reminder of the grace of *Rahmaniyyat* (Divine Graciousness) before supplication. Thus the worshipper begins, as it were, with: Lord, I thank Thee for Thy bounties with which Thou hast favoured me long before my petitions and prayers and my deeds and efforts and my seeking help from Thy Providence (*Rabubiyyat*) and Graciousness (*Rahmaniyyat*) that precedes the supplication of a suppliant. Now I beg of Thee the strength, virtue, prosperity, success and aims that are bestowed only on supplication, prayer and begging for help, for Thou art the most munificent Bestower of bounties.

These verses urge towards grateful appreciation of gifts that have been granted and towards steadfast supplication for that which is needful and towards eagerness for whatever is perfect and excellent so that the worshipper may be steadfastly grateful. They also urge towards non-reliance on one's own competence and ability and towards throwing oneself before the Holy One in hope and expectancy, persisting in supplication and prayer in humility with glorification and praise, in a state between fear and hope, like a suckling infant in the arms of the wet-nurse, dead to the rest of creation and everything on earth.

These verses also urge towards confession and acknowledgement that we are weak and cannot carry out the duties of Thy worship without Thy help and cannot seek the ways of Thy pleasure without support and that we can act only with Thy help and can move only with Thy succour and hasten to Thee like mothers pining over the deaths of their children and like lovers who are on fire with love. They urge also towards discarding pride and arrogance and towards holding fast to

the power and might of Allah when affairs become involved and hardships pile up and towards joining the company of those who are lowly of heart as if the Lord of glory were saying: O My servants, regard yourselves as corpses and ever seek strength from Allah. Let not a youth take pride in his vigour, nor an old one rely on his staff, nor a wise one feel elated with his intelligence nor a scholar trust in the accuracy of his knowledge, or the soundness of his understanding or the keenness of his intellect, nor let a recipient of Divine revelation depend for support on his inspiration and revelation and the fervour of his prayers. Allah does what He pleases, rejects whom He pleases and admits among His chosen ones whom He pleases.

The phrase: We implore only Thy help; warns of the great wickedness of the evil-prompting ego which frisks away from virtue like the unbroken she-camel from its would-be rider, or which is like a vicious reptile who cleans up its victim like a bleached bone, emitting venom all the time, or is like a lion who is not diverted once it leaps. There is no power, no strength, no earning and no substance except with the help of Allah Who annihilates the satans.

There are other implications in placing: We worship Thee alone; before: We seek only Thy help; which we propose to set down here for the benefit of those who are enamoured of the verses of the Fatiha, and not of the music of guitars, and run to them like eager devotees. Allah here teaches His servants a prayer which is a source of happiness for them and says, in effect: O My servants, beg of Me with humility and in lowliness of spirit: Our Lord, we worship Thee alone, but we have to struggle hard and have to grapple with affectation and remorse and distractions and satanic insinuations and confusing ideas and superstitions and dark thoughts like the muddy waters of a flood, and like one who gathers fuel in the dark we follow only conjecture and we are not firmly anchored in faith. In this situation we seek only Thy help. We beg Thee for the gift of keenness, eagerness and readiness of heart and overflowing faith and spiritual response and joy and light and for embel-

lishing our hearts with the decor of truth and the garments of delight, so that, by Thy grace, we may win through to certainty of faith, and achieve our highest goals and arrive at the ocean of Reality.

In the phrase: We worship Thee alone; Allah, the Supreme, urges His servants to put forth, in their obedience to Him, the utmost energetic effort, standing upright, constantly responding to His call, with: Lord, we spare no pains in our striving and in observing Thy commands and in seeking Thy pleasure; but we seek Thy help and Thy protection against pride and self-esteem and beg of Thee to grant us the strength that would lead us to Thy guidance and to winning Thy pleasure. We are firm in our obedience to Thee and in Thy worship; so write us down among those who submit to Thee. There is yet another point to be noted in this context. The worshipper declares: Lord, we have adopted Thee alone for worship, preferring Thee over all else and we adore nothing save Thy countenance and we believe in Thy Unity.

Give one another gifts of prayer in mutual affection

In this verse Allah, the Lord of Glory and Majesty, has instructed the use of the first person plural, conveying thereby that this prayer is for the benefit of all brothers and not only for the benefit of the supplicant. Thus Allah urges the Muslims towards mutual accord, unity and love and requires that a supplicant should put himself to hardship for the promotion of his brother's welfare as he would put himself to hardship for the promotion of his own well-being and should concern himself with and strive to meet his brother's needs as he is concerned with and strives to meet his own needs, making no distinction between himself and his brother, and should be his brother's well-wisher, with all his heart as if Allah, the Sublime, had commanded: O My servants, give one another gifts of prayer as brothers and friends exchange gifts, and widen the scope of your prayers and your motives and your aims, making room in them for your brethren and become like brothers and

fathers and sons in mutual affection (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 77-80).

Allah, the Lord of Majesty and Honour, has placed: We worship Thee alone; before: We seek only Thy help; to indicate that we should first use and exercise whatever of strength and capacity we have been given in the practical and theoretical fields and then seek the help of God, the Exalted, in respect of whatever may be beyond our knowledge and power (Al-Badr, Sept. 25, 1903).

Iyyaka na'budu wa Iyyaka nast'aeen means: O God, Possessor of the four attributes, we worship Thee alone, and implore only Thy help. It is important that a worshipper should not stop at mere profession that he believes Allah to be the possessor of His four attributes. He should prove, in a practical manner, that He believes Allah to be His Lord in truth, affirming His Providence (*Rabubiyyat*) through his personal practice. One who does not believe in God as his Deity will act as it pleases him; he may commit theft or adultery. But he who professes belief, until he proves his profession by conduct is not entitled to be called a believer, nor can he win grace as the favourites and righteous of the past won it. Faith is itself a grace of God. When it arrives the believer no longer practices vice. Mere words do not work out man's salvation (Al-Badr, Jan. 9 1908).

Welding together planning and prayer is Islam. That is why I continue to urge that one should plan as well as may be possible and pray as hard as possible, to be rid of sin and sloth. Both these aspects have been stressed in the very first chapter of the Holy Quran, the Fatiha, where we are instructed to pray: We worship Thee alone and we seek only Thy help. We worship Thee alone; calls for the practical effort needed and has been placed first so that man should first do everything appropriate in respect of necessary means and planning, but should at the same time, not neglect prayer; in fact, should keep it up along with practical effort. When a believer says: We worship Thee alone, it suddenly strikes him that he has no capacity to worship Allah, the Sublime, unless His grace

favours and helps him. Therefore he immediately prays: We seek Thy help. This is a fine point which Islam alone of all religions has appreciated (Al-Hakam, Feb. 10, 1904).

In this chapter which is called both Khatamal-Kitab (Seal of the Book) and Ummul Kitab (Mother of the Book) the object of human life and the manner of achieving it are clearly stated. We worship Thee alone is the real urge and object of human nature; but it is incomplete without: We seek only Thy help; conveying thereby that it is necessary that one must first exert oneself as far as one can within the limits of one's powers, capacities and understanding, in seeking out the ways that lead to the pleasure of God, the Supreme, and make full use of one's God-given talents and then pray to the Supreme Lord to help carry one's effort to completion and to make it fruitful (Al-Hakam, Oct. 24, 1904).

Though: We worship Thee alone; has precedence over: We seek help of Thee alone; yet a little reflection will show that the *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) of the Supreme Lord still has precedence. For, even: We worship Thee alone; has been inspired by some Power and what is the source of that power that works behind the scene to make one utter: We worship Thee alone? Did God, the Sublime, not grant the same? No doubt, it is a bounty of God, the Most High, which He granted by His graciousness (*Rahmaniyyat*). It is by its urging that one says: We worship Thee alone. If we reflect over it in this light, then it is a sequence and yet in verbal expression it has precedence. In other words, when this power makes one utter the second part, it has precedence over the first part, while in verbal juxtaposition the first part has precedence. In the same way every prophetic dispensation gives expression to its philosophy (Al-Hakam, April 10, 1905).

The Noble Lord has imparted through the opening Surah, the Fatiha, the teaching: We worship Thee alone and seek only Thy help. Here adoration comprises both worship and insight and in both aspects man's helplessness has been stressed (Al-Hakam, June 30, 1899).

Worshipper should be completely absorbed in the love of God

The essence of worship is that the worshipper should feel as if he is in the presence of God, or at least that God sees him. He should be free completely from every diverting and distracting tendency, and keep in view only His greatness and His Providence. He should continue addressing to God prescribed as well as other prayers and have repeated recourse to *tauba* (seeking refuge with God) and *Istighfar* (seeking forgiveness and obliteration of wrongs) and should repeatedly confess his own helplessness, so that his self may be purified and his communion with God may be strengthened and he should be completely absorbed in His love. This is the quintessence of the entire Prayer service and is all comprised in Surah Fatiha. We worship Thee alone and implore only Thy help; is a confession of one's own weaknesses and an appeal addressed to God, the Supreme, alone for His help and succour. Next there is prayer for guidance along the path of the Prophets and Messengers and the grant of favours that the world experienced through Prophets and Messengers and which are attainable only through following them and pursuing their ways. Next, a supplication is made to Allah for protection against treading in the direction taken by those who rejected and behaved arrogantly towards His Prophets and Messengers and were afflicted with Divine wrath in this very world, and against the ways of those who made the world their objective and abandoned the right path (Al-Hakam, Oct. 24, 1907).

Worshipping God as true object of love is saintliness

Man boasts of worshipping God. But does worship only comprise many prostrations, repeated obeisance and standing at attention or do those who tell their beads over and over deserve to be called worshippers of God? Indeed not. Only he is capable of worship whom the love of God draws so close that his own self is excluded altogether. First, there should be full faith in the Existence of God and then full knowledge of His Beauty

and Beneficence and then there should be the attachment of love with Him, constantly aflame in the bosom, radiating itself at all times in the face. The impression of His magnificence on the heart should be so deep that the entire world should appear like dead in contrast with Him; every fear should derive from Him alone and all pleasure should be in His love and all joy in seclusion with Him and no comfort without Him. If and when one's condition is such this is the state of true worship. But this state cannot be achieved without the special help of God, the Most Excellent. Therefore, the Supreme Being taught the prayer: We worship Thee alone and implore Thee alone for help; that is, we cannot carry out worship in the true sense unless there is special help forthcoming from Thee. Worshipping God as the real object of all love is true saintliness, beyond which there is no higher degree, but this is unattainable except with His help. It is attained when His magnificence is imprinted on the heart and the heart is filled with His love and relies totally on Him and chooses Him alone and prefers Him to all else, making His remembrance its only goal. This is a very narrow door and a very bitter draught. Few enter this door and few quaff this draught (Haqiqatul Wahi, pp. 51-52).

God made man and sent down for him a law and prescribed rules and penalties. The primary object of all this is not that he should attain to salvation. Man has been created for perpetual servitude of God. The object of his religious life is eternal serfdom of God; salvation being its necessary concomittant, attainment to which results from the achievement of the true objective. Freedom from sin is also not the object of law and the ordinances. For freedom from sin is also a concomittant of the true objective.

Salvation through sincerity and steadfastness

When man takes to worship and obedience he is necessarily freed from sin, being far removed from it. When he is freed from sin he is saved from the fruits of sin. The way to salvation, therefore, is to stand in an attitude of sincerity and steadfast-

ness before the Source of all light whence rays of light descend. That posture has been called *Istiqamat* (uprightness) as Allah, the Sublime, says: Stand upright as thou hast been commanded (11.113). There is no doubt that rays of light will descend on whoso stands before the Source of light and through the descent of light will be dispelled that darkness which is called sinfulness. We know that no darkness is dispelled without the descent of light. God, the Supreme, sends light millions of miles downward to dispel darkness. Darkness cannot stay before light.

It may be asked when can man be said to have taken his stand before the Source of all light. The answer is that this would be said when he turns over to righteousness in all aspects of his life and loves truth and sin is no longer attractive to him, in fact he looks upon it with abhorrence and seeks the help of God to deliver him from it. God, the Gracious, the Compassionate then helps him and sends down His light to deliver him from this darkness. This prayer is taught for this very purpose indeed: We seek Thy help in this affliction. Help us take our stand in the path of the descent of the rays of Thy grace (Al-Hakam, May 17, 1904).

Men of God permitted to give help in secondary capacity

It needs to be remembered that it is Allah alone from whom help may be sought. The Holy Quran is emphatic on this. In Surah Fatiha mention is first made of the Divine attributes *Rabb, Rahman, Rahim* and *Malike Yaumiddeen*. Thereafter is the instruction to pray: Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help. This means that Allah alone may be implored for help and not any creature in heaven or in earth, man, beast, cattle or bird. As a reflection of this attribute, men of God and the righteous are permitted, in a secondary capacity, to give help (Al-Hakam, July 24, 1902, p. 5).

Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help; is a safeguard against sinfulness and disobedience of

Allah, the Exalted. Those who keep supplicating their Lord humbly, hoping that perchance their humility may find favour, begin to find that Allah Himself is their Helper (Al-Badr, July 31, 1903).

Essence of worship is to take on complexion of worshipped

The words of Allah, the Exalted: Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help; indicate that all good fortune is comprised in putting oneself in accord with the attributes of the Lord of the worlds. The essence of worship is to take on the complexion of the worshipped One and that is in the eyes of the righteous the culmination of beatitude. A worshipper is not a worshipper in truth, according to the men of God, unless his character reflects the attributes of the gracious God (*Rahman*). Therefore, one feature of true worship is that a providence (*Rabubiyyat*) reflecting the *Rabubiyyat* (Providence) of the Lord of Honour, should take its birth in the worshipper and in a similar way the attributes of *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness), *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) and *Malikiyyate Yaumiddeen* (Mastership of Requital) should be reflected in him. This is the right path which we have been commanded to seek and this is the way that we have been urged to hope for from the Bounteous Lord of open grace.

Vanity and arrogance eat up all virtues

Since the principal obstructions in the way of the attainment of these degrees are vanity, which eats up all virtuous acts, and arrogance which is the root of all evils, and misguidance which leads astray from the ways of felicity, He has in His mercy for the weak who are prone to error and by way of compassion for those seeking Him, indicated the remedies for these maladies. He has directed that we should say: We worship Thee; so that we may be delivered of vanity, and has directed that we should say: We implore Thy help; so that we may be cured of arrogance and boastfulness, and has directed that we

should say: Guide us along the straight path; so that we may be safeguarded against errors and vain desires. His direction: We worship Thee; is an incentive towards cultivation of sincerity and complete submission and His direction: We implore Thy help; is a supplication for strength, firmness and uprightness, and His direction: Guide us along the straight path; is a supplication for knowledge and guidance to be bestowed by Him as of grace.

Three conditions of those who follow the ways of their Lord

In short, the journey of the seeker after God can not be accomplished, nor can it lead to salvation except with the help of perfect sincerity, utmost effort and full understanding of guidance. In fact, a person is not fit to be employed as a servant unless he possesses these qualities. For instance, a servant who is sincere, honest, well-meaning and pious, but is indolent, slothful and lazy, dozes off when he should be awake and is neglectful, lacking initiative and all will towards effort, would undoubtedly be a burden on his employer, would not be able to follow his directions and to carry them out. Another one is loyal and dependable and also hard-working and not an idler like the first one, but he is ignorant, fails to grasp the directions of his employer and repeatedly makes mistakes like those who have lost the way, and because of his ignorance is often betrayed into offending against prohibitions and exposes himself to dangers and gets involved in trouble and, because of his utter stupidity, alienates the good will of his master many a time, through his ignorance and faulty understanding, wastes the precious possessions of his master, like pearls and jewelry, and arranges everything in wrong order out of lack of intelligence. Such a one also can not win the pleasure of his master. His inanity lowers him in the eyes of his employer every time. He weeps like the destitute and drags on his life in misery and wretchedness. He cannot be counted among the worthy ones. In fact, his employer considers him unlucky who

never gathers any good out of all his activities and continuously wastes his master's property of every description.

The blessed servant and the blissful employee is one who pleases his master and neglects not a syllable of his directions and hears words of approval and praise from his lord. This is the one who combines in his person the three qualities fully and does not offend his master by his dishonesty or unfairness nor injure him through negligence or ignorance and becomes a well-liked servant. These are the three conditions for those who follow the ways of their Lord seeking fully His guidance: We worship Thee; is the first condition, We implore Thy help; is the second, and: Guide us along the straight path, is the third. Felicity is, therefore, for those who combine these three in their person and turn wholly to their God. They observe all the requirements of reverence in their attitude towards their Lord and pursue their way to Him fulfilling all conditions without falling short in any manner. These are the people with whom Allah is pleased and they are pleased with Him. They enter the sanctum of Holiness in peace.

Since these conditions are matters of weight for one who takes to the paths of light, Allah the Wise made them ingredients of prayer, so that the spiritual wayfarer may reflect deeply on them like persons of sagacity and so that the way of the dishonest may become manifest (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 104–106).

The essence of the worship that is acceptable to the Lord in His beneficence is whole-hearted submission, in the face of His magnificence and the majesty of His glory and His glorification on the observation of His beneficence and His bounties and preferring Him over everyone, in love of Him and in contemplation of His praiseworthiness and His beauty and His luminance and purging the heart of all satanic insinuations, with an eye to His heaven.

Five daily prayers are the highest worship

The highest worship is constant watchfulness over the five

daily Prayer services in the early portion of their timing and to endeavour with eager attention to derive the utmost blessing therefrom, through strict observance of obligatory and voluntary parts. For, Prayer (*Salat*) is a mount that carries the worshipper to the Lord of men, transporting him to a station he could not reach on the back of fast-running horses. The object of Prayer cannot be achieved with arrows, and its mystery cannot be unfolded by pens. Whoso makes this method obligatory on himself arrives at the truth and discovers the reality and meets the Friend Who is hidden behind the screens of invisibility and is delivered from doubt and uncertainty. His days become bright, his words shine like pearls, his face becomes refulgent like the full moon and his station is elevated. Whoso makes himself lowly before Allah in Prayer will find that God makes kings humble before him and makes such a slave a master.

Advent of Ahmad, the Messiah foretold in Fatiha

In Surah Fatiha Allah praises Himself first in His words: All praise belongs to Allah the Lord of Universal Providence; and then urges His creatures to His own worship through His words: We worship Thee alone and we implore Thee alone for help. This emphasises that the true worshipper is the one who praises Him as He ought to be praised. Thus Allah raises to the dignity called Ahmad him who devotes himself to His worship. This entails that there should be an Admad among the Muslim people in the latter period as there had been in the early period the Admad, the Chief of creation, so that it may be realized that the Fatiha Prayer is heard in the august Presence of the Hearer of prayers and that his appearance is a sign of the acceptance of prayer. This Ahmad is the Messiah whose advent in the latter age had been promised in the Fatiha and in the Quran.

This verse also conveys that it is not possible for a person to worship truly without the grant of strength from the Presence of the One, the only Lord. One of the elements of worship is

that you should love your enemy as you love yourself and your children, and that you should overlook the faults of others and forbear and be good-hearted and pure-minded, upright and clean-living and loyal and virtuous, free from evil inclinations; and that you should be of service to mankind with a natural inclination like that of some vegetables, without formality and without affectation; and that you should not hurt your less fortunate brother with your arrogance, nor injure him with harsh words. It is obligatory on you to respond to your aggrieved brother with courtesy and never speak to him contemptuously. You should die before your death and count yourself among the dead. Honour your visitor even if he be dressed in tattered rags and not in gorgeous robes and new garments. Greet with the salutation of peace, both the acquaintance and the stranger and be ever ready to share the burdens of others (Ijazul Masih, pp. 161-165).

He commands: We worship Thee alone and seek Thy help in all things. This points to the nothingness and lowliness of man so that he may not regard himself as something important and be puffed up with pride (Sat Bachan, p. 88).

It is necessary to employ one's God-given talents and faculties in promoting a temporal or spiritual undertaking before seeking Divine help and then to appeal for Divine help for its fruition. God has taught us this in our daily prayer. He has commanded us to pray: We serve Thee and seek Thy help; and not: We seek Thy help and serve Thee (Poster addressed to Islamic Organizations, Baraheen Admadiyyah, Part III, p. a).

Allah, the Sublime, has taught us to pray: We serve Thee. It was possible for man to rely on his own capacity for prayer and thus to estrange himself from God. Therefore, the prayer: We seek Thy help was added to it immediately so that no one may labour under the impression that the worship he renders is due to his own powers and capacities. Indeed not. On the contrary, without the help of Allah, the Supreme, and until that Holy One grants strength and power, nothing can be achieved.

Again, He did not command us to pray: I serve Thee; or: I

beg help of Thee; for that would smack of self-preference which is inconsistent with righteousness. A righteous person includes all mankind in his prayer (Al-Hakam, March 24, 1901).

One who seeks through prayer and effort is a righteous person. As Allah, the Supreme, has pointed out in Surah Fatiha: We worship Thee alone and implore only Thy help. That one who does not seek with full understanding and intelligence and power, is not a seeker in the sight of God, and a person who tries God in this manner is ever frustrated. But if, along with his effort, he also supplicates God then God saves him, even if he should make a slip. But God cares not for one who comes to His door in self-assurance and sloth and thus tests God (Al-Badr, Dec. 24, 1903).

There is no greater boon for a man than that he should hate sin, and that God, the Supreme, may be pleased to safeguard him against disobedience. But this cannot be attained merely through effort or merely by prayer but through both jointly; as God, the Exalted, has taught: We worship Thee alone and we implore Thy help. This means that one employs one's God-granted powers and capacities in the best manner and commits the result to God with the supplication addressed to the Supreme Lord: I have made use of the powers and capacities Thou hast granted me (this is the meaning of: We worship Thee) and then seeks His help in the later stages praying: We implore Thy help.

Effort and prayer should be combined

One who does not make use of his God-granted powers and faculties but seeks help merely through prayer is in error. How can he ever succeed in his objective (Al-Badr, March 1, 1904)?

The believer makes use of both effort and prayer. He plans well and puts forth his best effort and then leaving the matter in the hands of God, prays. This is the teaching imparted in the very first chapter of the Holy Quran: We worship Thee alone and pray to Thee for help. One who does not use his

talents, not only destroys them and slights them but commits a sin (Al-Hakam, March 10, 1904).

The righteous who have been promised great success in the Holy Quran are those who mind their obligations to the fullest, keeping steadfast in righteousness as far as their human capacities permit, until they arrive at the limit of their capacities and then they beg God for further strength, as is evident from the prayer: We worship Thee and seek Thy help. We worship Thee; means we have done what we could to the limit of our capacities sparing no pains; now: We implore Thy help; meaning we continue to seek new strength from Thee (Al-Hakam, July 10, 1904).

Man's nature is certainly inclined to virtue. He, therefore, needs Divine help. That is why God has commanded the recitation of Surah Fatiha in the five daily Prayer services. In it we affirm: We worship Thee; and also: We implore Thy help. This conveys that in every righteous undertaking, one should make use of one's powers and capacities and should plan and work hard. This is the purpose of: We worship. One who devotes himself solely to prayer but does not make any effort, does not gain his purpose. If a cultivator having done the sowing, puts forth no further effort, how can he expect a good harvest? This is the way of Allah. He who sows the seed and then only prays and does nothing more will certainly reap nothing (Al-Hakam, Nov. 10, 1904).

Those who depend on their own resources and disregard God, the Sublime, never come to a good end. This does not mean that doing nothing and sitting idle is reliance on God. Using one's resources and God-given capacities is appreciation of God's bounties. Those who do not make use of their capacities and proclaim their trust in God are liars. They do not truly appreciate God, the Sublime. They try the Supreme Lord and in effect treat their God-given powers and faculties as superfluous and irrelevant and are thus guilty of irreverence and impertinence towards Him. They ignore the significance of: We worship Thee; and without practising it, seek to enjoy the benefits of: We implore Thy help. This is most improper.

One must make use of one's resources, as far as possible, within the limits of one's capacities, without relying on them as one's deities and sources of beneficence. Instead, having made proper use of them, one must submit the matter to Allah, with a thanksgiving prostration for the Divine gift of faculties and capacities (Al-Hakam, April 17, 1905).

Iyyaka na'budu means: We adore Thee, making use of all the resources and means that Thou hast granted us. If this tongue which is made up of veins and muscles had not been what it is we would not have been able to speak. He granted us a tongue that can express the thoughts of the mind. If we do not employ the tongue for prayer, it would be our misfortune. There are many ailments which could suspend all activity of the tongue, were any of them to afflict it, making one dumb. How wonderful then is this gift of the tongue! Similarly if the structure of the ears were prejudicially affected, one could become stone deaf. The same is true of the mind and intellect. Humility, lowliness, the faculty of thought and reflection would all be stultified in case of distemper or disorder. Do we not observe how the mental faculties disintegrate in the case of the insane? Is it not then incumbent upon us to appreciate these God-given gifts? If we let these faculties that Allah, the Exalted, has granted us by His perfect grace, rust by disuse we would undoubtedly be guilty of ingratitude. Be mindful, therefore, that if you pray, leaving your talents and capacities unexercised, the prayer is of no avail. For, if the primary bounties are not utilized, how can one be expected to use and to derive benefit from further bounties? We worship Thee; is a confession: O Lord of universal providence, we have not neglected Thy first gift.

To be able to tread the straight path one must use faculties appropriately and supplicate

In: Guide us along the straight path; man is urged to seek true insight from God. For, if His grace and beneficence were not available, helpless man groping in darkness and blindness could

hardly make a prayer. Thus, unless one makes full use of the Divine grace that has been extended to one through *Rahmaniyyat* and then makes one's prayer, one cannot hope for any good result. An applicant for an agricultural loan is required to furnish proof of some assets. In the same way the law of nature demands that we should make good use of that which has already been bestowed upon us and then supplicate for more.

Having been blessed with reason, good sense, eyes and ears, if we have not gone astray and have not pursued stupidity and folly, we would receive more of grace through prayer. Otherwise destitution and misfortune are indicated.

Our friends will have to encounter Christians on many occasions. They will not discover anything among their professions that could be attributed to God, the Lord of wisdom. Wisdom means putting everything in its proper place. But you will not find among them a single action or ordinance conforming to this standard. When we ponder thoughtfully: Guide us along the straight path; we find that, though in form it is a command to pray for guidance to the right course, yet: We worship Thee and implore Thy help; that immediately preceded it conveys that we should be mindful of that injunction. That is to say, to be able to tread along the straight path we must make use of our appropriate faculties and supplicate for Divine help (Report of the Proceedings of Annual Conference, 1897, pp. 150-151).

When a person says: We worship Thee and implore Thy help; and sets out with sincerity and loyalty, then God, the Sublime, causes to spring forth a wide stream of righteousness which flows down on his heart filling it with the spirit of righteousness. Man approaches with a paltry offering, but Allah, the Exalted, bestows on him a precious gift of immense value. In this situation it behoves man so to deport himself that righteousness should become his outstanding insignia. He is then granted a volume of insights and verities and such strength that no one can stand in opposition to him (Al-Hakam, May 17, 1905).

The essence of the struggle to attain to the excellence of *Siddiq* (The Righteous) lies in man's submission: We worship Thee. To the extent of his capacity and potential, in full realization of his feebleness and nothingness, he determines to adhere to truthfulness and to discard falsehood. He turns away from every type of uncleanness and foulness that is inherent in falsehood, and keeps to his firm resolve never to tell a lie or to bear false witness or ever to utter anything false in a fit of temper or in idle talk, or for seeking a benefit, or to ward off harm, or under any circumstances whatever. By binding himself down so far he goes a certain distance in carrying out: We worship Thee. That in itself is worship of high quality. We worship Thee; is followed by: We implore Thy help. Whether he utters these words or not, Allah, the Sublime, the Source of all grace, and of truth and righteousness, necessarily helps him and reveals to him the high tenets and verities of righteousness (Al-Hakam, April 17, 1905).

The Holy Quran cites two attributes of Allah, the Exalted, *Al-Hayy*, the Ever-Living and *Al-Qayyum*, the Life-Sustaining. *Al-Hayy* means the Living and the Life-giving and *Al-Qayyum* means the Self-subsisting and All-sustaining. The inner and outer life of everything is due to these two attributes. The attribute Hayy (Ever-Living) demands that He should be adored as directed in Surah Fatiha: We worship Thee; and Al-Qayyum requires that His support should be sought, as in: We implore Thy help (Al-Hakam, March 17, 1902).

We worship Thee alone; conveys that we seek nothing except Thy worship and by means of: We implore Thy help; we pray for Thy aid in this. In other words: We worship Thee; and: We implore Thy help; combine between them: Call on Me, I shall respond to you (40.61); We shall try you (2.156; 47.32). We worship; means that we are unmindful of harm or good; there is neither hope nor desire involved. We implore Thy help; there is an urge towards prayer and seeking of help (Al-Hakam, Oct. 10, 1902).

In: We worship Thee; one is moved by the beauty and beneficence of the Lord of Universal Providence (Rab), the

Gracious (Rahman), the Compassionate (Rahim) and the Master of the Day of Requital (Malike Yaumiddeen); and simultaneously one's humility and the consciousness of one's utter helplessness impel one to cry out: We implore Thy help (Al-Hakam, July 26, 1908).

We worship Thee and we implore Thy help; inculcate righteousness. Who can be more righteous than one who carries out the duties of worship and supplicates for Divine help in carrying them out (Al-Hakam, Dec. 10, 1902).

A repeated supplication source of comfort

Some people complain that they do not find comfort in Prayer. They should go back to it repeatedly. In the initial stages of spiritual effort there is often a feeling of constriction. At such time one should repeatedly supplicate: We worship Thee and we implore Thy help. Satan approaches in the character of a thief and a burglar. One should supplicate the Lord against him, seeking to be safeguarded against the depredations of the robber by Divine support. Those who occupy themselves with this entreaty and are not wearied receive a new power and a new strength wherewith Satan is vanquished. But to submit this prayer and acquire this strength one needs sincerity and a consuming urge and this is attainable by conjuring up the picture of the robber who is close at the heels and seeks to expose one's nakedness, as he did with Adam. Once this comes to the mind, the soul will cry out: We worship Thee and we implore Thy help (Al-Hakam, Feb. 17, 1901).

Repeat: We worship Thee and implore Thy help; often in Prayer. We implore Thy help; draws the grace of God and supplies that which one is missing (Al-Hakam, Nov. 10, 1902).

The phrase: We worship Thee alone; repudiates all false gods and furnishes a refutation of the polytheists. First the perfect attributes of God, the Supreme, are mentioned and then He is addressed: Thee alone do we worship. That is to say: O Lord of perfect attributes, Lord of Universal Providence, Gracious, Compassionate, Master of the Day of Judgment, we

worship Thee alone. These four attributes, that are called Mother attributes, are not to be found in any false deity. Those who worship stones, trees, beasts and other objects cannot establish that these objects possess these attributes. In the same way: We implore only Thy help; refutes those who do not believe in prayer, or in acceptance of prayer (Al-Hakam, May 24, 1903).

Those who rely on their own strength and do not depend on Allah are humiliated

One should constantly keep to the prayer: We worship Thee alone and implore only Thy help; and seek strength from Him only. By means of this a person can become a manifestation of Divine glory. When the moon faces the sun, it receives light from the sun, but when it starts moving away it grows darker and darker. The same is true of man. So long as he is prostrate at His portal, believing himself to be utterly dependent on Him, Allah, the Sublime, raises him up and bestows His grace on Him. When he begins to rely on his own strength he is humiliated. That is why we have been commanded: Keep company with the righteous (9.119) (Al-Hakam, March 10, 1903).

Three kinds of unity

Unity is of three kinds. One is academic which is attainable through correct belief. The second is practical which is attainable by means of subordinating one's moral instincts to the will of God; in other words self-obliteration in the ethical excellences of Allah. The third unity is inner, that is, it is attainable through self-improvement. One must proceed to the point of perfection in purity, empty out the heart of everything other than Allah, and lose one's separate identity. This unity is achieved in its perfection only when one is so utterly possessed by passion for the Divine that it extinguishes the ego completely. This is not attainable through knowledge, or effort but only through Divine grace. That is why the dedicated worshippers have the cry: We implore Thy help; constantly on their lips (Al-Hakam, Sept. 24, 1905).

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ۝ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ۝

Verses 6-7: Guide us along the straight path; the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, those who have not incurred Thy wrath and have not gone astray

The guidance that we have been commanded to seek in the Fatiha consists in observance of the excellences of Allah and His four attributes. This is stressed by the *alif lam (al)* in *Ih dinas-sirat-al-mustaqeem*. This can be appreciated only by those whom Allah has blessed with a sound mind. Undoubtedly these four are basic attributes and are sufficient for cleansing people of abominations and all types of vice. No one can be said to believe in them truly until he has partaken of each of them and has patterned his own conduct to the ethics of the Creator of all creation. For one who partakes of their grace, is opened the high portal of knowledge of his beloved Lord and His magnificence is manifested to him. He gains, by the leave of Allah, the Sustainer of spiritual travellers, constant inclination of the heart towards Him, aversion towards sins, serenity, benign attitude, spirit of true obedience, fear of God, love of God, eagerness and zeal, healthy emotional reactions and love of the Divine with an intense desire to negate himself in God which consumes and destroys everything beside Him (Karamatus Sadiqeen, p. 103).

Thus Allah taught His servants the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, those who have not incurred Thy wrath and have not gone astray. Guidance comprises revelation, inspiration, visions, dreams, dialogue between man and God so that the mysteries of the Holy Quran may be revealed by these means and faith may thereby be strengthened. For those are the true objectives of the spiritual pilgrims who desire that the profundities of Divine knowledge be revealed to them, so that they may know their Lord in this very world and gain

increase of love and faith and turn their faces away from the world to attain union with the object of their love. That is why Allah has invited people to seek this favour from His august Presence. For He well knows the desire for union and the certainty of faith and the knowledge their hearts compass and was thus mercifully inclined towards them and prepared for the seekers every kind of insight. Next, He commanded them to beg for these in the mornings and in the evenings and in the night and in the day. He gave them this command as it was His pleasure to bestow these gifts upon them, in fact, after He had determined that they would be given them and after He had made them heirs of the Prophets who had been granted before them all the gifts of guidance directly. See then how benevolent has Allah been to us, commanding us in the Mother of the Book, to seek through prayer every type of guidance granted to the Prophets, so that all that was revealed to them may also be revealed to us, but through following them and as a reflection of that which was granted to them, and according to the measure of our respective capacities and resolves. How can we then reject the bounty of Allah that has been prepared for us if we are really candidates for His guidance; and how can we disregard it after we have been told of it by the most Truthful of the True (Hamamatul Bushra, pp. 80–81).

Three stages of human development

The teaching of the most authentic Book of Allah and of the Prophet of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him) is divisible into three parts. First, that the wild ones should be tamed into human beings and should be taught proper behaviour and be equipped with human susceptibilities. Secondly, that they may be promoted from average human beings to the highest stage of moral excellence. Thirdly, that they may be raised from the ethical level to the level of the love of the Creator so that they may attain to the stage of closeness to the Divine and His pleasure and His company and immersion in Him and a melting-down in His love and absorption in Him

that is, to the stage where one's self and choice are shed and Allah alone remains just as He alone will survive the annihilation of this universe, in His Supremacy. This then is the last stage of the pilgrims' journeying to God, men and women, and here terminate all strivings and here end all the paths of saintliness. This is the stage of steadfastness that is the object of the Fatiha prayer. All the vain desires generated by the promptings of the evil-bidding ego flare up and are consumed at this stage under the command of the Lord of Might and Honour. The whole city is then thrown open and the ferment of the masses of vain desires subsides and it is asked: Whose is the dominion today? Surely, of Allah, Lord of Dignity and of Greatness (Najmul Huda, p. 7).

Ways of Divine guidance

There are three ways of Divine guidance; or, in other words, there are three means and methods. First, a lost one may find guidance through the Book of God. Secondly, if he does not arrive at full understanding, through the Divine Book, the light of rational evidence may point out the way to him. Thirdly, if rational evidence should also fail to satisfy him, heavenly signs may help him to tranquillity of faith. These are the three means that constitute Allah's eternal way for the satisfaction of His creatures. First, the series of Books of faith that reach the mass of people through oral communication and tradition. It is incumbent on the faithful to believe in their messages and guidance. Their most perfect and authentic source is the Holy Quran. Secondly, rational evidence, the source of which is reason and argument. Thirdly, heavenly signs whose source, next after the Prophets, is the Imam (Leader) of the age or the Reformer of the day. The original source of these are the Prophets (peace be on them). But when their miracles and signs, through the passage of time, lose their dynamic impact, having become mere stories of the past, then God, the Supreme, raises someone else following in their footsteps, so that the marvels of prophethood should not be

reduced to stale and ineffective fables for succeeding generations and that they should also, through witnessing Divine signs, be enabled to refresh their faith (Kitab-al-Bariyya, pp. 25-29).

In this Surah (the Fatiha), Allah, the Sublime, teaches His Muslim servants, so to say, in these words: O My servants, you have observed the Jews and the Christians, beware then of acting like them and hold fast to the rope of prayer and uprightness and forget not the blessings of Allah like the Jews, lest His wrath should afflict you, and disregard not the true sciences and prayer and slacken not in seeking guidance as did the Christians, otherwise you will be lost. He has urged the seeking of guidance by pointing out that perseverance in guidance is not possible, except through constancy in prayer and humility before Allah. It is also stressed that guidance comes from Allah and that man can never be guided aright except when Allah guides him and admits him among the rightly directed. A further point is that guidance is endless and that man can climb up to it by means of the ladder of prayers. He who gives up prayer loses his ladder. He alone is deserving of guidance who keeps his tongue occupied with the remembrance of his Lord and prays with earnest constancy. One who gives up prayer and claims that he is one of the rightly guided, bedecks himself for public show with that which he possesses not and will fall into the pit of polytheism and ostentation and will forsake the body of the devoted ones. But the sincere one rises higher and higher, day by day, until he becomes the select and His munificence grants him a secret that subsists only between Allah and him and he is admitted to the body of favourites and is promoted to the rank of the accepted ones.

No one can reach the reality of faith until he comprehends the reality of sincerity and is firmly established in it. He is not truly sincere so long as there is in the world aught that he relies upon or is afraid of or considers helpful for himself. No one can be safe from the ruin and evil of his ego until after Allah has accepted him, because of his sincerity, and guards

him by His grace and His power and His might and by giving him a taste of the wine of the spirit. For the ego is foul at the height of its malignance, and is the breeding ground of fatal, noxious and offensive misguidance. Therefore, Allah, the Supreme, has taught His servants to run to Him, praying and seeking security against its wickedness and its afflictions, so that He may admit them into the party of the protected. Undoubtedly the emotions of the ego, are very much like high fevers. As there are encountered in the course of these fevers fearsome and acute conditions like ague, cold fits, paroxysms, or profuse sweating, or nose-bleeding or excessive vomiting or debilitating diarrhoea and unbearable thirst or excessive sleep or insomnia or coated tongue, or dryness of the mouth or continual sneezing or severe headache or fits of cough or loss of appetite or hiccups and all the symptoms that the fever-stricken have, similar are the outbursts and symptoms of the ego. Its elements are in constant ferment, its billows heave and its afflictions make their rounds, its heifers bleat, its captives expire and only a few are secure against it.

Seeking guidance from God is like turning to an eminent physician for healing

The seeking of guidance then is like turning to an eminent physician and placing oneself wholly in the hands of the healers. The bounty which Allah has indicated for His servants is the utter detachment of the worshipper from the world and his turning wholly to Allah and the warmth of his attachment to Allah and sustaining and maintaining of his devotion and Allah's reciprocating him with His blessings and His inspiration and His responsive favours and dignifying him among His own dignified ones and admitting him among His protected servants, and His direction: O fire! be thou cool and harmless for Ibrahim (21.70); and making him one of the pure and the holy. This indeed is cure from the fever of sins and a treatment with efficacious remedies and proper diet and a wholesome

regime that none but the Lord of Universal Providence knows (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 82-83).

The word *Sirat* means the way that is straight, so that all parts of it are in orderly array and are properly adjusted to one another (Al-Hakam, Feb. 10, 1905).

People gifted with God-fearing hearts and light do not regard a path (*tariq*) as the way (*sirat*) until it comprises five of the prominent features of the faith and these are (1) rectitude (2) leading surely to the objective (3) being the shortest (4) and being broad in width for travellers (5) and its determination as the road to the goal in the eyes of the wayfarers. At times, it is related to Allah being His law and is a level road for the pedestrians and at times it is related to people, for they tread it and walk on it and travel over it (Karamatus Sadiqeen, p. 95).

Steadfastness wins the pleasure of Allah

Steadfastness wins the pleasure of Allah. It is very true that steadfastness is more than a miracle. The climax of steadfastness is that in front of all-enveloping afflictions, with life and honour and prestige in jeopardy in the cause of Allah, with no redeeming feature to afford relief, even God, by way of trial, shutting the door to an uplifting vision, dream, or revelation, leaving one exposed to frightful terrors, one should not lose heart, shrinking back like a coward and should let nothing impair the integrity of loyalty, sincerity and firmness, welcoming humiliation, being reconciled to death, refusing to look to a friend for reinforcement of steadfastness and support, nor looking to God for good tidings, for it is the hour of crisis and in spite of being totally friendless and weak and without anything to hearten one, to stand upright and proffer one's neck, saying: Come what may; without a word of protest, to the determined decree, neither exhibiting desperation nor having recourse to plaintive moanings until the conditions of the trial have been fully satisfied. This is steadfastness indeed by means of which God is reached. It is the fragrance of this that

is exuded by the dust of Prophets and Apostles and the righteous and the martyrs. It is to this that the Lord of glory and majesty has pointed in the prayer: Lord show us the path of uprightness, the path that leads to Thy favours and gifts and pleases Thee. He has pointed to the same in another verse: Lord, send down tranquillity on our hearts so that we may be steadfast and let death come to us in a state of complete submission to Thee (7.127).

During the period of hardships and afflictions, God, the Sublime, sends down a light on the hearts of His favourites which fortifies them and they bear all calamities with good cheer. In the ecstasy of faith they kiss the fetters that their feet may have to bear in His way. When misfortunes descend on a godly person and he perceives signs of approaching death, he does not start contending with His Generous Lord, calling upon Him to save him from the visitations. For, persisting in prayer for security at such an hour, means being at odds with God, the Supreme, and is contrary to the spirit of complete accord. In fact, the true lover goes forward at the hour of affliction and, holding life of no account, lays aside the love of life and places himself entirely at the disposal of His Lord, seeking only His pleasure. As Allah, the Sublime, says: There are people who surrender their lives in return for Allah's pleasure. Allah is very compassionate towards such servants (2.208). Such is the spirit of steadfastness that leads to God. Let him ponder who will (Report of the Great Religions Conference, pp. 187-188).

Istiqamat (steadfastness) is identical with *fana* (sacrifice of self) the term used by the *Sufis*. They interpret: Guide us along the straight path; also as meaning *fana*; that is to say, the soul, emotions and designs should all be devoted to Allah, the Exalted, and all one's personal sentiments and desires should suffer a total death. Those who do not give priority to the will and designs of Allah, the Supreme, over their personal aims and concerns, depart this life in the midst of the frustration of their mundane affairs and aims.

Salat is the pinnacle of prayer and Allah, the loftiest name

of God, has precedence in the *Salat*. Similarly, man's highest quality is steadfastness. *Ism-i-Azam* (highest attribute) signifies the means of attaining perfection in human excellences. Allah, the Supreme, has drawn attention to it in: Guide us along the straight path; and in another place has said: On those who proclaim: Allah is our Lord; that is to say, take shelter under the *rabubiyyat* (Providence) of Allah, and are steadfast, descend angels, comforting them: Have no fear and grieve not (41.31).

I have stated that steadfastness is a great asset. What does steadfastness (*Istiqamat*) mean? When everything is in place and in order, it is appraised as wisdom and steadfastness. For instance, were the components of a telescope to be dislocated and dispersed out of order, it will not work. Thus, placing a thing in its proper position is steadfastness. In other words, the natural order may be described as steadfast. Unless the human mould is maintained in its natural order and in its normal condition, it cannot develop its excellences. The proper way of prayer is that the loftiest name of God, Allah, and the highest quality of man, steadfastness, should be combined, and man should turn only to God and to no one else, not even to the idol of his ambitions and desires. When this state is reached one realises the significance of: Call on Me, I shall respond to you (40.61) (A speech of the Promised Messiah and a letter on pantheism, pp. 18–21).

These verses are treasures full of meaning and comprise strong arguments for the refutation of antagonists, male and female. We shall deal with them at length and set forth the reasons and arguments that Allah has taught us. Listen then to the exposition thereof, haply Allah might deliver you from false notions. As for the words of the Sublime Lord: Guide us along the straight path; they mean: Show us the straight path and keep us constant along the course that leads to Thy presence and safeguards from Thy punishment. According to the Sufis there are many ways of finding guidance gathered from the Book and the *sunna* (the way of the Holy Prophet). The first is seeking knowledge of the Divine with the help of

reason and demonstrable proof; secondly, through self-purification and rigorous self-discipline; and thirdly, through total turning to Allah, with sincere love and beseeching His help in whole-hearted alignment with His will, ruling out the least disparity and returning to Him with entreaties and prayers and a firm resolve.

Prophets and Apostles are the rightly guided ones who should be followed

Then, since search for guidance and purification of self are not enough for the attainment of nearness to God, without the assistance available from leading divines and those rightly guided, Allah, the Holy, did not confine His direction to the instruction: Guide us along the straight path; but urged His servants, by His words: the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; to look for these rightly-instructed guides and leaders from among the diligent and the pure-souled, that is to say, the Prophets and the Apostles. They are a people who preferred the abode of truth (the hereafter) to the house of falsehood and vanity and were drawn by the ropes of love to Allah, the ocean of light, and were delivered from the land of untruth by His revelation and His power of attraction. Before the award of prophethood they were like a beautiful woman who lacks all ornament. Now they do not speak but when Allah urges them to speak and choose only that which has His approval. They strive to the utmost to acquaint people with Divine Law and to make them conform to it, like a loving mother who, after the death of her husband, prefers to remain a widow so that she may devote herself to the upbringing of her children. They are granted such facility of expression as makes the deaf hear and tames wild goats; and are granted hearts that draw together whole nations through their high resolve. When they speak they always achieve their purpose, and their attention quickens the dead who have lost all hope. They strive to draw people away from evil towards good, from forbidden pursuits towards righteous-

ness, from ignorance towards wisdom and sagacity, and from turpitude and disobedience towards rectitude and piety. One who disregards them, certainly deprives himself of a bounty he had been offered, and draws away from the fountain of good and the light of his eyes. This isolation is far more serious than the severance of ties of kinship and blood-relationship. These personalities are the heralds of paradise. Woe to him who turns away from them and confines himself to eating and drinking. They are the light of Allah and through them the hearts of people are granted illumination, and antidote for the poison of sins, and tranquillity in agony and in the throes of death, and fortitude at the hour of departure from this world. Do you imagine that anyone else could be like this noble group? Indeed not, by the Lord who caused the date-palm to sprout forth from a stone-seed. That is why, out of abundant compassion, Allah taught this prayer, commanding the Muslims to seek of Him the way of those He had favoured, that is to say, the Prophets and the Apostles. This verse conveys clearly to men of understanding that the Muslims have been established in the footsteps of the Prophets and there has not been a Prophet but his like has been raised among the Muslims.

Had there been no possibility of such resemblance and likeness, it would have been vain to seek the excellences achieved by those who have passed away and this prayer would have been meaningless. Allah's command that we should supplicate Him in the Prayer services, morn and eve: Guide us along the straight path; and that we should keep seeking the way of His favoured ones, the Prophets and the Apostles, implies that He has ordained it from the beginning that He will continue to raise among the Muslims righteous people who will walk in the footsteps of the Prophets and that He will make them Khalifas as He made Khalifas before among the children of Israel. This is indeed the truth, so give up vain dispute and contention. Allah had designed to combine in the Muslims all the excellences and moral qualities. It was this that called for the teaching of this prayer to be followed by whatever should be His pleasure. The Muslims have been

named the most excellent people in the Quran (3.111) and excellence is attained only if deeds, faith, knowledge and insight continue to be fostered and the pleasure of Allah, the Gracious, is sought continuously.

Khalifas shall continue to be raised among Muslims

Allah has promised the believers who work righteousness that He shall, by His grace and beneficence, appoint them Khalifas in the earth as He appointed Khalifas before them from among the righteous and the virtuous (24.56). It has thus been established in the Quran that Khalifas will continue to be raised among the Muslims till the Last day. Surely not one of them will descend from heaven. On the contrary, they will be raised from among the people. What ails you then that you do not believe in the word of the Quran? Have you abandoned the Book of Allah or has not there been left in you even a semblance of insight? Allah has said: from among you; and did not say: from among the Israelites. This should suffice you if you really seek the truth and proof. Read the Quran, O humble creature, and do not throw your weight about in vanity and do not run away from the light of truth lest Surah Fatiha and Surah Nur should protest against you in the presence of the Lord. Be mindful of Allah, I repeat: be mindful of Allah and be not the first to reject the verses of Nur and Fatiha, lest the two bear witness against you in the Presence, while you read His word: He has promised the believers from among you; and you also read His word: We shall make them khalifas (24.56). Ponder well then His word, 'from among you' in Surah Nur and give up the wrong-doers and their doubts. Has not the time yet come for you to realise, while reading these verses, that Allah has determined to appoint all the khalifas from among the Muslims, by His grace. How will then the Promised Messiah descend from heaven! Do you not consider the Promised Messiah one of the Khalifas? How then do you imagine him to be of the Children of Israel and of the Prophets of Israel? Have you given up the Quran while all healing is

comprised in the Quran? Or has your ill fortune overwhelmed you and you are deliberately abandoning the path of rectitude? Do you not see the word of Allah: as He made Khalifas before them (24.56); in the Surah. It is inevitable then that the Messiah who was to come should be from among the Muslims and not from among others than the Muslims. The word *kama* (as) denotes resemblance and likeness; and resemblance implies a degree of non-resemblance as well. An object cannot be said to resemble itself. The clear words of the Quran thus establish that the Messiah who was to come would be a Muslim. This is quite clear and free from every doubt. This is what the Quran says and the divines know it well. What will you then accept after this? The Quran has said that Jesus, the Prophet of Allah has died. Ponder its word: Since Thou didst cause me to die; and do not call the dead living and do not lend support to the Christians with these myths and fictions. Their mischief is already heavy; do not augment it with your stupidities. If you must consider some Prophet to be alive, then believe that through his spiritual influence our Holy Prophet, the best of creation, continues to live. How is it that you believe the one who was sent as a mercy for all the worlds (21.108) to be dead and believe that the son of Mary not only lives on but also bestows life! Look into Surah Nur and then look into Surah Fatiha and then reflect. Your mind will be filled with decisive reasoning. Do you not read in Surah Fatiha: Guide us along the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours? Whither are you then wandering after this? Do you forget your prayer or do you offer it indifferently? You had supplicated your Lord in this prayer to raise among the Muslims the like of every Prophet raised among the children of Israel. Have you forgotten your prayer so soon, even though you offer it several times in the five daily services? I wonder at you that you should offer this prayer and yet hold these views. Look again into the Fatiha and into the Nur of the Quran. What witness will be acceptable after the evidence of the Quran? Be not like one who has discarded the fear of Allah both inwardly and outwardly and has habited himself in the garment of

impudence. Will you then give up the Book of Allah because of these people who have abandoned the right path, without making a complete research and enquiry? Their way does not lead to the goal; it is contrary to the Unity of the Divine and the ways of Allah, the Beloved. You should not imagine the stony path as the easy way, even if the multitudinous treading of feet may have levelled it and even if swarms of swallows may have winged their way over it. The guidance granted by Allah is the only true guidance. The Holy Quran bears witness to the death of Jesus and counts him among the dead in explicit language. Why do not you ponder His words: Since Thou didst cause me to die (5.118); and His words: Prophets before him (the Holy Prophet) have passed away (3.145)?

Why do you not choose the way of the Quran and why do you prefer other ways? He has said: Therein you shall live and therein you shall die (7.26). Why do you not reflect? He told you: For you there is an abode in the earth and provision for a time (2.37; 7.25). How did Jesus then find an abode in the heavens or on the Throne of the Lord of the Universe? That is but a manifest falsehood. The Holy Lord said further: They are dead, not living (16.22). How then do you regard Jesus to be living?

Beware, beware! Hold fast to the Quran, O servants of the Gracious One. Hold fast to the Quran! Fear Allah and do not disregard the Quran! That is a Book concerning which men, high and low, will be called to account. You recite the Fatiha in the Prayer services, so reflect over it, O men of wisdom! Do you not come across it in the verse: Guide us along the way of those whom Thou hast favoured? Be not then like those who lost the light of their eyes and all that they possessed departed from them. Is there an argument even after the Quran, or any way of escape?

Does your reason accept the position that, on the one hand, Allah, the Sublime, should in this prayer cheer us with the promise that He will raise from among the Muslims for those who seek true guidance, Imams (leaders) who will be His favourites and elect like the Prophets of Israel and should

exhort us to pray that we should become like the Prophets of Israel and not like the unfortunates among them and should then push us to the pit of despair and send to us a Messenger from among the children of Israel, forgetting His covenant altogether? This is a deception that cannot be ascribed to Allah, the Gracious.

Allah has referred to three groups in this Surah, the favoured ones, the Jews and the Christians, and has urged us to join the first, and has warned us against the last two. In fact, He has exhorted us to prayer, humility and supplication so that we may join the favoured group and not those who incurred His displeasure, nor the lost ones.

By Him Who pours down rain from the clouds and brings forth fruit from the spathes, the truth has verily been manifested by means of this verse and he who has been granted the least understanding will not have any doubt about it. Allah has been gracious to us in making it explicit, relieving us of the hardship of casting it about in our minds. It now is incumbent on those whose tongues dart to and fro like the tongues of serpents and who gaze with fierce eyes like hawks, ferociously watching their preys, not to turn away from this gift and not to become like brutes. It is deeply impressed on my mind that the Fatiha heals the injuries of those who are steadfast in Prayer and equips them with wings.

Jesus died a natural death

There is not a single chapter of the Quran that does not refute this belief of theirs. Read whichever part of the Book of Allah you may choose, it will show you the way of truth and reality. Do you not realise that Surah Bani Israel of the Quran refutes the ascension of Jesus to the heavens? Surah Āl-'Imran states that Allah assured him that He would cause him to die a natural death and would thus transfer him from the living to the dead. Again, Surah Al-Maida sets for him the table of death. Read therein: Since Thou didst cause me to die; if you still labour in doubt. Next, Surah Zumar includes him among

the group that do not come back to this despicable world. If you like you may read: Then He retains those against whom He has decreed death; and bear in mind that return to this world is forbidden after death. It is an inviolable law for a township which We have destroyed that they shall not return (21.96). Being spiritually revived by way of a miracle does not involve the return to this world, the abode of injustice and deception, of a person physically dead.

Since the passing away of Jesus has been established in the clear textual references of the Quran, and Allah has dispelled the surmise about his ascension into heaven through clear statements and has indicated in Surahs Nur and Fatiha that the Muslims are spiritual successors of the Prophets of Israel, it follows that a Messiah will appear among the Muslims in the latter days as Jesus, son of Mary, came in the latter stage of the Mosaic Dispensation. Moses and Muhammad (peace of the Gracious One be on both) were raised in the likeness of one another, according to the clear text of the Quran, and the Khilafat among the Muslims resembles the Khilafat of Moses as is stated in the Quran. No two persons differ about it. The centuries of the Khalifas of Moses extending to the term of Jesus numbered as many as the days of the full moon. It was inevitable therefore, that the Messiah of Islam should appear after the lapse of a similar period subsequent to Muhammad (on whom be the peace and blessings of God). The Holy Quran has indicated this in the verse: Allah helped you in Badr when you were weak (3.124). The Quran has many facets as is well-known to eminent divines. The other meaning of this verse is that, after the lapse of as many centuries as the number of the days of the full moon, Allah will help the faithful through the advent of the Messiah, at a time when the believers will be in a weak state. Consider this verse then – how it predicts the weakness of Islam and the waxing of its crescent into the full moon in the period of time named by Allah, the Most Knowing, as is conveyed in the word: Full moon (Badr). Praise be to Allah for His grace and His favours.

Messiah to appear from among Muslims

The conclusion to be drawn from what we have said in this context is that the Fatiha gives the tidings of the appearance of the Messiah from among the Muslims, a grace from the Lord of all lords. We have thus been promised Imams (leaders) from among us in the likeness of the Prophets of Israel but have not been promised a prophet making his descent from heaven. So ponder this deeply. You have heard before that Surah Nur has promised us a series of Khalifas like the Khalifas of Moses. How can this resemblance be complete without the advent of a Messiah, in the latter part of the dispensation of the Noble Prophet, like the Messiah of the Mosaic dispensation? We have definitely put our faith in this promise, for it certainly is from the Lord of His servants and Allah never goes back on His promise.

We wonder at the people who pay no heed to the promise of the Lord of Majesty! His word shall always be fulfilled and shall ever prevail. They should, therefore, regard it with due piety and reverence. Is it just that the Messiah should come down from heaven and the promise of resemblance between the two Dispensations of Khilafat should be violated while resemblance of the two Dispensations has become incumbent by the command of our Lord of Honour, as is clearly the sense of the word *kama* in Surah Nur (Ijazul Masih, pp. 166–185).

Thus Allah holds out a promise to the followers of our Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him). In other words, He says: O My servants, you have been created with the capacities and faculties that were bestowed upon those who succeeded in winning My pleasure before you, so waste not these capacities and strive after excellence. Know well that Allah is truly Generous and Benevolent and is not a niggardly miser. Herefrom can be grasped the truth underlying the advent of the Messiah which is the subject of so much controversy. When a servant from among the servants of Allah follows the way of the guided and observes the practices of the perfect and becomes eager to take on the colours of the

righteous and turns to them with all his attention and strength and will, fulfilling all the conditions of the spiritual journey, as far as possible, and makes his performance conform to his profession and joins the ranks of those who drink of the cup of love from the Mighty Lord of Magnificence and strikes light, as it were, from the flint-stone of the glorification of Allah, with humility and supplication, weeping along with those who weep, the ocean of Divine compassion then swells to cleanse him of every kind of uncleanness and to refresh him with a plentiful spiritual downpour. Allah then takes him by the hand and leads him to high grades in spiritual development and insight, admitting him to the company of the righteous, the saints, the Prophets and the Apostles who had passed before him. He is granted excellences like those granted to them and also beauty and glory like theirs. Should the time and the reform needed call for one following in the footsteps of a particular Prophet, he is granted knowledge like the knowledge of that Prophet and wisdom like his wisdom and light like his light and is given a name like his name. Allah makes the souls of the two like two mirrors facing one another, so that the Prophet stands for the original and the saint for the reflection, partaking of his position and benefiting from his spirituality to a degree which eliminates the duality and separateness between the two and the commands relating to the first become applicable to the latter and both become like one unit before Allah and the heavenly authorities and the will of Allah descends on the latter and His intent to direct him into a particular direction and His injunctions and His prohibitions are transmitted to him after transversing the soul of the former. This is a mystery from among the Divine mysteries which only those with spiritual experience can fathom (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 85-86).

In short, the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; delivers man from every shortcoming, explains clearly to him the abiding faith, and leads him out of a desolate abode to the garden of fruits and fragrance. Whosoever supplicates more intensely in the course of this prayer, Allah grants him a larger

share of the garden. Through this prayer the Prophets became recipients of the love of the Gracious One, and they did not give up praying even for as much as the twinkling of an eye, until the last moment. It does not behove any one to dispense with this supplication or to turn away from this goal, even if he be a Prophet or an Apostle.

The high grades in righteousness and guidance have no ending ever; in fact, they extend without limit and the eyes of wisdom cannot compass them. That is why Allah, the Sublime, has taught this prayer to His servants, making it the heart of Prayer so that people may benefit by its guidance and may perfect their faith in unity thereby and keep in mind its promises and be purified of the polytheistic streaks of the polytheists.

One of the excellences of this prayer is that it comprises every grade of people and every individual person and it is a prayer that is unlimited and has no ceiling, no ending, and no terminal point nor any confines. Blessed are those then who are constant in it with bleeding hearts and enduring souls and tranquil minds like those servants of Allah who know their Lord.

This is the prayer that comprises every good and security and firmness and steadfastness and glad tidings from the Lord of Universal Providence (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 94-95).

Guide us along the right path; is juxtaposed to *Ar-Rahman*. For, receiving guidance is not the right of anyone. This grace is attained through the *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) of God. The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; is juxtaposed to *Ar-Rahim*. For, its invocator receives beneficence from the spring of *Rahimiyyat* (Divine Compassion). It means, in other words: O Hearer of prayer by Thy special compassion, show us the way of the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous who, through prayer and self-denial, received from Thee all manner of bounties of insights and verities and revelations and inspiration and through perpetual supplication and humility and good deeds attained to perfect recognition of Thee (Al-Hakam, Sept. 17, 1901).

The seventh verity comprised in Surah Fatiha is: Guide us along the straight path. This means: Guide us along the path that is straight without a deviation and make us steadfast and upright in it. The true prayer of man aims at seeking the straight path, leading to God. For, it is the natural rule to strive for procuring means that lead to the attainment of the objective and this is the natural rule that God has laid down in respect of our every objective that the means that are necessary for securing it should be procured and the ways that lead to it should be adopted. When man treads the straight path steadily and takes the measures that are necessary for achieving the objective, the goal is achieved. But it can never be attained if the ways that have been appointed to lead to the objective are abandoned. It is the eternal law that for every goal there is a fixed way and until one treads it one can never reach the objective. Therefore, the *sirati-mustaqeem* (the straight path) is the means that must be sought through effort and exertion and prayer and humility. He who does not strive to attain it, in disregard of its value, is in error in the sight of God. If he were to beg of God heaven and comforts of the hereafter, Divine wisdom would direct the foolish one to seek first the straight path which would bring everything within his reach. Hence the primary prayer which the seeker of truth most urgently needs is supplication for the straight path (Sirat-i-Mustaqeem).

Our opponents have denied themselves the benefit of this truth also. The Christians only ask for their daily bread in their prayers. Even if they come to church well fed, they still ask for bread. In other words, their highest objective is food. The Arya Samajists and their idolatrous brethren recite many vedic prayers to escape the cycle of life and death through reincarnation which is inevitable according to their false notions, but they never supplicate God for the straight path.

The Brahmos have scant faith in prayer

Allah, the Sublime, has in this verse directed the use of the

first person in the plural, indicating thereby, that not a single person is excluded from seeking guidance and receiving Divine bounties. But, according to the doctrine of the Arya-Samajists, it is not permissible for a sinner to seek guidance as God must punish him and whether he is guided or not is alike in his case. The Brahmo Samajists have scant faith in prayer. They are all the time filled with pride in the perfection of their reason. At the same time, they hold the view that it is not needful to have recourse to a particular prayer for a given purpose. One may supplicate as one pleases. It is utterly wrong of them to think so. It is obvious that though one is beset with a multitude of minor needs, yet the primary need one should be concerned about day and night is only one, that is, that one should seek deliverance from the various screens of darkness and reach out to the stage of full recognition of the Divine, so that not a trace of blindness or inner sightlessness or hard-heartedness or disloyalty should be left, and that one should recognise God fully and being filled with His pure love, should attain to union with the Divine, as in this alone consists one's perfect beatitude. This is a prayer that man needs most and on which depends his entire felicity. In order to achieve it the simple way is that he should supplicate: Guide us along the straight path. For this is the only means open to man to attain to the goal he seeks, namely, that he should tread steadfastly along the path that leads to it, and avoid pursuing other paths. It is obvious that God has appointed in His natural law only one way which may be called the straight way to reach a goal. Unless that course is adopted the goal can never be reached. As all God's laws have been promulgated in a system since the beginning, so is there a special way, straight and direct, that has been appointed for attaining to salvation and beatitude in the hereafter. Steadfastness in Prayer consists in supplicating God to be guided along that straight path (Baraheen Ahmadiyya, pp. 445-456, Footnote).

Putting everything in its proper place is straight path

Observance of true virtue is treading the straight path which

is also called following the middle way of moderation. For practical faith in Unity, which is the real objective, is attained through it. One who is slack in seeking this degree of righteousness, falls short and one who impels himself to go beyond is guilty of excess. For instance, being clement on every occasion is excess; for it is of the essence of virtue that the propriety of the place and occasion be duly observed. On the other hand, never showing mercy on any occasion is to fall short, for both occasion and place are missed. Putting everything in its proper place is moderation, and this is the straight path which it is the duty of every Muslim to tread. Supplication for the straight path has been prescribed for a Muslim in every Prayer service for this would keep him firmly established in the fundamental principle of Divine Unity. Being on the *sirat-i-mustaqeem* is an attribute of God; besides the nature of *sirat-i-mustaqeem* is truth and wisdom. If truth and wisdom are exercised towards the creatures of God, that is virtue; if they are exercised in respect of God that means sincerity and righteousness; and if they are exercised towards oneself, that is purification of self. *Sirat-i-mustaqeem* comprises all three, virtue, sincerity of faith, and self-purification.

Three sets of obligations

It should be understood that *sirat-i-mustaqeem* which is based on truth and wisdom has three aspects, theoretical, practical and relating to self. Each of these is again three faceted. For instance, the theoretical comprises appreciation of that which is due to Allah, that which is due to His creatures, and that which is due to oneself. The practical demands the discharge of each of these three sets of obligations. That which is due to Allah in the theoretical sphere is to regard Him as the One, the Source of all beneficence, comprehending all excellences, the origin and returning-point of everything, free from every imperfection and short-coming, combining in Himself all perfect qualities and the sole Being to Whom worship is due. This is the theory of *sirat-i-mustaqeem* concerning that which is

due to Allah. Its practical aspect comprises obeying Him with perfect sincerity, associating no one in the obedience due to Him, and supplicating Him alone looking up only to Him for the promotion of one's welfare and effacing oneself in His love. This is the practical *sirat-i-mustaqeem* concerning that which is due to Allah, and this is the very truth. The theoretical *sirat-i-mustaqeem*, concerning that which is due to one's fellow beings, consists in accepting them as one's kin as servants of God and in that capacity amounting to nothing independently of Him. For, true appraisal of God's creatures is that their existence is only derived from Him and is non-existent in itself, all being mortal. This is the theoretical definition of *Tauheed* (Unity), for, it emphasises the Eminence of One Being Who suffers from no shortcoming and is perfect in His Being.

The practical *sirat-i-mustaqim*, concerning that which is due to one's fellow beings, consists in practising genuine virtue, that is, doing that which is most beneficial and proper for them. This is practical *Tauheed* (Unity), the object of the creature being that all his conduct should be a reflection of Divine attributes.

The theoretical *sirat-i-mustaqeem*, in respect of that which is due to oneself, is that one should be aware of all the evils that spring from the ego, like self-estimation, ostentation, arrogance, spite, jealousy, vanity, greed, miserliness, negligence, and injustice and should estimate them as degrading traits of character as they are in fact. This is theoretical *Tauheed* (Unity), also as it emphasises the greatness of only one Being Who suffers from no drawback and is altogether Holy.

The practical *sirat-i-mustaqeem*, concerning that which is due to oneself, is to purge one's self of all low inclinations, to be emptied of all dross and to be equipped with all excellent traits. This indeed is the straight course (*sirat-i-mustaqeem*) in practice. This is also *Tauheed* as expressed in one's own being. For, the purpose of a believer in One God is to empty his heart of the intrusion of everything other than Allah, in

order to attain to the stage where he is urged to merge in the Holiness of Allah.

There is a fine distinction between this and the practical *sirat-i-mustaqeem* in respect of that which is due to one's fellow beings and that is that the former is a quality which can be acquired through exercise and is a latent distinction which may or may not find external expression. But the observance of that which is due to one's fellow beings has a practical aspect which finds expression in service of which the benefit should extend to large numbers of one's fellow beings so that the duty of service should be adequately discharged. The practical aspect of *sirat-i-mustaqeem* concerning one's fellow beings, is fulfilled only through service and the practical aspect of that which is due to oneself is realized through self-purification and does not necessarily call for any service. This self-purification can be achieved even in the solitude of wilderness. But that which is due to mankind cannot be rendered except in the midst of one's fellow beings. That is why it has been said that there is no monasticism in Islam (57.28).

It must, therefore, be understood that the meaning of *sirat-i-mustaqeem*, both theoretical and practical is theoretical knowledge of *Tauheed* and a life lived in terms of *Tauheed*, that is, *Tauheed* through knowledge and *Tauheed* through practice. The Holy Quran sets forth only one true objective, true Unity, all the rest being means towards achieving it (Al-Hakam, Sept. 24, 1905).

This verse indicates that *sirat-i-mustaqeem* is a great blessing and is the source of all gifts and the door to every bounty. When a person is honoured with this great kingdom and dominion that never decays, he becomes the recipient of favours upon favours. Whoso prepares himself for receiving this felicity and perseveres in the effort, is called to every type of guidance and enjoys a pleasant life and experiences an illuminating light, after nights of darkness. Allah saves him from every slip, admits him into the company of the righteous, after he had been involved with the rebellious, and shows him the ways of

those He favours, those who have not incurred His displeasure and have not gone astray.

Sirat-i-Mustaqeem objective of worshipper

The reality of *sirat-i-mustaqeem*, as designed in the firm Faith, is the servant's love for His gracious Lord, and his complete acceptance of the will of Allah and committing his soul and his heart to Him, and dedicating his whole attention to Him Who created man, and praying to none but Him, loving Him with all his heart and supplicating Him alone and seeking His mercy and compassion, and emerging out of his stupor, and walking straight and fearing the Gracious Lord, His love permeating his whole being with Allah helping him, strengthening his belief and faith. Then the servant inclines totally towards his Lord with all his heart and desires and reason and limbs and land and harvest, turning away from everything besides Him until there remains for him nothing but his Lord and he follows naught but His wishes and comes to Him with a heart emptied of all besides Him and seeks none but Allah in the paths of his journey and repents of priding himself or of being fascinated by wealth and the wealthy and presents himself before the Presence of the Lord like one destitute. He gives up the world and travels away from it and prefers the hereafter and seeks it and puts his trust in Allah and becomes His and is lost in Him and runs to Him like a lover.

This then is the *sirat-i-mustaqeem* the end of the journey of the spiritual wayfarers, which is the final objective of the seekers and the worshippers. No mercy is bestowed until after this light descends nor is any true success achieved except after it has been possessed. This is the key by means of which the spiritual wayfarer expresses his innermost thoughts in his supplications to His Lord and whereby the gates of discernment are opened to him and He is made a *muhaddis* by the Most Forgiving Allah. Whoso makes this supplication secretly in the morning with sincerity and pure intent, observing all the

conditions of righteousness and loyalty, undoubtedly arrives at the station of the chosen and the elect and the elite.

Worshipper should stand before God with yearning and total humility

One who heaves sighs, while supplicating the Bountiful Lord, like one who has lost his child, entreating acceptance of his prayer by Allah, the Gracious, with humility and lowliness, while his eyes overflow with tears, his prayer is verily heard. He is granted a position of honour and is vouchsafed appropriate guidance. His faith is strengthened with arguments resplendent like rubies and his heart, hitherto weaker than a spider's web, is fortified. He is granted excellence of character and is enabled to observe minute details of piety. He is invited to the table of the spiritually exalted and to the pure provisions meant for the saintly. He overcomes at all times every desire, utilising it under the superintendence of the law (*sharia*) as a vehicle to carry it wherever he wishes to go, like an expert rider bestriding a docile mount. He desires not the world nor puts himself in hardship on account of it; nor does he grovel before its golden calf. Allah is his Guardian and He indeed is the Guardian of the righteous. His mind is at rest, and has no tendency left to misguide him to his ruin. It no longer stares at the world like a hawk glaring at his prey from above. He sees the goals of his journey clearly like the munificent; his generosity is not niggardly; he is a source of freshness for others, like clear running water. Allah has urged His servants to seek of Him perseverance in striving for this position and steadfastness and ability to reach this eminence, for it is indeed a high position and an inaccessible objective, attainable by none except through the grace of their Lord and not at all through the exertions of their minds. It is, therefore, necessary that the worshipper should proceed to the Presence of the Lord of Honour, yearning for this prize and beg of Him success in this endeavour, standing and bowing down and in prostration, grovelling in the dust of humility as the mendicants and the

hard-pressed keep supplicating with outstretched arms (Kar-amatus Sadiqeen, pp. 91–93).

The prayer: Guide us along the straight path; implies that when human effort reaches its limit, one has to turn to Allah, the Exalted. A prayer is perfect when it comprises every good and safeguards against every evil. The prayer: Guide us along the straight path; comprises every form of good; and: not of those who incurred Thy wrath nor of those who went astray; is a supplication to be safeguarded against every evil, including the wickedness of the Dissembler (Dajjal). Those who incurred Divine wrath are by consensus the Jews and those who went astray are Christians. Obviously, there was a purpose in this supplication being so worded. For, if not, there would be little point in laying so much emphasis on it that there is no Prayer service valid without it. Further, its recital in every *rakaa* has been made obligatory. The purpose is that it is meant to invite attention to our times. In this age the *sirat-i-mustaqeem* (the straight path) is the path that is ours (Al-Hakam, Feb. 17, 1901).

Three sources of guidance for Muslims

The Muslims have available to them three sources of guidance towards the *sirat-i-mustaqeem*; (1) the Holy Quran, the Book of Allah. We have nothing more conclusive and certain than this, the Word of God, free from all doubt and vagueness; (2) the *Sunna*, that is, the example of the Holy Prophet. It should be remembered that *Sunna* and *Hadeeth* are not identical. *Sunna* is the example of the Holy Prophet, which is attested by continuous practice since his time. It is contemporaneous with the Holy Quran and shall so remain. In other words, the Holy Quran is the Word of God, the Exalted, and *Sunna* is the practice of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) illustrating the values propounded in the Holy Quran. It has ever been the way of Allah that when the Prophets (peace be on them all) communicate the revealed word of God for the guidance of people, they illustrate it in

practice through personal example, so that its import may be clearly grasped, and make others practise it likewise; (3) the *Hadeeth*. By *Hadeeth* we mean the reports of what the Holy Prophet said that were collected through narrators some 150 years after the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be on him) (Review on Batalvi versus Chakralvi Debate, pp. 3–4).

Islam has been called steadfastness in the Holy Quran, as it teaches the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; that is, make us steadfast in the path of righteousness, the path of those who became the recipients of Thy bounties and for whom the gates of heaven were opened. It must be remembered that steadfastness of attitude is determined with reference to the ultimate object of the creation of each species. The ultimate object of man's creation is the worship and service of God. The steadfastness of man, therefore, is that having been created for perpetual obedience to God, he should be dedicated solely to Him. When he becomes wholly devoted to Him with all his powers and capacities, he is rewarded with what may be described as the pure life. As you observe that when a window facing the sun is opened, its rays enter through the window. Similarly when a person faces up to God, the Supreme, and there is no intervening screen between him and God, the Sublime, then at once a luminous flame descends on him and illumines him and dispels all his inner uncleanness. Then he becomes a new person and experiences a great change. It is then said that he has been given a pure life. This change takes place in this very life. It is to this that Allah, the Lord of glory and honour, draws attention in the verse: Whoso is spiritually blind in this life and is not bestowed the light wherewith to see God, will be blind in the hereafter also (17.73) (Answers to Four Questions of Siraj Din Christian, pp. 18–19).

Most certainly it is a characteristic of true revelation that it expounds the meaning of the abstract terms employed in it. For instance, the verse of the Fatiha: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; employs the abstract term, bestowing of favours, which calls for an explanation. This is furnished in 4.70 where

God, the Exalted, says: Whoso obeys Allah and the Messenger will be among those whom Allah has favoured, namely, the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous (Jang Muqaddas paper D/- 24 May).

Four grades of excellence

There are four grades of excellence which it is the duty of every believer to aspire after. One who has no part in them at all, is devoid of faith. That is why Allah, the Lord of glory, has appointed for Muslims the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, so that they should keep supplicating for these four grades. In another place (4.70) the Holy Quran explains that the favoured ones are the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous. The perfect man combines these excellences in his person (Tiryaqul Qulub, p. 125).

The purpose and object of human life is the pursuit of and adherence to the straight path, as has been set out in this Surah, in the words: Allah, guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. This prayer is offered in each *rakaa* of each Prayer service. Its very repetition emphasises its significance. We should bear in mind that this is not a matter of small import and that it is not enough merely to repeat these words by rote. In fact, it is an efficacious and unfailing instrument for converting a person into an ideal human being which should be constantly employed and should be greatly cherished. This verse comprises a supplication for four categories of excellence. If a person attains to these four excellences, he will have discharged his duty of prayer and of seeking the object of his creation. He will have also acquitted himself worthily, in respect of the beneficent use of the capacities and talents granted to him.

It should never be forgotten that some parts of the Holy Quran explain its other parts. A subject finds a summary mention in one place and is explained at length in another, the latter thus constituting an exposition of the former. Thus:

Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed favours; is a supplication in the abstract. In another place (4.70) the favoured ones have been described as the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous. The Prophets (peace be on them all) comprise the excellences of all four categories. For this is the apex of perfection.

It is the duty of every one to cultivate these excellences through appropriate exertions, in the way the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be on him) demonstrated through his example (Al-Hakam, March 31, 1905).

If you reflect on the Holy Quran, you will find that Allah, the Sublime, has taught in the very first Surah the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, not of those with whom Thou hast been wroth, nor of those who have gone astray. A comprehensive prayer should comprise every type of advantage and benefit and should safeguard against all evil and harm. This prayer comprises every possible benefit and safeguards against every possible harm.

Four categories of favoured ones

I have repeatedly pointed out that the favoured ones referred to in this prayer are divided into four categories: the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous. This prayer is an entreaty for the excellences of all four. The great excellence of the Prophets is that they receive intelligence from God concerning that which is hidden. The Holy Quran says: He reveals not His secrets to anyone except to whomsoever of His Messengers He is pleased to choose (72.27–28). Those who partake of the excellences of Prophethood are vouchsafed intelligence by Allah, the Sublime, of that which is to come. This is the great Sign of the Divine Commissioners and Messengers. There is no greater miracle than this (Al-Hakam, March 17, 1901).

Two parties of Islam—forerunners and those coming after

According to the clear verse: A large party from the early Muslims and a large party from the later ones (56.40, 41), the pure Muhammadi group, free from all uncleanness and defilement and gifted with a faith chastened in sincere and utter inclination to God and with deep spiritual insight and knowledge and practice and piety, is a very large one. It comprises only two parties in Islam; the earlier and the later; the first being the Companions of the Holy Prophet and the second the community of the Promised Messiah. A description calls for qualitative and quantitative correspondence, in this case the possession of divine light. Consequently in this Surah the phrase: the favoured ones; applies to these two parties, the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be on him) and his party and the Promised Messiah and his party. In short God has appointed from the beginning two parties of Muslims and the expression: the favoured ones; in Surah Fatiha points to them (1) the forerunners, that is the community of the Holy Prophet and (2) the latter party, that is, the community of the Promised Messiah (Tuhfa Golarviya, pp. 80–81).

Allah has directed that we should supplicate in our five daily Prayer services: Lord, guide us along the way of Thy favoured servants. Who are these? They are the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous. The purpose of this prayer is that you should repair to whichever of these groups you should find in your day and should seek to derive profit from their company (Poster titled Signs of Doom, Aaenae Kamalate Islam).

Allah, the Lord of sublime glory, has said: A large party from among the early Muslims and a large party from the later ones (56.40–41) and has urged His servants to supplicate: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. If we were not to be admitted to the company of His favoured ones, then what was the purpose in teaching us this prayer? You know that of the favoured ones, the foremost are the Prophets and Apostles and

that His favour is not in the shape of coins of gold or silver but comprises spiritual knowledge and insight and blessings and light as is well-known to the discerning ones. As we have been directed to make this entreaty in every Prayer service, it is obvious that the direction has been given us so that our prayer may be accepted and that we may be granted the bounties that were granted to the Prophets. Thus, Allah, may His name be exalted, has promised us the grant of blessings which the Prophets and Apostles were given before us, making us their heirs. How can we then deny these bounties and become like the blind? How is it possible that after making firm promises Allah, the Sublime, should go back on them and make us the deprived ones?

You know that the leaders and chiefs among the favoured are the Prophets and Apostles and Allah, the Sublime, has promised to grant us the guidance and the perfect discernment granted to them, which cannot be attained except through receiving the honour of speech and address from Allah, the Exalted, or through witnessing His signs. May Allah forgive you! How do you come to entertain the notion that the saints of Allah are not favoured with the Divine word and Divine address and are not included among those who are so honoured (Tuhfa Baghdad, pp. 12–13)?

We supplicate in our Prayers: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. This means for the purpose of advancement in faith and for the benefit of mankind we seek four types of signs in the shape of four excellences – the excellence of the Prophets, the excellence of the righteous, the excellence of the martyrs and the excellence of the virtuous. The special excellence of a Prophet is to receive from God knowledge of things hidden which should be a Sign. The excellence of the righteous is that one should so completely possess the treasure of truth, the verities comprised in the Book of Allah, that because of their outstanding character they should be a sign, confirming the integrity of the righteous person. The excellence of the martyr is that he should possess such firmness of faith and such

strength of character and such steadfastness in times of trial and troubles and hardships that they should be a sign for him. The excellence of the man of virtue is that he should so completely discard every type of mischief and become such an embodiment of goodness, that his virtue should become a sign, because of its extraordinary character.

These are then the four kinds of excellence that we beg of Allah, the Exalted, five times in our daily Prayers. In other words, we seek from God, the Supreme, heavenly signs and whoso does not aspire to them lacks faith. The very purpose of our prayer is this aspiration which we seek from God, the Great, five times in our daily Prayers, in four shapes as four signs, seeking thus the magnification of God, the Most High, in the earth, so that our lives may not defile the earth as lives of denial and doubt and indifference. A person glorifies God, the Sublime, only when he begs of Him these four signs (Zameema Tiryatul Qulub, p. 4).

God intends to prepare a community like the people prepared by the Holy Prophet

It is the true purpose of every person to attain to the excellences of the favoured ones to which Allah, the Exalted, has called attention in: the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. Our community should address itself particularly to this. For, by instituting this Movement, Allah, the Exalted, means to prepare a people like the people prepared by the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be on him) so that this community may stand as a witness to the truth and magnificence of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Of the excellences granted to the favoured ones, the first is that of Prophethood which occupies the most eminent position of all. I regret that I am unable to find words to set forth the true nature of this excellence. The more glorious the object, the greater the weakness of language to describe it. Prophethood is such a lofty station that there is no higher grade and honour for man.

It is, therefore, not possible to describe it fully in words (Al-Hakam, March 31, 1905).

The Prophets are true adorers of God, the Supreme, and are immersed in His love. They possess far greater zeal and fervour than do the reputed false lovers. For, God inclines towards those who incline towards Him, so much so, that He cares far more for them than they could ever care for Him. If a seeker walks towards Him, Allah, the Sublime, runs towards him. Therefore, if one turns completely to God, losing oneself in His adoration, such love and adoration of God consume all vain ambitions and selfish desires and one's soul is inspired and made articulate and becomes recipient of the holy Word of God, the Supreme. In other words, one prays and Allah, the Sublime, responds. This then is an excellence of Prophethood and is inherent in: those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. When, therefore, a person supplicates: Guide us to the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; he should seek attainment of this excellence of Prophethood. (Al-Hakam, April 17, 1905).

The other excellence is comprised in: Those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; this is the excellence of the righteous. On attainment to this excellence, the wisdom and verities of the Holy Quran are disclosed. This grace and beneficence is also attainable only through Divine bounty. We believe that it is not possible even to stir a finger without the support and grace of God, the Exalted. It is, however, man's duty to exert himself as far as he can and for this also to seek strength from God, the Sublime, never losing hope, for a believer never despairs of God's mercy, as God, the Supreme, has said: Only the disbelievers despair of the mercy of Allah (12.88). Despair is a great evil. One who despairs in effect entertains an ill concept of God, the Exalted. Remember, most evils and vices spring from mistrust. Allah, the Most High, has therefore, warned against it emphatically: Mistrust may cause great harm (49.13).

Nearness and closeness to God and indeed life itself are favours included in: Those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy

favours. Our opponents include the Messiah among the divinely favoured but exclude therefrom the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Why are they not ashamed of it? Long life is also part of this favour for, the Holy Quran says: That which benefits people abides in the earth (13.18) (Al-Hakam, Feb. 10, 1905).

What has befallen these people; why do they not understand? Is the prayer taught in the Quran: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; a meaningless phrase and mere verbiage? Is that favour illusory? Has God played upon our credulity and does He plan to keep His true seekers and the righteous unblessed? It is a grave injustice to attribute to God mere empty phrases. This is not the truth. These are their own conjectures. The Holy Quran in truth seeks to lead man to the high grades and lofty ranks which were bestowed on people who qualified for the position of the Divinely favoured ones, and there never is a time when living proof of the word of God, the Sublime, is not available. We do not share the Aryasamajist belief that an adorer and devotee of God prays and piteously beseeches God in vain. Islam is not an arid faith. It is an ever-living faith and its signs march abreast of it and have not been left behind (Al-Hakam, Sept. 30, 1901).

Way of Imamat is ever open

If it is true that God, the Exalted, has sealed up all blessings and every kind of *Imamat* (spiritual leadership) and patronage and the ways leading to these are closed altogether, there can be no greater tragedy for the true seekers of God, the Supreme. They are, so to say, as good as dead though living and have nothing in their hands except barren tales, with no substance and truth in them.

If the Shias believe this to be true then why do they supplicate in their five daily Prayers: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours? For, this prayer plainly means: Lord, favour us

with the way that offers approach to Thee which Thou didst grant to the Prophets, the leaders, the righteous and the martyrs. This verse manifestly proclaims that the way to the grant of *Imamat* (spiritual leadership) is ever open and thus should it be. This humble servant of God has sent out to different countries and towns twenty thousand posters to proclaim the proof of the existence of this way. If this blessing is absent then what excellence does Islam claim (Al-Hakam, March 10, 1902)?

Allah, the Sublime, has in the Holy Quran directed us to supplicate: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. All commentators are agreed that the direction: the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; aims at cultivating true resemblance with the Prophets which is the essence of obedience. God sent Prophets (peace be on them) to the world to create their replicas in the earth. If this was not the purpose, then Prophethood loses all meaning. Prophets are not sent to be worshipped. On the contrary, they appear so that people may pattern their lives according to their example and cultivate affinities with them and should identify themselves with them totally. Allah, the Exalted, says: Announce: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will then love you (3.32). God will not withhold any blessing from one whom He loves. Following, also means self-obliteration in obedience, which promotes one to the status of complete resemblance. This is accepted on all hands and will be denied only by one completely ignorant or one bereft of all faith (Ayyamus Solh, pp. 163–164).

Allah has made Muslims spiritual heirs of all prophets

The Prophets are prototypes and live on through their likes. At the time of need, God, the Supreme, makes a servant of His the like of a Prophet and his spiritual reflection. He takes on the colour of his prototype and thus becomes a means of perpetuating his spiritual existence. It is for the purpose of continuing this reflexive representation, that God, the Most

High, has taught His servants the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of Thy servants whom Thou hast favoured. It is obvious that the Divine favour bestowed on the Prophets, for which we are directed to supplicate by means of this prayer, does not comprise silver and gold coins but is of the nature of light and bliss and love and certainty and extraordinary signs and heavenly support and approval and full and perfect discernment and revelation and Divine communion. God, the Supreme, directed the Muslims to supplicate for this favour, having determined to grant them this gift. This verse, therefore, clearly establishes that Allah has made the Muslims spiritual heirs of all the Prophets so that all Prophets may live on spiritually and the world may never be bereft of them. He not only directed that this prayer should be made; in fact, He made a promise of its acceptance in the verse (29.70): Those who strive in Our path, them shall We guide along Our ways. It is obvious that the ways of God, the Sublime, are the same as were shown to the Prophets (Shahadatul Quran, p. 56).

Divine speech is proof of Divine presence

Can you assert that the sun of Divine revelation which has been rising in the full glory of its certainty in the past has now lost its refulgence? In other words, that the sure way to reach certitude is no longer available and that it has been left behind and that the sovereignty and kingdom of God and His beneficence have come to an end only having ruled a short while? The Word of God bears witness to the contrary, for, He teaches us the prayer: Guide us to the right path, the path of Thy favoured ones. This prayer gives promise of the favour that the Prophets and Apostles were granted. It is obvious that of all those bounties, the highest is the definite word of God, for Divine speech is the substitute and proof of Divine Presence. It demonstrates the existence of God. If, therefore, no member of this Umma (nation of Islam) can be favoured with definite Divine revelation as authentic as that granted to the Prophets

(peace be on them), disregard and denial of which by the world would lead to positive loss and harm, the teaching of this prayer would amount to an illusion. For, if God does not desire to make the Muslims co-sharers with the Prophets (peace be on them) in the Divine bounties in terms of the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast favoured; then why did He teach them this prayer and why did He urge them to pray for an impossibility? If teaching them this prayer is not with the purpose of granting them the gift of certitude and insight and is merely designed to please them with words, then decidedly this people is the most unfortunate of all the peoples and God, the Supreme, does not design to save it with a drink from the fountain of certainty and, on the contrary, designs to let it flounder to death and ruin in the vortex of doubts and misgivings. But bear it well and truly in mind that this *ummat* (the Muslims) has been definitely assigned a share in the bounties granted to the Prophets. For, if there were no such receptive capacity in the nature of the perfect members of this *ummat*, their hearts would not have been charged with the yearning to reach the ultimate stage of certitude, in their knowledge of God. Of these bounties the highest is that of sure Divine speech and communion by means of which man gains full certainty of recognition of the Divine Being which is tantamount to beholding God, the Supreme, and believing in Him through personal experience of Him (Nuzulul Masih, pp. 109–110).

Allah, the Exalted, directs man in Surah Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Holy Quran, to supplicate: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours.

This prayer has been taught to raise man's morale so that he may realize by means of it, the design of his Creator which is that this people should not lead the life of animals, and that all its veils should be rent asunder. The Shias believe that Divine patronage came to an end after the twelve Imams (leaders). But this prayer indicates that it is the Divine design that a righteous one who lives in obedience to the behests of

God, should be able to attain to the high ranks that are bestowed on the Prophets and the elite. It also indicates that man has been granted diverse faculties and capacities which have to be developed and that he has a long way to go in progress of all kinds. A goat, not being human, has capacities that are incapable of development. But when a high minded person hears about Prophets and Apostles, he does not content himself with faith in the bounties bestowed on them but wishes to have progressive personal experience of them, from deduction through personal observation to closer insight and finally to certitude, through personal involvement.

Three stages of knowledge

There are three stages of knowledge, through deduction, observation, and personal experience. For instance, at the sight of smoke we draw the conclusion that there should be a fire. This is *ilmul yaqeen* (knowledge through deduction). Higher than this is seeing the fire (knowledge through observation). This is *ainul yaqeen*. The last stage is that of personal experience. This is *haqqul yaqeen* i.e. inserting one's hand in the fire and feeling the heat and the burning and thus being convinced beyond the possibility of doubt. How unfortunate is the person who has not attained to any of these. One who does not enjoy Allah's grace in terms of the verse: Those who strive in Our path, them shall We guide along the ways that lead to Us (29.70) is entangled in blind groping. This is the promise and there is the prayer: Guide us along the straight path. One should, therefore, keep it in view, in one's Prayer and supplicate devoutly and desire earnestly to be included among those who have made advancement and gained insight, lest one should depart from this world spiritually sightless and blind, as He has said: One who is spiritually blind in this world shall be blind in the hereafter (17.73). This means that we must take with us spiritual sight from this world to be able to see in the next. To perceive in the hereafter, appropriate senses must be developed in this very life. Can it be imagined that Allah

should make a promise but should fail to honour it? One who has been denied spiritual insight and spiritual perception is truly blind. A person is born in a Muslim family and because of blind tradition is called a Muslim, just as a person born in a Christian family is called a Christian. Such a one has scant regard for the honour of God, of the Prophet and the Quran. His attachment to religion is doubtful. He moves about among people who affront God and the Prophet. This is because he lacks spiritual insight. He has no love for the faith, for, one who loves would not tolerate aught against his love. In brief, Allah, the Exalted, has given us to understand that He is ready to grant if we are ready to receive. This supplication is an indication of readiness to receive the guidance. Immediately after this prayer of the Fatiha, the phrase: Guidance for the God-fearing; in the beginning of the second chapter, meaning thereby the Holy Quran, indicates that God, the Sublime, is ready to make the grant (Report of the proceedings of the Annual Conference, 1897, pp. 38-39).

A follower of the Holy Prophet is eligible for Divine address

If Nabi (Prophet) means a person with whom God speaks and converses, and to whom He discloses knowledge of things hidden, then there can be no harm if a follower of the Holy Prophet qualifies to be such a prophet, particularly when God, the Exalted, has held out the hope in the Holy Quran that a follower of the Holy Prophet is eligible for the honour of Divine address. In fact, the Supreme Lord does speak to His saints. The truth of the matter is that the supplication: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; directed to be made in the five daily Prayer services, has been taught for this very purpose. Why then is the grant of this bounty to a follower of the Holy Prophet objected to? Did the bounty that is begged of God, the Sublime, through the Fatiha, the one that was awarded to the Prophets, consist of silver and gold coins? Obviously the Prophets (peace be on them) were granted the honour of

Divine address and Divine speech by means of which their knowledge of God reached the stage of certitude, through personal experience (*haqqul yaqeen*) and the manifestation of Divine grace through the spoken word became the substitute of a sight of the Divine. Therefore, the supplication to guide us along the way by treading along which we can qualify for that bounty can mean only: Grant us the honour of Thy speech and address. It is said that the prayer simply asks for reinforcement of faith and the strength to work righteousness, such as would please Him. It is not realized that firmness of faith and working of righteousness such as would please God, are the fruits of perfect knowledge. A heart that has not been granted knowledge of God, the Supreme, is devoid of firm faith and righteousness. It is through knowledge that the heart learns to fear God, the Supreme; it is through knowledge that love of the Supreme Lord wells up in the heart. Since both fear and love of God accrue from knowledge, man can incline to God wholeheartedly only when he has knowledge, first of His Being and then of His attributes and excellences. This degree of knowledge can be attained only through Divine address and speech, which, by the manifestation of Divine signs create firm faith in His all-encompassing knowledge and in His almighty power to do whatever He wills. The true gift then on which firmness of faith and righteous conduct are contingent is Divine speech and address through which one first obtains sure knowledge of Him and next a concept of His powers and then in accordance with this concept one observes the operation of His powers with one's own eyes. This is the gift that the Prophets (peace be on them) were granted and the Muslims have been directed to pray for and have thus been promised it. Divine speech and address are the firm root of knowledge and the fountainhead of all bounties. Had this door been closed on this *ummat* (people) then all access to beatitude would also have been bolted on it (Zameema Baraheen Ahmadiyyah, Vol. V, pp. 139–141).

Bear well in mind that the Muslims have been promised all the bounties that were granted to the former Prophets and the

righteous. Part of these are the prophecies and prophetic foresights, because of which they were called Prophets (peace be on them). The Holy Quran closes the door to the knowledge of the unseen, on all except the Prophets and Apostles as is clear from the verse: He discloses not His secrets to any except to the Messenger He is pleased to choose (72.27,28). It is, therefore, necessary to be a Prophet to qualify for receiving clear information about the unseen. The verse: Those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours: confirms that the Muslims are not debarred from clear insight into and clear knowledge of the unseen and this calls for Prophethood and Apostleship. But direct access thereto is barred. It follows therefore, that the only means of attaining to this bounty that is left open is through becoming a spiritual reflection of the Holy Prophet (Ek Ghalati ka Izala, Footnote p. 7).

Ponder the word of Allah, the Sublime, and the prayer which He has taught us: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. We have thus been commanded to follow all the Prophets and to seek of Allah all their excellences. But the excellences of the Prophets are of diverse types and we have been commanded to seek all of them and to combine all of them in ourselves. It follows therefrom that through perfect obedience to the Holy Prophet we can achieve a reflection of excellences some of which were bestowed on some Prophets but not on others. The Muslim Divines are agreed that a non-Prophet may be granted an excellence not granted to a Prophet whose advent was before that of the Holy Prophet (Hamamatul Bushra, p. 78).

Miracles demand signs to be exhibited by the true followers of the Prophet so that their impact may survive till the Day of Judgment. Those who are heirs to their Prophet, are granted favours by way of reflection. Had it not been so, the prophetic beneficence would have disappeared. These spiritual heirs of the Prophets are a reflection of the original that has itself passed on and are like the reflection of an object in a mirror. They apply the kohl in their eyes with the pencil of self-obliteration and they discard all self-display, until nothing is

left of their own being, and all that appears is the image of the Seal of the Prophets. That which you observe of their extraordinary works or hear of their words resembling holy writ, proceed not from them but from our Master the Chief of the Elite, in the garb of reflections. If you are in any doubt concerning this dignity of the friends of the Gracious One, then study with care the verse: The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours (Al-Huda, pp. 31–32).

If Allah desires to grant the seekers of truth perfection in Divine knowledge, then be sure He has definitely kept open the door to His speech and address. In this connection the Lord of Honour has taught in the Holy Quran: Lord, guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. Here favours means Divine speech and revelation and heavenly sciences which are bestowed directly on people (Report of the proceedings of the Great Religions Conference, pp. 199–200).

Lord, guide us along the path of the Prophets and Apostles who were recipients of Thy bounties and favours. It is evident from this verse, which is recited in the five daily Prayer services that the spiritual Divine gift, which is knowledge and love of the Divine, is attained only through the Prophets and the Apostles and not by any other means (Haqiqatul Wahi, pp. 131–132).

Since He knew that the Holy Prophet combined in himself the excellences of all the Prophets, He commanded us to make this supplication in our five daily Prayer services: Lord, guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; meaning bestow on us the excellences of all the Prophets, Messengers, righteous and martyrs who have preceded us (Haqiqatul Wahi, p. 152).

This verse means: Grant us the grace and bounty conferred on all the Prophets and the righteous who have preceded us and debar us not from any kind of grace. This verse gives a magnificent hope to the Muslims, a hope not shared by those who passed on before. For, all the Prophets possessed distinctive excellences and enjoyed distinctive grace and bounties individ-

ually. Now the Muslims have been directed to supplicate for all the different excellences they possessed. It is obvious that their aggregate will far outweigh the individual excellences.

It is for this reason that it has been said: You are the best people raised for the good of mankind (3.111); because of your excellences (Chashma Masihi, pp. 65-66).

It must be remembered that the door of Divine speech and address is open for this *ummat* (people). This door is an ever-fresh testimony of the validity of the Holy Quran and the truth of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). It is to this end that God, the Sublime, has taught us in the Fatiha the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; directing us to supplicate for the path of the favoured ones is a sure indication that we should seek to attain to the excellences of the Prophets (peace be on them). The excellence granted to the Prophets (peace be on them) was the excellence of Divine knowledge which they received through Divine speech and Divine address. You, too, should seek the same (Al-Hakam, Oct. 24, 1906).

Ponder carefully the word of God so that you may know what He expects of you. What He expects is that which has been taught in Surah Fatiha, namely the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours.

Since God enjoins on you to supplicate five times every day for the gifts bestowed on the Prophets and Apostles, how can you then attain to these gifts, independently of the Prophets and Apostles? It, therefore, follows that to lead you to the stage of certainty and love, Prophets of God should appear from time to time that you may receive these gifts through them (Lecture at Sialkot, p. 32).

Muslims will be granted all bounties granted to previous peoples

It is only the Quran that has taught at the very outset the

prayer to its readers and given them this hope, namely; Guide us along the way to those bounties of Thine which Thou didst bestow on those who preceded us from among the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs, the virtuous. Look up then and turn not down the invitation of the Quran, for, it means to grant you the gifts that were granted to those who have gone before. Did He not grant you the land of Israel and the Holy House of Israel which are still in your possession? O ye of little faith and less courage, do you imagine that your Lord put you in the place of Israel in the temporal domain but could not do so in the spiritual realm? On the contrary, God intends to grant you a larger measure of grace than He granted them. He made you heirs to their temporal and spiritual possessions but no one will replace you until the Day of Judgment. God will never debar you from the gift of Divine revelation and Divine speech. He will grant you, in full measure, all the bounties that were granted to those before you. Go forward, therefore, in sincerity, truth, righteousness and love of God, making this your sole purpose, as long as life lasts. God will then honour whomsoever of you He wills with His speech and address (Kishti Nooh, pp. 25-26).

So long as man does not cultivate both these qualities, namely, giving up evil and practising virtue, he cannot be called a believer. The perfect believers have been defined as: Those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. Now ponder well, whether the favour merely was that they were not burglars and highwaymen or does it mean something more? Indeed, the favoured ones enjoyed the great bounty of Divine address and Divine speech (Al-Hakam, Jan. 17, 1905).

By transfer of Prophethood from the house of Israel, Allah, the Exalted, intended to demonstrate the honour and grace that He bestowed on the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). This is indicated in: Guide us along the straight path. This means: Allah, favour us with the gifts and bounties that Thou didst confer on former Prophets and the righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous. If God, the Supreme, could not confer these boons and the door to them had been

closed, then what was the purpose of teaching us this prayer? This door was closed on the children of Israel. If it has been likewise closed here then what is the difference and what is there for this people to take pride in as compared to Israel? A blind one has no cause to boast in the face of another blind one. If revelation, inspiration and Divine signs have ceased among the Jews, then can you say whether they continue among any other people? Our opponents say that this door is closed on them as well. What colossal ill luck! They supplicate five times a day: Guide us along the straight path; and nothing is gained thereby! What frustration!!

The right path is the path of Prophets

The teaching by Allah, the Exalted, of such a prayer means that He is prepared to bestow honour and bounties. For instance, if five candidates for a post appear before the appointing authority and four are dismissed and one is told to wait, it would mean that he would be appointed to the post. In the same way, Allah, the Sublime, taught this prayer and it is offered five times a day, but our opponents assert that it produces no result. Is this position not derogatory to the Holy Quran and to Islam? This is the crux of the controversy between them and me. I claim that the blessings and fruits of Islam are as much in evidence today as they were ever before. The Supreme Lord exercises His powers as before and speaks to His servants also. But they aver that this door is closed and God, the Exalted, has become silent and speaks no more to anyone (Al-Hakam, Oct. 31, 1905).

Every Muslim supplicates five times every day: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; and God, the Supreme, says that the straight path is the path of the Prophets and of the righteous and the martyrs. We would be very foolish indeed, if we did not seek that path which God, the Sublime, has commanded us to seek and instead floundered after the sophists (Ayenae Kamalate Islam, pp. 245-246).

I can truly say that a Muslim can go much further than Jesus by following the Perfect Prophet. The blind regard this as blasphemous. I would say that they are devoid of faith and know not what blasphemy is. Blasphemy is right within them. If you had known the meaning of the verse: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; you would not have uttered such blasphemy. God urges you that by rendering perfect obedience to this Prophet you can combine in yourselves the various excellences of all the Prophets but you regard it blasphemous to aspire to the excellences of even one Prophet (Chashma Masihi, pp. 24–25).

If prophethood has ceased Muslims cannot be regarded best of peoples

Prophethood means Divine communion. One who foretells the unseen is a Prophet. If you repudiate future Prophethood, this *ummat* (people) shall then cease to be the best of all peoples, but shall be like beasts and the teachings of Surah Fatiha which embodies the verse: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; will be deemed to be meaningless. For if the gifts and bounties of God are not to be bestowed any more, then what is the purpose of this prayer? It will also follow then that the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be on him) lacks all purifying spiritual influence. God save us from such a belief (Al-Badr, April 17, 1903)!

A servant of God named Jesus, followed the law of Moses for 30 years and became a favourite of God, attaining the grade of Prophet. As against this we are told that if a person were to follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be on him) for fifty years he would not attain that grade. In other words, obedience to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) does not confer any excellence. They do not seem to consider that in

that event it is clear that teaching the prayer: Guide us along the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; would be an illusion (Chashma Masihi, p. 67 Footnote).

The path of those who were favoured by God is sought through the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. I have explained it many times that the favoured ones comprise four groups; the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous. So when a believer makes this petition he begs to be favoured with their morals, habits and the knowledge possessed by them. If he does not acquire the ethics of these four groups, this prayer will have been in vain, in his case, and he will be like a beast uttering lifeless sounds. These four groups comprise people who received from God, the Sublime, lofty knowledge and high ranks (Al-Hakam, July 24, 1902).

If the gift of Divine address is repudiated, then Islam must be reckoned a dead religion. If this door is closed then this *ummat* (people) is under a curse and not the best of peoples. Also the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; would be meaningless. It is strange indeed that when the Muslims should become like the Jews, the Messiah should be raised from another people (Al-Hakam, Feb. 7, 1903).

Divine communion is the characteristic of Prophethood. Now when the Muslims believe that the door to Divine communion is closed, it is clear that they are under tremendous Divine wrath and the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; is an illusion. What is the good of teaching this prayer? In other words, God taught it to no purpose (Al-Badr, Feb. 27, 1903).

If God had chosen to debar this people from this honour, then why did He teach them the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. This prayer clearly means: Lord, lead us along the path of those favoured ones who have gone before and grant us the bounties they were granted. Who were the favoured ones? God has Himself said they were the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous, and the bounty

bestowed on them was revelation and Divine speech. If God had to deny the true result of this prayer, then why did He teach such a prayer (Al-Hakam, April 17, 1903)?

If Allah, the Sublime, has sealed up His grace and locked it away, then what was the point in teaching us the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours? It means tying the hands and feet of a person and then beating him for not being able to walk. How can he walk? He Himself closed the doors of grace and bliss and still directed that the supplication: Guide us along the straight path; should be made several times in every Prayer service. If He had ordained that miracles and blessings would end after the Holy Prophet and none of the *ummat* were destined to receive aught of grace and blessing, then what was the purpose of this prayer?

If this prayer is productive of no results, then what is the difference between the effectiveness and results of this teaching and those of the Christian doctrine? The New Testament also says that Christians could move mountains by following Jesus but now they can hardly put a shoe straight. It is written that they would reproduce his miracles but they can reproduce not a thing. It is written that if they ate poison it would not hurt them. But now snakes and dogs bite them and they die of these venoms and can show no miracle through prayer. Their failure to reproduce a sign through acceptance of prayer is a strong argument to demonstrate the falsehood of the current Christian doctrine, that it lacks soul and vitality. This is proof that they have abandoned the way of their Prophet.

If we too were to concede that miracles and signs have ceased and that this prayer that we have been taught is without any result and reaction, would it not mean that all our effort is vain? God forbid! Nay, God, the Lord of Wisdom, maintains intact the effectiveness of Prophethood and has instituted this Movement to bear witness to this truth (Al-Hakam, May 31, 1903).

God is not niggardly

God, the Most High, commands and teaches the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. It means: Lord, grant us the approach to Thy nearness and love and knowledge that Thou didst grant to the Prophets and the holy ones and the pious. This shows that God is not niggardly. Thus as a person can attain the grade of Prophets as their spiritual reflection, what is there to prevent him reaching the spiritual dignity of the members of the Holy Prophet's household or of Imam Husain? If the doors to Divine favour and love and knowledge were not open, and all three excellences were to come to an end with Ali or Imam Husain or some other member of the Holy Prophet's household then Islam would hardly stay in its original shape and the repetition of the prayer for the path of the favoured ones would be vain. God, the Sublime, however, is not niggardly towards His servants. Whoever seeks shall find (Al-Badr, Sept. 25, 1903).

Allah suffers from no shortcoming in His powers. For inspiring faith He adopts such extraordinary measures that a person recognises the word of God the way he knows the sun when he sees it. Do they imagine that God, the Supreme, had the power from the day of Adam to that of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) to lead seekers after truth to the fountainhead of certainty, through His revelation, but that thereafter He ceased to possess that power, or that possessing it He deliberately chose to be miserly towards this unblessed people and forgot the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; that He had Himself taught (Al-Badr, Feb. 1, 1904).

Progress towards the Divine is limitless

Allah, the Exalted, calls everyone *vali* (friend) and desires to make everyone a *vali*. That is why He directs us to pray to

Him: Guide us along the straight path. He desires that you should become like the favoured group. He who says that he cannot be such, charges God with niggardliness. It is thus a blasphemous utterance (Al-Hakam, Oct. 10, 1905).

Remember, the grace of God knows no bounds. One who limits it limits God and makes His word meaningless. Such a one must explain how he can restrict the excellences and favours enjoyed by those who preceded us while he keeps seeking them through the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. If they have been restricted, as the Shias say, to the twelve Imams, then why do the Shias recite the Fatiha in their Prayers? It imparts a teaching contrary to their belief and charges God with restricting excellences to the twelve Imams and, at the same time, urging people to seek them till the Day of Judgment.

It does not behove a believer to lose heart. Progress towards higher grades in nearness to the Divine has no limit. It is a great mistake to limit something to a particular person (Al-Badr, June 8, 1904).

One who comes to God with a true heart does not go back empty-handed. What is needed is a pure mind. The teaching of the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; and stress on it become meaningless otherwise. If those gifts and bounties are no longer to be bestowed on anyone then what is the purpose of making this supplication repeatedly in the five daily Prayer services? It is a grave error that has become widespread among the Muslims, for the very beauty and charm of Islam lie in the fact that its blessings and its grace and the fruits of its pure teachings are ever available in abundance. This is the belief of all the Sufis and great leaders of the faith. In fact they affirm that no one is a perfect follower of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) unless he assimilates his excellences in his own person as a reflection. This is indeed true. For it is necessary for perfect obedience to the Holy Prophet that its fruits should be reaped.

When a person becomes fully obedient and completely effaces himself in submission to the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be on him) his state is comparable to that of a mirror placed right in front which receives and reproduces a complete reflection.

I can never endorse the restriction of Divine grace, blessings and qualities that accrue through perfect obedience to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). I regard such a thought as blasphemous (Al-Hakam, Oct. 10, 1905).

Since it is admitted that Khidhar had been granted sure and positive knowledge by God, the Supreme, why should then a Muslim, a believer in the Holy Quran, deny that a Muslim cannot be like Khidhar in spiritual excellence? Most certainly he can. In fact, the Ever-Living, the Life-sustaining God has the power to grant to the elect of the Muslim people far superior and far greater spiritual excellences. Knowest thou not that Allah has power to do all that He wills (2.107)? Has not the Generous Lord Himself taught this prayer to this people: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours (Baraheen Ahmadiyya, Vol. III, pp. 265-266, Marginal note)?

By teaching the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; He gave to all true seekers the glad tidings that they could attain, through obedience to the chosen Prophet, the formal, as well as the spiritual knowledge that was bestowed directly on the Prophets. It is in this sense that the divines have been called heirs of the Prophets. If they cannot inherit the spiritual insights then how can they be true heirs (Baraheen Ahmadiyyah, Vol. III, p. 237, Footnote)?

Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, not of those who incurred Thy displeasure, nor of those who went astray. This verse clearly affirms that some individuals from among this people shall be granted the excellences of past Prophets and that some who disbelieve will take on the habits of the disbelievers

of the past and the resemblance between the future and the past generation shall come to light with tremendous force; and that accordingly there will be Jews among the Muslims like the Jews of old and a perfect reflection of the Prophets will also appear (Nazulul Masih, pp. 4-5, Footnote).

The door of Prophethood not closed

If it is said that the door of Divine speech and address is closed for this *ummat* (people) till the Day of Judgment and that, therefore, none of its members can be designated a prophet, for it is necessary in the case of a prophet that God should speak to him, the answer is that this door is certainly not closed on this *ummat*. If this door were closed on those people, it would have been a dead people, alienated from God and discarded. If this door was closed on this *ummat* then why did the Quran teach the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours (Zameema Baraheen Ahmadiyyah, Vol. V, pp. 182-183)?

Remember, the religion that closes the door of future progress towards the highest excellences is an enemy of human progress. The major prayer of man, according to the Holy Quran, is directed towards spiritual advancement. One should study deeply the verse: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours (Al-Hakam, Dec. 8, 1908).

It would be a blot on Islam to hold that the children of Israel were granted sure revelation, so much so that the mother of Moses was moved to put her infant son into the river and did not entertain the least doubt about the truth of the revelation vouchsafed to her and *Khidhar* even killed a boy, but this blessed *ummat* has not been granted the dignity granted to the women of Israel. What is then the significance of the verse: The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours?

Are then merely doubtful revelations the source of which

may be Rahman or Satan the only gift now permissible? Shame (Tajalliyate Ilahiyya, pp. 27–28)!

Divine Communion in full measure is the Muhammadi prophethood

The Muhammadi Prophethood is not lacking in beneficence; in fact, of all the Prophethoods, it is the richest in beneficence. By following this Prophethood, one obtains easy access to God. By following it one can receive the love of God and His address and speech in a far larger measure than was granted before. When Divine communion attains its full measure both quantitatively and qualitatively, lacking neither clarity nor perfection, comprising clear insight into the unseen, it is termed Prophethood, by the consensus of all the Prophets. It is, therefore, inconceivable that a people who were named the best of all the people (3.111) and who were taught the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; should have, without a single exception, been ineligible for this lofty honour. In such case, the only drawback would not be that the entire Muslim people would be incompetent and imperfect like the blind *en masse* but there would be the further defect that the effectiveness of the beneficence of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and his purifying influence would be disparaged. At the same time it would render pointless the teaching of the prayer referred to above which is offered repeatedly in the five daily Prayer services (Al-Wasiyyat, pp. 12–13).

Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. If this *ummat* is not heir to the earlier Prophets and has no share in the bounties bestowed on them, then what is the purpose of teaching this prayer (Haqiqatul Wahi, p. 101, Footnote)?

The sixth verse of this Surah is: Guide us along the straight path. This indicates that the darkness of the sixth millennium will call for a light and upright human nature will beg for a

guide, the Promised Messiah, from the Divine Lord (Tuhfa Golarviya, p. 112, Footnote).

Know then that the phrase, the favoured ones, comprises glad tidings for the believers and indicates that Allah has certainly prepared for them all that He gave the former Prophets. That is why He taught this prayer so that it may carry a cheerful message to the seekers. It follows that the chain of the Khalifas of the Holy Prophet Muhammad should terminate with the like of Jesus to complete its resemblance with the Mosaic Dispensation. When the Noble One makes a promise, He invariably honours it (Ijazul Masih, p. 166, Footnote).

The seal of Khalifas must be from followers of the Holy Prophet

Allah is witness that there is not in the Quran, the Decisive Scripture, any message other than that the Khatamal Khulafa (the seal of Khalifas) will be raised from among the followers of the noblest Prophet. Follow not then that which you know not as you have been granted guidance in the Quran; therefore, utter not contrary words from your mouths, like arrows shot in darkness. Certainly this promise is a true promise and that which you hear from people who entertain vain desires should not deceive you. A second indication to this effect has been given in Surah Fatiha. You supplicate in the Prayer service to be guided along the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, and yet you seek the ways of denial and confer together secretly. What ails you that you trample the words of Allah under foot? Will you not die or do you imagine that you will not be called to account (Khutba Ilhamiyya, pp. 63-64)?

If there can be no Prophet or Apostle even as a spiritual reflection of the Holy Prophet then what is the meaning of: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours (Ek Ghalati ka Izala, p. 7)?

The Holy Quran establishes a dispensation parallel to the

Mosaic dispensation. This is indicated, among other Quranic verses, by the verse: Guide us along the straight path; meaning grant us that which the former Prophets were granted (Al-Hakam, Feb. 28, 1903).

Promised Messiah is the only perfect reflection of Holy Prophet

The good and the bad have their spiritual reflections. There is only one promised reflection of the good, and that is the Promised Messiah. We believe that: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; refers to the spiritual reflection of the good and the erring ones are the Christians and those who incurred God's displeasure are the Jews. These also have their reflections. There are to be found today good and bad people similar in character to those who have passed away. God, the Supreme, does not let these dispositions and qualities to disappear; others resembling them take their place. That being so, it follows that the good and the virtuous will continue to be raised in their good time and that this will continue till the end of time. When this ends the world will also end. But the Promised one charged with the great mission is only one, for he is the perfect reflection of one who is unique, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) (Al-Hakam, Nov. 10, 1902).

God, the Supreme, has taught the Muslims through Surah Fatiha the prayer to seek of the Most High the way of the favoured ones. The favoured ones in the full sense of the term, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and in terms of the bounties of the Unique Divine, in the light of the clear words of the Quran and the authentic sayings of the Messenger of the Lord are two groups, one the Companions of the Holy Prophet and the other the party of the Promised Messiah. For, both these two groups have been trained by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and have not been left to their own deductions. Among the first group

the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was present in person, receiving guidance directly from God and transmitting the same with prophetic care to the hearts of the Companions (Allah be pleased with them) and was thus their direct tutor. Among the second group is the Promised Messiah who receives revelation from God and is benefitted through the spiritual power of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). This group is also not dependent on deduction or speculation (Tuhfa Golarviyya, p. 80).

It is the true objective of every person to seek the excellences of the Divinely-favoured to whom Allah, the Exalted, has referred in the phrase: the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. Our community should pay particular heed to this. For, by instituting this Movement Allah, the Sublime, has designed to prepare a community on the pattern of the community prepared by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) so that it may, in the latter age, bear witness to the truth and glory of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him (Al-Hakam, Oct. 24, 1904).

The highest state of man is the state of tranquillity of soul (nafs-i-mutmainna) on which I am speaking. In this state, certain developments take place leading to much closer relationship with God which is not earthly or superficial, but is supernal and heavenly. This tranquillity is also termed salvation and steadfastness. Guide us along the straight path; also points to this; and this is the path for which we are urged to supplicate. This path of steadfastness is the path of those who are the favoured ones, recipients of Divine grace and honour. By laying special stress on the path of the favoured ones, it has been suggested that the ways of steadfastness are diverse but that the steadfastness which is another name for the way to success and salvation is the way of the Prophets (peace be on them).

There is a further indication. The supplication: Guide us along the straight path; is made by a person's tongue, heart

and conduct. When a person supplicates God for a virtuous life, he feels a sense of shame and yet this is the prayer that resolves his embarrassment. (Report of the Proceedings of the Annual Conference 1897, pp. 144–145).

Employ God-given capacities first and then pray to Allah

It is essential to employ one's capacities appropriately, so that more may be granted. It is our personal experience that when the faculties are appropriately occupied Allah pours down His blessings. One should overhaul one's beliefs, morals and conduct and then supplicate: Guide us along the straight path. It will thus produce its full effect (Report of the proceedings of the Annual Conference 1897, p. 146).

It is obligatory on Muslims to keep in mind: We worship Thee alone, at the time of supplicating: Guide us along the straight path. We worship Thee; has been placed before: We seek Thy help. First, gratitude should be expressed in a practical shape and this is the purpose underlying the supplication: Guide us along the straight path. That is, the available material means should be appropriately employed and then recourse should be had to prayer. Beliefs, morals and conduct should be put in order and the supplication: Guide us along the straight path; should follow.

In teaching the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; Allah desires that the worshipper should take good care of three aspects; beliefs, morals and conduct. In other words a worshipper should reform his condition through employment of his God-given capacities and then pray to Allah. This does not mean that during the process of self-reformation he should not pray. He must keep asking even then, but must not neglect the other aspect (Report of the Proceedings of the Annual Conference 1897, p. 148).

Purpose of Promised Messiah's advent is the completion of spiritual edifice of Islam

Who may be accounted saved? One who believes that God

is true and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) is the intercessor between Him and all creation, and that there is not under the heavens another Prophet of his stature nor a book comparable to the Quran. God did not design that anyone should live for ever, but this exalted Prophet is spiritually alive; his perpetual spiritual life is secured on the foundation that God has extended His moral and spiritual beneficence to the end of time, and as part of it has ultimately sent this Promised Messiah to the world, whose advent was needed for the completion of the spiritual edifice of Islam. For it was necessary that this world cycle should not come to its end until the Muhammadi dispensation was given a Messiah in spiritual form as the Mosaic dispensation had been given. This is indicated by the verse: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours (Kishti Nooh, p. 13).

Personal love is the essence and true source of salvation leading to union with the Divine. No lover can stay away from his love and since God is light, His love creates the light of salvation. The love inherent in human nature draws the love of God; the love of God then creates an unusual ferment in the love of man and the union of these two obliterates man's ego and generates the light of survival with Allah (*baqa bil-lah*). The merger of these two loves necessarily results in the ego of the worshipper being obliterated in Allah. The ego which is but a veil turns into ashes while the soul is immersed in the love of God. This phenomenon may be illustrated by reference to a person being struck by lightning from the sky. The meeting of the two fires brings about the physical extinction of the person struck. The extinction of the ego likewise calls for two fires, a fire from heaven and the internal fire. The meeting of the two results in extinction without which the spiritual journey is not complete. It is this extinction which terminates the journey of the spiritual wayfarer and which is the limit of human exertion. After this extinction the seeker is granted, as pure grace, the state of survival (*baqa*). This is the meaning of: The path of those on whom Thou hast

bestowed Thy favours. The essence of this verse is that whoever is granted this boon is granted it as a bounty through pure grace and not as a reward for any action. This is the final result of love of God which is the means of eternal life and of release from death (Chashma Masihi, pp. 41–42).

Salvation cannot be achieved through prayers and fasting alone

The concept of salvation deducible from the Holy Quran is that salvation is achieved neither through fasting and Prayer services nor through zakat or almsgiving but only through supplication and grace of God. That is why God, the Sublime, has taught the prayer: Guide us along the straight path. When it is heard, it absorbs the grace of God. Good deeds are its accompaniment but not its essentials. When a prayer is accepted all necessary adjuncts fall into line. Were salvation contingent on deeds, it would be a subtle form of *shirk* (association of something else with God). It would mean that man can work out his salvation by himself, for, deeds are voluntary and people perform them on their own. When prayer is offered with all its adjuncts, it absorbs Divine grace and thereafter all conditions automatically start falling into line. This is the concept of salvation in Islam (Al-Badr, Aug. 7, 1903).

A prayer seeking the world is a torment. Prayer should be directed towards the seeking of the pleasure of God and freedom from sin. Everything else is included in it. Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; is a great prayer indeed. The straight path means, in other words, knowledge of God; and: those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; means being safeguarded against sin and joining the company of the righteous. If a person is godly, the Supreme Lord looks after his progeny unto seven generations. Prayer should be such as to melt down the evil-prompting ego (*nafse ammara*) to a state of tranquillity (*nafse mutmainna*). If one keeps up the supplication:

Guide us along the straight path; (in the sense already explained) one's other needs for which one may wish to pray, will be fulfilled by God (Al-Badr, March 16, 1904).

Means of warding off the major sins

Shirk (association of partners with the One and only God) is the major sin. One who utterly discards *shirk*, that is property, wealth, knowledge, wisdom, deeds, self, idols and Satan and all other deities and accepts God alone as his Deity and waits on Him in expectation of His grace, would certainly be saved and enter paradise. But one who is involved in one kind of *shirk* or the other will be a prisoner of hell and shall be clothed with wretchedness until Divine grace comes to his rescue. This is a very critical matter and full of subtleness and a slippery slope. Few are saved.

Hearken, what are the means of warding off this *shirk*? First, there is in Surah Fatiha the confession: We worship Thee alone and beg Thee alone for help in our worship and in our effort to get closer to Thee. This dissipates all kinds of *shirk*.

Secondly, Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours and save us from the path of those who have incurred Thy displeasure and of those who have gone astray (Al-Hakam, Dec. 24, 1902).

This prayer means, Lord make plain to us the straight path that you have shown to all the people gifted with excellence, who were recipients of Thy grace and favour.

Since the straight path of the people gifted with excellence is search for verities with true insight unlike the blind, the purpose of the prayer is to supplicate God to bestow on us all the true sciences and valid insights and deep verities and subtle truths that He has granted to all the gifted people of the world, from time to time. Through this prayer knowledge and wisdom have been begged of God such as had been

bestowed upon all the favoured ones everywhere at all times (Baraheen Ahmadiyyah, Vol. IV, pp. 420–422).

Employ the appropriate available means and then pray for more

Acceptance of prayer is proved by valid instances as part of the law of nature and God sets up living models in every age. That is why He has taught the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. This is the design and law of God and no one can alter it. Guide us along the straight path; is a supplication for perfection in conduct. In form this is a direction to seek guidance to the straight path, but it is preceded by: We worship Thee alone and beg Thy help. This indicates that we must use our natural capacities for treading along the straight path and seek Divine help in the process. Therefore, appropriate available means must be employed. One who neglects this is guilty of ingratitude in respect of God's bounties. Consider, if the tongue, made of nerves and muscles, that God, the Sublime, has bestowed on us was not equipped with its capacities we would not have been capable of speech. He granted us a tongue that can express the thoughts and designs of the mind for the purposes of prayer. If we do not employ the tongue for supplication, it would be our great misfortune. There are so many ailments any of which could instantly stop its functioning. Similarly, He has equipped the mind with the qualities of humility and lowliness and the faculties of contemplation and reflection. Be mindful, then, that if we fail to use these powers and faculties, our prayer is vain. If we do not use the gifts we possess, how can we supplicate for more? That is why: We worship Thee alone; precedes: Guide us along the straight path. This is an affirmation that we have not left unemployed and stultified the gifts and faculties that Thou hast granted us.

Remember, it is the characteristic of *Rahmaniyyat* (Divine Graciousness) that it enables man to derive benefit from

Rahimiyyat (Divine Compassion). The Divine promise: Call on Me, I shall respond to you (40.61); is not a mere figure of speech. Human dignity calls for it. Supplication is a human characteristic and responding to prayer is a Divine quality. One who does not acknowledge this is unjust.

Guide us along the straight path; is a supplication for perfection in conduct. By adding: The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; it is made plain that we seek guidance to the path of the favoured ones and seek to be safeguarded against the ways of those who incurred Thy wrath and were afflicted with Thy punishment on account of their misdeeds. The reference to the erring ones is designed to be secured against going astray in default of His guidance (Al-Hakam, Dec. 10, 1901).

Worship should win Divine pleasure

This prayer is taught so that you may not rest content with merely believing and should exert yourself in pursuit of Divine favours with which the servants of God who approach close to Him are honoured. There are many who fall into prostrations and offer prayers and observe other articles of faith but fail to win Divine help and support. There is no noticeable change in their ways and habits, which shows that their acts of worship are mere form and lack reality. Observance of Divine ordinances is like the sowing of a seed the sprouting of which affects both the soul and the body. If a person irrigates a field and works hard at sowing the seed but finds after a couple of months that it has not germinated at all, he concludes that the seed was defective. The same may be said of worship. If a person believes in the Unity of God, offers prayers, observes fasts and apparently carries out Divine ordinances to the best of his ability, yet no Divine support is extended to him, the conclusion is inevitable that the seed he is sowing is defective. In other words, all his acts of worship are mere form (Al-Hakam, Jan. 6, 1908).

Exaggerated Exaltation of Prophets is Shirk

The verse: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; constitutes a powerful incentive for purifying the soul of all tendencies towards setting up partners with Allah and their total eradication. It is to this end that Allah has urged us in this verse to acquire the excellences of Prophets and to supplicate that the doors giving access to them be opened to us. *Shirk* found currency in the world largely through exaggerated exaltation of the Prophets and saints. Those who looked upon their Prophet as unique and peerless like the Lord of glory, ended by adopting him as their god. The hearts of the Christians were corrupted through similar exaggerated exaltation. Allah has drawn attention to this mischief and corruption in this verse and has emphasised that the favoured ones, Prophets and Apostles and reformers, are raised so that people may follow their example and acquire their excellences and not that they should worship them and take them for deities like idols. The object of sending these high souled personages possessing pure qualities is that each of their followers should acquire their virtues and not that they should be converted into stone images to be worshipped and grovelled before. Allah has thus indicated in this verse to people of understanding and wisdom that the excellences of Prophets are not like the excellences of the Lord of Universal Providence, and that verily Allah is One, Independent of all and Unique in His Being and in His attributes, but that the Prophets have not that status. In fact, Allah makes their true followers their heirs and thus their people become their spiritual heirs and receive whatever their Prophets received provided they obey them in every respect. This is the meaning of the words of Allah, the Exalted: Say to them: If you love Allah then follow me, Allah will then love you (3.32). Observe then that Allah calls this people His friends if they but obey and follow the lead of the Chief of His adorers, Muhammad.

Believers are spiritual heirs of Prophets

The verse: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; conveys that the spiritual heritage of the former Prophets and righteous ones is a continuing right of virtuous believers until the Day of Judgment. They do succeed to the Prophets and receive the same Divine bounties that were bestowed on the Prophets. This certainly is the truth, so be not of the doubters.

The purpose of this spiritual succession and the nature of this heritage is revealed through this verse which glorifies the unique Lord of Providence and emphasises His unity. Allah, the greatest Helper and the Most Compassionate of all the compassionate, taught us the pure essence of Divine Unity expounding it exhaustively and directed us to affirm: We worship Thee alone and seek Thy help alone; thus rooting out the least inclination towards *shirk* on the part of the followers of the Seal of the Prophets, as a grace and mercy from Him, and to deliver them from afflictions that befell the former peoples. He graciously taught us this prayer as a great bounty and through it included us among the elect. We, therefore, pray to Him as He taught us and seek of Him as He instructed us, immensely gratified with His bounty and beg of Him, while celebrating His praise: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, not of those who incurred Thy displeasure, nor of those who went astray. By means of this prayer we beg of Allah all the blessings granted to the Prophets and supplicate Him to make us steadfast like the Prophets on the straight path that we may never deviate from it and that we may enter along with them the holy sanctum, hastening towards the Presence of the Lord of Universal Providence, purified of every kind of uncleanness. It is thus clear that Allah has made us, through this prayer, reflections of the Prophets making us heirs to all of them, granting us all the patent and hidden and secured and sealed blessings and favours. Of these we have picked up our loads, carrying as many as would suf-

fice to satisfy our need. Our vessels have been filled to their capacity and we have arrived at the goal of prosperity. This is the purpose of raising Prophets and Apostles and the elect, so that we may be steeped in their colour and be united with them in spiritual fellowship and may become their spiritual heirs.

At the same time, it is the way of Allah that when He grants an excellence to one of His servants and the ignorant ones take to worshipping him in their error, associating him with the Noble Lord, in honour and glory, regarding him in fact, as the very Lord Himself, then Allah raises one like him, giving him his name and invests his nature with similar excellences. He does this out of a jealous concern for His own honour to render vain the notions harboured by those who have drifted into setting up associates with Him. He does as He pleases and is not accountable for what He does but His creatures are accountable to Him.

He makes whomso He pleases like delicious nourishing milk or like a bright pearl of purest ray and provides for him drink from the fountain of paradise, and anoints him with the fragrance of perfume till his handsome features are disclosed to the gaze of beholders and his fragrance spreads among them.

In brief, Allah, the Exalted, has in this prayer disclosed to the seekers of guidance His universal mercy and love; as if He had said: I am the Compassionate, My mercy encompasses everything. I make some of My servants spiritual heirs to others, out of bounty and grace, in order to stamp out the tendency towards deification of some of the elect on account of their special excellences. This is the purpose of this prayer. As if, Allah, the Exalted, gives His creatures the hope of widespread grace and universal beneficence, saying: I am the Bountiful Lord of Universal Providence and am not at all niggardly. Keep in mind, therefore, the reservoir of My beneficence and all that it contains, for, My grace is both universal and beneficial and My way is levelled and has been widened for all who stand forth, pay heed and prepare themselves to seek it with diligence. This is the great purpose of

the verse: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; namely, the dissipation of the tendency towards deification and stamping it out. Peace then be on those who safeguarded themselves against this tendency and on their companions and on those who followed them from among sincere seekers (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 89-91).

Prayer is spiritual force that attracts Divine grace

Muslims have been urged towards constant prayer in Surah Fatiha. They have been taught the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; and are under obligation to make this supplication five times a day. It would then be gross error to deny the spiritual value of prayer. The Holy Quran has made it plain that prayer is a spiritual force which attracts Divine grace and thus opens the way to success in diverse shapes (Ayyamus Solh, p. 30).

This prayer seeks the general welfare of all mankind, for, all have been included within the purview of the entreaty that God may deliver them from pain here and safeguard them against loss in the hereafter and may guide all to the straight path (Ayyamus Solh, p. 30 Footnote).

Surah Fatiha and New Testament contrasted

The New Testament suffers from another shortcoming. It does not anywhere teach that the best prayer is one that leaves aside one's personal wishes. All that it teaches is to pray for daily bread. The Holy Quran has taught us the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; that is: Guide us along the path of the Prophets and the righteous and lovers of the Divine. The New Testament merely teaches us to pray for our daily bread. We have searched through the New Testament and have not found the slightest trace of the lofty teaching of the Holy Quran (Nurul Quran II, p. 43).

It should be remembered that of the grand purposes of Surah Fatiha, one is this prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. Whereas there is a supplication for bread in the New Testament, in this prayer there is a supplication for all the bounties granted to the Prophets and Apostles. This presents a remarkable contrast.

The way the Messiah's prayer was heard, and the Christians were granted an abundance of material provisions, the Quranic prayer was also heard through the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and the good and righteous from among the Muslims, in particular the perfect ones, were made spiritual heirs of the Prophets of Israel. Indeed the appearance of the Promised Messiah from among these Muslims is also the result of this prayer. For, though a large number of Muslim saints and righteous people have shared the characteristics of the Prophets of Israel in an unobtrusive way, the Promised Messiah from among this *ummat* has been, by the command of God, openly raised as the like of the Messiah of the House of Israel so that the resemblance between the dispensations of Moses and Muhammad (on both of whom be the peace and blessings of Allah) may become comprehensible (Kishti-Nooh, p. 49).

Surah Fatiha comprises so many verities and such treasures of wisdom and insight that it would take volumes to set them out at length. Consider this one prayer so pregnant with wisdom that has been taught in this Surah: Guide us along the straight path. It is comprehensive enough to provide the key for the achievement of all temporal and spiritual objectives. We cannot have any idea of the nature of an object nor can we derive any benefit from it until we find the right way of approach to it. The difficult and complex problems of life whether they relate to matters of state or administration or to fighting and war and hostilities, or to theories of natural sciences or astronomy, or to crafts or methods of diagnosis and therapy, or to commerce and agriculture, are hard, even

impossible, to resolve, until one finds the correct way of approach to them.

Comprehensive prayer for seeking correct solutions to problems

Every sensible person when faced with a problem feels it is his duty to turn it over in his mind, during the hours of day and night, to seek the correct way to resolve it. Every industry, every invention and every complex and complicated problem calls for the correct way of approach. In short, the real prayer is the prayer to discover the correct way of approach in all matters, temporal and spiritual. When the right way of approach to a question has been discovered, then surely the problem is resolved by the grace of Allah. Divine wisdom has determined a way for the attainment of every objective. For instance, the correct treatment of a patient is not possible unless the correct approach to the diagnosis and treatment of his malady becomes available and one feels satisfied in one's mind that one is on the right track. In fact nothing can be properly organized in the world until the correct way of organization is discovered. It is, therefore, the duty of a seeker after an objective to supplicate for guidance towards the correct approach. As it is imperative to discover the correct way of approach before embarking upon a worldly undertaking, in the same way, from the beginning the need has been felt for seeking the correct approach towards becoming a friend of God and worthy of His love and grace. In response to this need it has been said in the very beginning of Surah Al-Baqara, the surah next to Surah Fatiha: This is the way towards the objective. In Surah Fatiha supplication was made for the straight path. In the next Surah the prayer is answered and the straight path is pointed out. This prayer: Guide us along the straight path; is a comprehensive prayer which admonishes the worshipper that when he is faced with mundane or spiritual problems, he must first seek the right way towards their resolution – a clear and straight approach which would

enable him to reach his objective easily, so that his heart is fully assured and is purged of misgivings. But he who merely begs for daily bread in terms of the directive of the New Testament will not take to seeking God. His objective is his daily bread and when he has received it, he has little concern left with God. That is why the Christians strayed away from the right path and have been saddled with the monstrous doctrine of elevating a man to the Godhead (Kishti Nooh, pp. 54–56).

Islam is the religion, the true followers of which have been made heirs, by God, the Supreme, to all the righteous of the past. He has granted to this *ummat* their collective virtues. He has accepted the prayer He had taught in the Holy Quran: Guide us along the way of the righteous whom Thou hast graced with every bounty and honour – those who received every kind of blessing from Thee and were favoured with Thy speech and address and received from Thee acceptance of their prayers, and Thy support and help and guidance attended them; and safeguard us against the way of those who incurred Thy wrath, or wandered away from Thy path and took to other ways. This is the supplication that is repeatedly made in the five Prayer services every day. This shows that for the spiritually blind, life in this world is a hell and so is death a hell and that the true servant of God and the truly saved is the one who knows God and has perfect faith in His existence. It is only such a one who can be delivered from sin and can be wholly devoted to the love of God (Lecture at Lahore, pp. 15–16).

When Allah, the Exalted, taught this prayer, He did not just leave it at that. He taught the prayer and also provided the guidance. This positive response is given in the beginning of the next chapter where He has said: This is the perfect Book, there is no doubt in it; it is a guidance for the righteous. So that along with the invitation the feast has been provided (Al-Hakam, Oct. 24, 1904).

At the outset of the Holy Quran, the advancement demanded by the soul by its very nature has been promised.

In Surah Fatiha we are directed to supplicate: Guide us along the straight way, the way of those who were honoured with Thy bounties and favours. The response follows in the very first verse of the next chapter! This is the perfect Book, there is no doubt in it, it is guidance for the righteous. In other words, the soul supplicates and there is an immediate response. The acceptance of the prayer was manifested in the shape of the Holy Quran. There is the supplication and there is the response. This is the grace and bounty of God that He deigned to bestow (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1906).

This prayer refutes those who say whatever was to happen has been written down and that, therefore, prayer can avail nothing. Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, gives to His servants the glad tidings of acceptance of prayer, as if He said: O My servants, call on me; I will answer you. Verily, prayer is effective and brings about change. The acceptance of prayer admits the supplicant to the company of the favoured ones. In this verse there are indications which help to determine the acceptance of a prayer, and also the marks of those granted nearness to God. When a person develops true love for the Gracious One and acquires firmness of faith, it is only then that he arrives at the stature of manhood. He may have had faith in acceptance of prayer, but mere faith is not a substitute for observation and experience, and the blind and those with sight are not equal. He who has witnessed and experienced the acceptance of prayer will have no doubt left in that regard. Those who entertain doubts in this regard, are the ones whose prayers have not found acceptance for their lack of attention to their Lord and their reliance on material means which manifest themselves in the phenomena of nature. Their vision never rises above the material means exhibited before their eyes. They regard everything that is beyond the reach of their reason as an impossibility and they are not guided aright (Karamatus Sadiqeen, p. 80).

Purifying grace of the Holy Prophet continues

The supplication: Guide us along the straight path, the path

of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; also refutes the contemporary Muslim divines who believe that all spiritual grace and blessings have come to an end, and that no effort or exertion can produce any spiritual result, nor can any one today be granted access to the blessings and fruits with which the favoured ones were previously honoured. These people thus consider that the beneficence of the Holy Quran is no longer effective, and do not believe any longer in the purifying grace of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). For, if not a single person can now be invested with the qualities of the favoured ones, then what is the purpose of making this supplication? That, however, is not so. It is a great error on the part of those who hold such views. The door of Divine grace and bounties is still open as wide as it was before, but these bounties and gifts are procurable only through obedience to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). One who claims to partake of spiritual blessings and heavenly light independently of obedience to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) is utterly false in his claim (Al-Hakam, May 24, 1903).

Seeking all requirements from God

In the verse: Guide us along the straight path; there is an urge towards praying for true understanding; as if He were teaching us by urging us to call upon Him so that He may demonstrate to us His attributes as they really are and may include us among the grateful. Former peoples were lost because of their blindness towards knowledge of His attributes and His bounties and His pleasure. They passed their time in sinful pursuits and thus earned God's wrath and they were smitten with humiliation and were counted among the lost. It is to them that Allah pointed in His words: Those who incurred Thy wrath (Karamatus Sadiqeen, p. 81).

The supplication: Guide us along the straight path; comprehends all mundane and spiritual requirements; for, until

the right way of approach is available in respect of a problem, there can be no progress. A physician, a farmer, in short every one needs the right approach in respect of every undertaking (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1903).

The best prayer is in the Fatiha, for it is the most comprehensive prayer. When a farmer learns the correct method of farming he will have found the right path to farming and will succeed. You should, in like manner, seek the straight path of meeting God, praying: Lord, I am a sinful servant of Thine and a fallen one, do Thou guide me. Seek of God all your requirements, major and minor, without hesitation, for He is the true Bestower. One who prays most is the most virtuous. If a beggar knocks at the door of even a miser every day, the miser would one day relent (Al-Hakam, Nov. 10, 1904).

Pay no heed to the dead ones, who are without life themselves and regard Islam also as dead. In truth it is a faith, a follower of which rises high enough to shake hands with the angels. Were that not so, there would be no purpose in the supplication: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. This is not a supplication only for worldly benefits; spiritual bounties are thereby solicited. If we have to stay blind what is it that we seek thereby? This Fatiha prayer is most comprehensive and marvellous; no former Prophet ever taught it. But if it is mere empty words and God will not grant it, then why did He teach us such expressions? If we are not eligible for that station, why do we bother for nothing five times every day?

But Allah is not niggardly; nor do Prophets appear so that they may be worshipped; they are sent to teach that those who would follow them would become their spiritual reflections (Al-Hakam, Nov. 10, 1904).

That prayer is comprehensive which comprises all good and secures against all loss and injury. This prayer covers all possible benefits and safeguards against all harm that could undo a person (Al-Hakam, July 26, 1908).

**The favoured ones and those smitten by God's wrath will
continue to exist**

The two other groups mentioned in contradistinction to the favoured ones are those who incurred His wrath and those who went astray. In this very chapter, the Fatiha, the supplication is made to God, the Supreme, to seek protection against these groups. When the whole of this prayer is offered together, that is, when the supplication is made: Lord, include us among the favoured ones and safeguard us against being included among those who were smitten by Thy wrath, or those who went astray; it is understood that there is within God's knowledge a party of the favoured ones who are contemporaries of those who incurred His displeasure and of those who went astray.

Since those who were smitten by His wrath are undoubtedly the people who rejected the Promised Messiah and called him an impostor and insulted him, equally without a doubt, there is in contrast with them a party of the favoured ones who are faithful believers in the Promised Messiah, honour him with dutiful hearts and are his helpers and witnesses before the world (Tuhfa Golarviyya, p. 82).

Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, not of those who have incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who have gone astray; clearly indicates that differences will continue till the end, there will always be the favoured ones and also those under displeasure, but that false creeds will be vanquished through reasoning and argument (Tuhfa Golarviyyah, p. 131, Footnote).

As for civil life the Holy Quran has enjoined serving under a sovereign, the same provision has been made in respect of the spiritual realm. It is implied in the prayer taught by Allah, the Sublime: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours.

The Imam of the age must be obeyed

It is a matter for deliberation that there is not a single believer, not even a single person or even a single beast who is bereft altogether of Divine favour. But we cannot say that God, the Most High, has thereby ordered us to follow them. This verse then obviously means: Grant us the strength to follow in the ways of those who enjoyed a full and complete measure of Thy spiritual favours. This clearly implies that people should obey the Imam of the age. It must be remembered that the expression Imam of the age comprises the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Reformers. But those who are not appointed for directing and guiding people and have not been granted their excellences, even if they be saints and godly people, are not entitled to be called Imams of the age (Zaruratul Imam, pp. 23-24).

Some people ask, why do the Prophets have recourse to this prayer? They should know that they offer it to seek further advancement. Since Allah, the Supreme, is limitless, so are His graces and bounties unbounded. It is to seek these unbounded bounties that they make this supplication (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1903).

We understand from the Holy Quran and the *Hadeeth* that the relationship between a spiritual preceptor and a disciple is comparable to that between the wife and the husband. The disciple should not disobey any of the commands of the master, nor enquire into their wisdom. That is why the Holy Quran has directed: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; so that man may be restricted to the way of the favoured ones. Since man is by nature inclined towards freedom, he has been restricted to take this path (Al-Hakam, Dec. 24, 1900).

The prayer: Guide us along the straight path; indicates that when human effort is exhausted, one has to turn to God (Al-Hakam, Feb. 17, 1901).

I have been granted a title of honour out of Surah

Fatiha. What is that? One of the favoured ones (Al-Hakam, Feb. 24, 1901).

Way of seeking ease and comfort

The most cherished wish of a person in respect of this life is to enjoy ease and comfort. Allah has appointed a way for it; it is called the way of righteousness. In other words, it is the way of the Holy Quran, or the *Sirat-i-Mustaqeem*, the straight path (Al-Hakam, March 24, 1901).

The essence and soul of communion is the prayer that we have been taught in Surah Fatiha. When we supplicate: Guide us along the straight path; we seek to draw by means of this prayer, the light that comes down from God, the Supreme, illuminating hearts with certainty and love (Ayyamus Solh, p. 12).

Among the people referred to in the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; there is the group of martyrs. This means that we may be granted steadfastness which should keep our feet firm without the slightest tremor even if life itself should be demanded (Al-Hakam, July 10, 1901).

Guide us; implies seeking knowledge; and perfection in practical implementation is indicated in: The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; meaning thereby that the best and most perfect results may be attained.

A plant cannot bear flowers and fruits until it receives proper nourishment and growth. The same is true of guidance. If it does not produce perfect and excellent results, it is a dead direction, lacking in qualities and properties of growth.

That is why Allah, the Exalted, has provided the condition: the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; in Surah Fatiha. In other words, this is not a barren, disconcerting and distracting path. On the contrary, one who treads along it attains to success and achieves his goal (Al-Hakam, Aug. 24, 1901).

The real goal that God, the Supreme, has appointed for man, is the path of the righteous and of the Divinely-favoured (Al-Hakam, Dec. 10, 1901).

Mere visions are of no avail

It is necessary for one who makes the covenant (*baiat*) to keep before his eyes the purposes of the commitment. The desire to have a vision of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) is quite far from the real aim and objective. He is the most unfortunate individual in the sight of God, the Sublime, who has had a vision of all the Prophets (peace be on them), yet his heart is devoid of sincerity, loyalty, and true faith in God, the Supreme, fear of Allah and piety. Remember, therefore, that mere visions are of no avail. If God, the Most High, had made visions as the real objective, He would have taught the paryer: Show us the faces of those whom Thou hast favoured; instead of teaching us as the very first prayer: Guide us to the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. But He did not direct us in that way. Look at the life of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). He never asked to have a vision of Abraham (peace be on him) though, during his ascension, he saw all the Prophets. This should, therefore, not be the main objective. The real purpose is true obedience (Al-Hakam, Aug. 17, 1902).

One's true aim and objective should be attainment of self-purification and righteousness, in terms of the pleasure of God, the Supreme, and that such righteous conduct may be achieved as would please Him. When He is pleased, should His judgment and His wisdom so determine, He would Himself honour His servant with His speech. This should, however, never be one's objective, for, such a wish is in reality the root of perdition. The true aim should be the grant of strength to carry out the commands of God, according to the teachings of the Holy Quran, and self-purification and that

the love and glory of God, the Sublime, should saturate the heart and sin should become abhorrent.

Revelation is Divine bounty

God, the Exalted, has taught to the same purpose the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. He did not command us to pray for revelation; instead He commanded that we should pray for the right path, the path of those who are ultimately invested with the favour of God, the Supreme. The worshipper should have no concern about revelation, nor is this a token of excellence. It is the choice of God Himself and not a service rendered by man that he should expect a reward for it (Al-Hakam, Nov. 24, 1907).

Prayer is of the essence of communion and that is why we have been taught the mother-prayer: Guide us along the straight path; to be offered in all Prayer Services (Al-Hakam, Oct. 24, 1902).

God cannot be known by means of intellect alone

'Should be', and 'is', are vastly different. The realisation of this 'is' is not possible of achievement except through prayer. The realisation of 'is' cannot be achieved through the exercise of reason. It has, therefore, been said that God can be known only through God. Eyes cannot discover Him (6.104); means simply that He cannot be known by means of intellectual sight. On the contrary, He makes Himself known only through the media appointed by Him and for this purpose there is no prayer comparable to the prayer: Guide us along the right path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. (Al-Badr, March 8, 1904).

Allah, the Excellent, says: We shall surely guide to Our ways those who strive after Us (29.70). This is the promise and there is the prayer: Guide us along the straight path. One should, therefore, keeping this in mind entreat in one's prayer

to be one of those people who have achieved advancement and insight lest one should depart this life sightless and blind (Report of the proceedings of the Annual Conference 1897, p. 39).

A call from God means the removal of the intervening screen and the achievement of nearness. This is the culminating pinnacle of the righteous servant where he finds tranquillity and serenity. At another place the Holy Quran has called this tranquillity, success and steadfastness. Guide us along the straight path; refers to this steadfastness or serenity or success as the word *mustaqeem* connotes (Report of the Proceedings of the Annual Conference 1897, p. 137).

True prayer should aim at pleasing Allah

Miscellaneous prayers are secondary. True prayer should aim at pleasing Allah, the Exalted; other prayers will be heard in consequence. Blessings come after sins disappear. The prayer that is directed solely at some worldly objective is not heard. Therefore, pray primarily to please Allah and the best prayer for the purpose is: Guide us along the straight path. Persistence in this prayer admits to the company of the favoured ones immersed in the stream of Divine Love. Joining this party of dedicated ones the supplicant will receive Divine bounties as is the way of Allah with such people. Allah, the Sublime, never condemns a faithful believer to destitution. In fact, He is compassionate unto his seventh generation. The Holy Quran relates the story of Khidhar and Moses. They unearthed a treasure in respect of which it was said that it had been saved for two orphans since their father was a righteous person (18.83). This verse refers to the parents but does not say what sort of people the children were. The treasure was kept safe on account of the father and it was because of him that they were treated mercifully. Nothing is said in respect of the boys. God overlooked their faults.

The Torah and all the other sacred Books affirm that God does not let down the righteous. Therefore, one should first

strive through prayer to convert the evil-prompting spirit into the tranquil spirit so that Allah, the Glorious, is pleased. Therefore, take to the prayer: Guide us along the straight path. For, once this has been heard, God grants of Himself whatever the worshipper needs (Al-Hakam, March 10, 1904).

Righteousness and Divine favour are highest grade of virtue

If, as some people consider it a great virtue, the sole aim were to avoid the major sins, then the prayer to be included among the favoured ones would not have been taught; the ultimate stage of which is dialogue between God and man. The excellence of the Prophets (peace be on them) was not confined merely to abstention from stealing and burglary. In fact, they had no peer in their love of God, and in sincerity and loyalty to Him. He thus taught through this prayer that righteousness and Divine favour are the highest grade of virtue and until a person acquires these he is not considered virtuous or righteous and is not included among the favoured ones. We are further instructed to pray not to be included among those who incurred Divine wrath nor among those who went astray. This has been explained in another place in the Holy Quran that the perfect development of a believer's soul takes place by means of two kinds of elixir, one is termed the camphor elixir and the other is labelled the ginger elixir. When the camphor elixir is taken, the ego cools down and loses all inclination towards evil, as camphor has the property of dissipating all toxic elements and so does this camphor elixir dissipate the poison of sin and mischief and neutralizes and suppresses the elements that being aroused work the ruin of man. The other drink is the ginger elixir by means of which man gains strength and vitality to perform acts of virtue and a warmth is generated for that purpose.

Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; is then the real objective and aim. This, in a manner of speaking, is the ginger elixir:

and not of those who incurred Thy wrath nor of those who went astray; is the camphor elixir (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1905).

Until a person has laid up a treasure of righteous deeds he is not a believer. That is why God, the Supreme, has taught the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; in Surah Fatiha, so that one may not confine virtuous activity merely to abandonment of major vices like theft, adultery, etc. By pointing to the ways of the favoured ones, He has emphasised that righteousness and Divine favour are the highest grade of virtue and until a person attains to them, he cannot be considered virtuous. God, the Sublime, did not teach the prayer: Do not include us among the law-breakers and the rebellious; and leave it there. He taught us to pray for being included among the favoured ones and not among those who incurred Divine displeasure, nor among those who went astray.

These verses indicate that the full development of a believer's soul is achieved when he takes two elixirs. One of these is called the camphor elixir. It cools down the evil inclinations of the ego. Camphor has the property of neutralizing poisonous matter. In the same way this camphor elixir dissipates the inner poison of sin and evil. The other drink is called the ginger elixir which gives one the strength to perform good deeds.

That is why the supplication: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, and not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray; has been taught in the Holy Quran whereby both the elixirs have been begged of Allah, the Exalted (Al-Badr, Jan. 10, 1905).

The goal and aim of human life is to seek and to tread along the right path which has been mentioned in this Surah in the words: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours.

This is the supplication that is made in every *rakaa* of every Prayer service. Its very repetition stresses its importance. Our community should remember that this is no ordinary matter

and that the mere parrot-like repetition of the words is not what is required. In fact this prayer is an unfailing and efficacious prescription for making a man perfect and it should be kept constantly in mind, as the objective and as a sure safeguard.

Four kinds of Excellence

This verse propounds a supplication for the attainment of four kinds of excellence. If a person attains to these four excellences, he will have performed the duty of prayer and of fellow-service and of having made worthy use of the faculties and talents he has been endowed with.

I want to warn you against those who aim at attaining these excellences by means of their self-invented prayers and incantations. Remember that a course that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) did not adopt, is futile. Who is a truer guide to the way of the Divinely-favoured ones than the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him)? All the excellences of prophethood reached their climax in his person. The way adopted by him is the most right and nearest to the purpose. Abandoning his way in favour of a self-invented one, even if it looks alluring, spells ruin in my view, and so has God, the Exalted, revealed to me.

Purpose of Ahmadiyya Movement

In short, to attain to the virtues of the Divinely-favoured ones to which Allah, the Sublime, has pointed in: The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; is the goal appointed for every person. Our community should pay particular heed to this. For, by establishing this Movement, Allah, the Exalted, has designed to prepare a community like the one organised by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) so that it may bear witness to the truth and glory of the Holy

Quran and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) (Al-Hakam, March 31, 1905).

If it were true, as our divines proclaim, that the door of revelation is now closed, a seeker would suffer agonies of death while still alive. God is not niggardly. He has Himself taught us the prayer to seek the way of the Divinely-favoured ones which is a sure indication that the way to these favours is still open (Al-Badr, Aug. 3, 1905).

Know it for sure that one cannot please Allah, the Sublime, nor can one draw close to Him, until one treads along the straight path. That is possible only when one has knowledge of the Being and of the attributes of God and follows the ways and the directions that have His approval and lead to His pleasure. That being so, one must uphold faith above everything else in the world (Al-Badr, Aug. 31, 1905).

Preferring God to everything and accepting every bitterness out of true love for Him and genuine enthusiasm for Him, even creating bitterness for oneself, is an honour worthy of none but the righteous. This is the worship that man is called upon to render, and when a person performs this worship his action draws from God a bounty in terms of His direction in the Holy Quran, to make the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours and whom Thou hast honoured with Thy special grace.

Hardships and trials must be encountered for winning pleasure of Allah

When a service is appreciated by God a bounty is bestowed. The extraordinary signs and miracles which others are not able to duplicate are the bounties of God, the Supreme, which are bestowed on His servants (Haqiqatul Wahi, pp. 52-53).

Betaking oneself to God and supplicating Him for guidance along the right path means to be shown the way that pleases Him and by following which the Prophets attained to their goal. Since, therefore, supplication is made for guidance along

the way of the Prophets, one should henceforth be prepared for trials and tests and keep imploring Him for steadfastness. One who wants to continue in good health and security, and desires increase of wealth and of all the means of pleasure and enjoyment and every type of comfort and luxury, unmarred by any trial and at the same time hopes to win the pleasure of God, is bereft of good sense. He can never succeed. Those who have succeeded in winning the pleasure of God had to go through trials of different kinds and encountered various types of hardship (Al-Hakam, Oct. 24, 1907).

The meaning of the prayer taught in Surah Fatiha is: God, Who art the Lord of Universal Providence, the Gracious, the Compassionate, Master of the Day of Judgment, guide us along the way of people who enjoyed Thy limitless grace and great bounties.

Verbal affirmation must be supported by conduct

The believer should not merely verbally confess the Lord, Possessor of these four attributes; he should so conduct himself as to make it manifest that He truly believes that God alone is His Lord and Provider and not any one else, firmly holding that it is God alone Who requites deeds and is aware of the most secret and closely hidden sins and defaults. Remember, verbal affirmations have no meaning unless they are supported by conduct. One who truly believes God to be his Provider and Master of the Day of Requital, can never be guilty of theft, gambling, vice and other misdeeds, for, he knows that all these are fatal poisons and indulgence in them is open disobedience of Divine commands. In short, until a person demonstrates by conduct that he has firm and true faith in God, he cannot hope for the graces and bounties that are bestowed on the favoured ones (Al-Hakam, Jan. 2, 1908).

Go through the Holy Quran. You will not find anything in it to show that God is pleased with those who disregard and ignore the ways that lead to His pleasure. He is pleased only when one follows the ways that He has appointed for the

purpose. He has clearly taught the prayer: Guide us along the straight path. When a man is pleased with someone he favours him with gifts. Will then God not love those who seek and tread the ways that lead to His pleasure (Al-Hakam, April 2, 1908)?

Three aspects of prayer

Prayer is the best weapon that opens the way of deliverance from hardship. Where all other instruments fail, prayer is the sure means of success, provided all the requirements of its acceptance are available and are observed. Guide us along the right path; is an excellent prayer; it does not name a particular religion nor stress a particular line (Al-Hakam, April 2, 1908).

In respect of prayer it should be remembered that in Surah Fatiha, Allah, the Exalted, has taught the supplication: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. In respect of it three aspects should be kept in mind; namely, that one should include in it all mankind, all the Muslims, and all those who are present in the service. By such intent all mankind will be included in the prayer and that is what Allah, the Supreme, desires. For, in the preceding verses of this Surah He has named Himself Lord of Universal Providence, which urges towards universal compassion even including the beasts. Next He has named Himself *Rahman*, the Gracious One, which urges towards sympathy with all mankind, for *Rahmaniyyat* includes all mankind in its ambit. Then He has called Himself *Rahim* the Compassionate. This attribute promotes compassion for believers, for *Rahimiyyat* is confined to the believers. Finally, He has named Himself Master of the Day of Requit, which urges towards compassion for the company present. For, the Day of Requit is the Day when companies will be present before God, the Supreme. The supplication: Guide us along the straight path, thus takes into account all these categories. This arrangement shows that the prayer comprises mercy for all mankind; and

this is the Islamic principle, that a Muslim should be the well-wisher of all (Al-Hakam, Oct. 29, 1898).

It is the way of Allah that once a person makes up his mind with firm resolve to achieve an objective, he is given the requisite strength. One should therefore turn to the practical aspects of life with a firm determination and strong resolve and should lay special stress on humility and lowliness in making the prayer: Guide us along the right path; and should offer it over and over again. Man is nothing, in fact, he is worse than the beasts and the most wicked of all the creatures, if he does not occupy himself with divine worship (Al-Hakam, June 30, 1900).

The eighth, ninth and tenth verities mentioned in Surah Fatiha are comprised in: Guide us along the path of those who followed the way which led them to Thy gifts and bounties and safeguard us against the way of those who incurred Thy wrath through disobedience, and also against the way of those who were too indifferent to try to follow the right path and, therefore, being disqualified for Thy support, went astray.

God treats each person according to his attitude to Him

The explanation of these three verities is that people fall into three categories in respect of their professions, activities, conduct and motives. Some seek God with a true heart and turn to Him with humility and in sincerity. Then God also seeks them and turns to them with mercy and grace. This is the state of Divine favour. This is conveyed in: The way of Thy favoured ones. These follow an even and straight path which qualifies them for the grace of Divine mercy, and since there remains no barrier between them and God and they are juxtaposed directly to Divine compassion, the light of Divine grace starts pouring in on them.

The second category of people are those who are deliberately hostile and turn their backs on God like enemies. Then God also turns His back on them and would not turn to them with compassion, the reason being that the hostility, disgust, anger,

malevolence and dislike embedded in their hearts against God become a barrier between Him and them. This state is the state of Divine wrath. It is to these that the Divine words: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; refer.

The third category of people are those who are indifferent towards God and do not seek Him with eagerness and effort. God too disregards them and would not lead them to His way, for, they are slack in seeking it and do not care to qualify themselves for the grace that has been appointed in the eternal law of God for those who strive and work hard in seeking Him. This is designated as the state of Divine misguidance, meaning that God adjudges them lost, as they did not seek the ways of guidance by effort and hard work and God, in terms of His eternal law, did not grant them guidance and withheld from them His support. They are referred to in: Nor of those who have gone astray.

The essence of these three verities is that God treats each person according to his attitude towards Him. With those who are pleased with Him and seek Him with true love of heart and sincerity, He also is pleased and He sheds on them the light of His pleasure. But those who turn away from Him and deliberately choose to be hostile to Him, He too treats like enemies. Towards those who are slack and neglectful in seeking Him, God also is indifferent and He leaves them in their misguidance. In brief, as man observes his face in a mirror and beholds it as it really is, similarly the One Lord Who is exempt from every kind of dullness loves those who adore Him, is wroth with those who are angry with Him, disregards those who disregard Him, withholds Himself from those who keep away from Him, inclines towards those who incline towards Him and dislikes those who hate Him. As you behold in a mirror the attitude you adopt in front of it, likewise shall one find reflected from God the attitude one adopts towards Him. The garments a person dons are reflected back. He reaps what he sows. When a person disencumbers his heart of all barriers and dirt and defilement and the expanse of his breast is cleansed of all base matters that divide him from the Divine,

he is like the person who opens his door which faces the sun and its rays pour in through it. But when a person takes to untruth, falsehood and different kinds of filth, and discards God as a thing scorned, he is like one who dislikes light and has such aversion towards it that he shuts all the doors of his house lest the rays of the sun should find their way into it from some direction.

When because of passion or considerations of honour and prestige or for the sake of alignment with his people a person becomes involved in different kinds of errors and filth and makes no effort and takes no pains to cleanse himself of these corruptions, on account of indolence, negligence and indifference, his case is like that of one who finds all the doors of his house closed and the entire house plunged in utter darkness but would not make a move to open the doors and sits inert, disinclined to stir.

Divine wrath means loss of Divine mercy

These three descriptions illustrate the three conditions of man that are the products of his own activity or inactivity. Of these, as explained before, the first is called the state of Divine favour, the second the state of Divine wrath and the third the state of Divine misguidance. Our opponents have no inkling of these three verities. For instance, the Brahmosamajists have no idea at all of the verity that makes God, the Sublime, to treat wrathfully the rebellious and the malignant. One of the Brahmosamajists has recently published a pamphlet on this subject. The writer, in the course of it, criticizes the Books of God for ascribing the attribute of anger to the Divine-Being. Is God chagrined at our short-comings, he asks? It is obvious that if the writer knew aught of this verity he would not have wasted his time in composing such a pamphlet as discloses his lack of insight. With all his pretensions to knowledge he has failed to realise that God's wrath is but a reflection of man's own attitude. When a person is enveloped in wicked hostility and turns his back on God, does he still remain worthy of the grace

of mercy that the true adorers and sincere devotees receive? Indeed not. On the contrary, the eternal law of God which the righteous and the true have throughout experienced and still continue to experience ordains that one who, emerging from behind dark barriers, runs straight to God, with his soul wholly turned to Him, in prostration at His porch, becomes the recipient of the special grace of Divine compassion. One who turns in a different direction, experiences inevitably Divine wrath which is the negation of Divine mercy. The true nature of Divine wrath is the state of loss of Divine mercy, otherwise termed the state of Divine displeasure. When a person abandons the right path which is the means of receiving Divine mercy, under Divine law, he, as a consequence, forfeits Divine grace. Since life and comfort and tranquillity are due to the grace of God, those who discard the way to the grace of mercy, are afflicted with sufferings of different kinds in this life or in the hereafter, for the simple reason that one who does not enjoy Divine compassion, inevitably draws upon himself different types of spiritual and physical afflictions. It is part of Divine law that special grace is bestowed on those who take to the path of mercy, namely that of prayer and Unity. Consequently those who disregard that path, are afflicted with various kinds of calamities. This is indicated in: Tell them: What would my Lord care for you, were it not for your supplications for His grace (25.78)! God is Independent and Self-Sufficient, He depends not on anything whatsoever (3.98).

Aryasamajists and Christians have no true concept of the first and the third verity. Some of them ask why God would not guide everyone and some object why God should have the attribute of misguidance.

Those who ask about Divine guidance do not realize that Divine guidance is accorded only to those who strive for it and walk the way that one must walk to have Divine grace. Those who object to Divine misguidance do not reflect that, in accord with His eternal law, God treats everyone according to his deserts. Those who would not strive after Him because of indolence and negligence He deprives of His support. This is

His eternal way. He guides along His ways only those who seek them sincerely and earnestly. How can it be possible that one who is negligent and full of utter disregard should be blessed with Divine grace in the same way as one who seeks Him with all his wisdom and strength and sincerity! This is indicated in: We surely guide along Our ways those who strive after Us (29.70).

It must be noted that these ten verities comprised in Surah Fatiha are the lofty and unparalleled truths which all our opponents have failed to discover. It should further be noted how God, the Sublime, has set them out in the fewest words with such brevity and beauty. It should also be noted that, in addition to these verities set out with such consummate brevity, there are many other excellent features of this blessed Surah an exposition of which would require a bulky volume (Baraheen Ahmadiyyah, Vol. IV, pp. 456–476, Footnote).

Warning about the Promised Messiah

Surah Fatiha implies a prophecy that as the Jews were smitten with Divine wrath by denouncing Jesus as a disbeliever and dissembler, some Muslims would adopt the same course. That is why the virtuous have been taught the prayer that they may be counted among the favoured ones, and not among those who had incurred Divine wrath. The grand purpose of Surah Fatiha was to give warning about the Promised Messiah and his followers and the Jews from among the Muslims and their group and about the time of the rise of the lost ones, that is to say, the Christians. It is a matter of great rejoicing that these things have come to pass today (Nazulul Masih, pp. 36–37).

In Surah Fatiha Allah taught the Muslims the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, and not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray.

Resemblance between Jews and Muslims

The authentic *Ahadith* (sayings of the Holy Prophet) have established, through constant reiteration, that by those who incurred Divine wrath are meant the evil-doing and rebellious Jews who denounced the Messiah as a disbeliever and designed to slay him, subjecting him to severe insults and calumny and whom Jesus cursed, as is mentioned in the Holy Quran. By those who went astray are meant the Christian deviates who deified Jesus and believed in the trinity and made salvation dependent on the blood of Christ and installed him on the throne of the Living God.

Thus this prayer means: Lord, grant us Thy grace so that we may not become like the Jews who denounced the Messiah as a disbeliever and were after slaying him, nor may we deify Jesus and believe in the trinity.

Since God, the Exalted, knew that during the latter days, the Promised Messiah would be raised from among this *ummat* (the Muslims) and some Jewish-minded Muslims would denounce him as a disbeliever and would plan to murder him and subject him to gross insult and indignity and He also knew that belief in the trinity will have reached its climax at that time and many unfortunate ones would turn Christians, He therefore taught the Muslims this prayer. In this prayer the expression: those who incurred Thy wrath; sounds a note of warning that those who will stand in the way of the Promised Messiah of Islam will be marked in the sight of God, the Supreme, as having incurred His wrath like the opponents of the Messiah of Israel (Nazulul Masih, pp. 41–42).

Muslims of Messiah's time would become Jewish minded

We have seen the Jews of this age and we affirm that the verse: nor of those who incurred Thy wrath; warned that there would certainly arise Jews from among this people also. That has happened and the prophecy of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) has been fulfilled. But are the

Muslims so unfortunate that it was written only that they would become Jewish-minded? We can never ascribe it to the Noble Lord that the Muslims should turn into Jews but that the Messiah should arise from among the children of Israel. Such a turn of events would be a humiliation for the *ummat* and would disqualify it from being the blessed people.

But as the identification of this people with the Jews is indicated in the expression those who incurred Divine wrath, at the same time, the inference is inevitable that as the Messiah appeared among the Jews who had incurred Divine wrath, similarly his like should arise from among the Muslims. This is indicated by the verse: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours (Ijaz Ahmadi, pp. 12-13).

God directs the Muslims to keep supplicating that they may not be included among those who incurred His wrath in this very world nor among those who went astray.

Every human action is followed by Divine reaction

It is not by way of a story or a fable that Allah imparted this teaching. On the contrary, He knew that as former peoples practised vice and rejected the Prophets and exceeded all limits in delinquency, so shall the Muslims pass through a period when they will indulge in vice and transgression, violating all boundaries and will take to practices which inflamed the wrath of God against former peoples and shall likewise incur His displeasure. The commentators and the doctors of Hadeeth have designated the Jews as the people who had incurred Divine wrath. For the Jews had subjected the Prophets of God to much ridicule. They had been particularly harsh towards Jesus (peace be on him) indulging in great impertinence and insolence. The consequence of which was that they were afflicted with Divine wrath in this very world. The expression Divine wrath should not be construed to mean that God is chagrined against people. It means that because of his sinfulness man is alienated from God, the Lord of Holiness. For

example, take the case of a person who occupies a chamber that has four doors. If he keeps them open, sunlight would pour in. But should he shut all the doors then light would not find its way into the chamber. The truth of the matter is that it is the way of Allah that every human action is followed by a Divine reaction. When this person unfortunately for himself shut all the four doors of his chamber, the Divine reaction was that the chamber was plunged into darkness. This plunging into darkness is termed Divine wrath. One must not conceive of Divine wrath in terms of the wrath of man. There is a world of difference between the action of God and man. It is wrong to conceive that men and God work in identical manner. For instance, God hears. But does He stand in need of air for hearing as does man? Or, is His power of hearing like that of man who hears better in the direction of the wind. Or, there is the faculty of sight. Man cannot see without the light of the sun or the moon or a lamp. Is, then, God similarly dependent on light? God's seeing is not like that of man. Its nature is better left to God. The objection of the Aryasamajists that God, the Supreme, has been described as wrathful in the Holy Quran, is misconceived. They should have taken into account other passages of the Holy Quran, for instance 7.157, where it is said: I shall inflict My punishment on whomso I so determine, but My mercy encompasseth all things. The mercy of God thus encompasses all. But their difficulty is that they do not believe in the mercy of God. According to their belief even if a person should somehow attain to salvation, he would in the end have to be sent back to this world.

Jews behaved insolently towards all Prophets

Remember well that the Word of God, the Sublime, is not open to any criticism. As God is free from every defect, so is His Word free from every kind of error. By the expression, not of those who incurred Thy wrath, are meant the Jews. They were a people who professed belief in the Torah, and yet they rejected the claims of Jesus vociferously and treated him with

great insolence, so much so that they planned to put him to death. It is well known that when a person attains perfection in an art, he becomes renowned and famous in that art and whenever the subject is broached, he is cited as the outstanding example. There have, for instance, been thousands of wrestlers in the world and there still are, but Rustam is invariably mentioned as the champion. Indeed, when a wrestler achieves great renown in this country he is described as the Rustam of India. The same is the case with the Jews. There has not been a Prophet towards whom they did not behave with insolence. In opposing Jesus (peace be on him) they went to the length of putting him on the cross and perpetrated every mischief against him. If it is said that the Jews acted wickedly and insolently towards the Prophets but Prophethood having been terminated, there is no occasion now for the prayer: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; the answer is that Allah, the Supreme, knew well that the Messiah would appear in the latter days and the Muslims would turn Jewish by decrying him and would increase in insolence and wickedness. That is why the Muslims were directed to make, in every *rakaa* of the five daily Prayer services, the supplication: Lord, safeguard us against the way of those who were afflicted with Thy wrath in this very world and who were visited with different kinds of earthly and heavenly calamities in consequence of their opposition to Thy Messiah.

Muslims will assume Jewish characteristics

It should thus be understood that this is the age to which the verse: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; refers, and the true Messiah of God is speaking presently in your midst.

Remember Allah, the Sublime, has been forbearing for a quarter of a century. These people have spared nothing in their opposition to me. Every type of insolence has been indulged in. Every kind of charge has been levelled against me. These mischiefs and impertinences were perpetrated with great eagerness and elan. It was sought, in every way, to destroy

and to wipe me out and anathemas of various types were drawn up against me. I was rated worse than a Christian or a Jew, despite the fact that I believe with all my heart and soul that there is no being worthy of worship save Allah, and that Muhammad is His Messenger; and I revere the Holy Quran as the true and perfect Book of God, the Exalted, believing it to be, with sincere heart, the last of the Books and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) the Seal of the Prophets, and offer identical prayers and observe the same Qibla, observe fast during Ramadhan as they do and in no way differ with them in the matter of *Hajj* and *Zakat*. I do not know what were the reasons that prompted them to rate me far worse than a Jew or a Christian, and hurling obscenities and abuse at me became a meritorious daily avocation with them. There should be some regard for decency. Only those who are devoid of faith and whose hearts have grown black adopt such an attitude.

In short, since God knew there would come a time when the Muslims would turn Jewish in character, he taught the prayer, warning against the way of those who incurred Divine wrath and added to it: and of those who went astray, that is, those who deviate from Thy right and straight path. This refers to the Christians who had received the teaching from Allah, the Sublime, through the Gospel, to believe in God as One, without partner, but they discarded this instruction and made the son of a woman their god.

Ascribing a son to God is insolence

No one should fall into the error of thinking that: Those who incurred Thy wrath; is a harsh expression and that: Those who deviated from the straight path; is a mild one. It is not a mild expression at all. The truth of the matter is that the sin of the Jews was far less grave. They adhered to the Torah and followed its commandments. It is true they had advanced far in mischief and in insolence but they were utterly opposed to making any one God or son of God. The fact that they have

been mentioned first in the Fatiha is not because they had been guilty of graver sins but because they suffered punishment in this very world. Their case is like that of a person who is charged with an offence before a subordinate magistrate who is authorised to impose only limited penalties. If the offender merits a heavier penalty, the magistrate must send the case to a higher court. The insolence and wickedness of the Jews were such as could be punished in this very world. But the punishment of these who went astray is beyond the capacity of this world. For, their doctrine is so abhorrent that the Holy Quran condemns it in these words: The heavens might well-nigh burst thereat, and the earth cleave asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces, because they ascribe a son to the Gracious One (19.91-92).

In short, since the punishment of the Jews was light it was meted out to them in this very world and the punishment of the Christians is too heavy for this world, therefore, the hereafter has been appointed for their punishment. In addition it is worth bearing in mind that the Christians have not only gone astray themselves, they lead others astray also. It is their daily calling to mislead people. They print fifty to sixty thousand, nay, some hundreds of thousands of papers daily and adopt every kind of device to propagate their false doctrine (Al-Hakam, Jan. 6, 1908).

You know that Surah Fatiha is the Mother of the Quran; it speaks only the truth. Therein is the mention of the righteous who have gone before, and of the wicked among them whom God smote with His anger in this world, and also there is the reference to the erring ones at the end of the chapter; and you agree that these are the Christians. Allah has mentioned them at the end of the Surah so that you may understand that their mischief is the last of all the mischiefs. Where is then any room left for your *Dajjal* (Dissembler) to step in, O men of wisdom? These are three groups of the people of the Book and similarly there are three groups among you, resembling those who have gone before (Khutba Ilhamiyyah, pp. 69-70).

God called these Jews those who incurred Divine wrath, and

warned you in the Mother Book lest you should be like them and reminded you that they were struck down with the plague. What ails you then that you forget the counsels of Allah and are not mindful of your duty to Him and fear Him not and do not ponder the word of Allah: not of those who were smitten with Divine anger; He did not say: not of the Jews; for truly therein He pointed to the punishment that afflicted them and the punishment that shall afflict you, if you do not desist. Will you then desist? Certainly this is a great warning and its signs are already apparent and herein is a great sign for those who deliberate (Khutba Ilhamiyyah, pp. 89–90).

Three Groups of people who have gone before

Surah Fatiha should suffice a person who seeks the truth and does not parade before us like the haughty. Allah has referred in it to three groups who have gone before and they were: those He favoured, those who incurred His displeasure and those who went astray. He made the Muslims a fourth party and the Fatiha indicates that they would be heirs to those three groups and that they will either be among the favoured ones or among those who incurred Divine anger or among the erring ones, that is, the Christians. He next directed that the Muslims should beg of their Lord to include them among the first group and not to include them among those who incurred His wrath or among the erring ones who worship Jesus and set him up as a partner with God.

Three prophecies

There are in this three prophecies for those who use their understanding. When the time of these prophecies approached, Allah made the start with the erring ones as you have witnessed. The Christians issue forth from their churches with a strength no one can withstand and they come down from every height. The earth was shaken and threw up its deposits, and a large party of the Muslims turned Christians as you have witnessed.

Then came the time of the emergence of those who were smitten by Divine wrath, as was the promise of God. So a party of Muslims took up the ways of the Jews whom Allah had afflicted with His wrath and all their desires and thoughts and appearances and malice and hostility and rebellion became like those of the Jews. They lie and violate the laws and are unjust and arrogant and love to shed blood without cause; their egos are filled with greed and miserliness and jealousy and they have been stricken with disgrace and are honoured neither in the heavens nor in the earth and are rebuffed at every door and thus has the earth been filled with injustice and iniquity and few there are of the virtuous. Allah looked at the earth and found its people in threefold darknesses, the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of transgression and the darkness of callers to Trinity and of the whispering campaign of Satan. He remembered graciously and mercifully His third promise for which the supplicants had been praying and accordingly bestowed His favour upon the Muslims by sending the like of Jesus and none but the blind would disavow it (Khutba Ilhamiyyah, pp. 99–103).

Ponder deeply the Mother Book, as one should ponder. Why did God warn you against becoming those who are smitten by His wrath? Why do you not reflect? Know then that the purpose underlying it is that Allah knew that soon would be raised among you the Second Messiah as if he were the self-same and He also knew that a party from among you would call him a disbeliever and a liar and would humiliate him and abuse him and design to kill him and would curse him. He, therefore, taught you this prayer, being disposed towards you compassionately, in view of that which had been determined. His Messiah has now come to you and if you desist not then you will certainly be called to account. This proves that by the people who were afflicted with Divine wrath are meant the Jews who exceeded all bounds in respect of Jesus, the Prophet of Allah, the Gracious, and called him a disbeliever and persecuted him and were cursed by him as mentioned in the Quran. Thus those who imitate their ways from among you,

by denouncing the Messiah of the age, as a disbeliever and by rejecting him and persecuting him by words of mouth and desiring to slay him even by means of false calumny, as you are doing, became like them.

By those who have gone astray, are meant the Christians who also exceeded all bounds in respect of Jesus in the other direction and gave him exaggerated praise and claimed that Allah in fact was the Messiah and that he was the third of Three, the third who holds all the three in His person, according to them.

**Messiah is the principal personage amongst the favoured ones
in latter days**

By His word: those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; are meant the Prophets, and the last group of righteous among the Israelites who bore witness to the truth of the Messiah and did not hold back in any way nor did they make exaggerated claims in respect of him. By this group is also meant the Messiah with whom that dispensation came to an end, and the fountain of grace ceased to run among the children of Israel and Prophethood was transferred from them as if he was a token for this transference and a resurrection and a judgment. In the same way, this group comprises the saintly ones from among the Muslims who have testified to the truth of the Messiah of the latter days and have believed in him and accept him with complete sincerity. He is the Messiah with whom this dispensation terminates and he is the principal Personage designated by His word: Those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; as the parallel with the Mosaic dispensation demanded. Those who reflect will not deny this. When it has become clear by every means that those who incurred Divine wrath were the Jews who called the Messiah a disbeliever and accounted him accursed, as the expression erring ones also indicates; then all the canons of construction and the whole syntax of the Holy Quran demand that the expression: Those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; should be construed

as meaning the Messiah of the latter age. The Quran always maintains the juxtaposition between parallels. This is one of the essentials of elegance in composition and none but the ignorant would deny it. It is thus clear that whoso makes this supplication in the Prayer services or otherwise, seeks of his Lord admittance into the party of the Messiah who will be denounced as a disbeliever by his people, will be called an impostor and a transgressor and will be treated as the worst of all creatures and will be named Dajjal and innovator and deviate as was the case with Jesus at the hands of the accursed Jews (Khutba Ilhamiyyah, pp. 121–126).

The people whom Allah called: Those who incurred Divine wrath; in the Fatiha, are the Jews who called the Messiah an impostor and planned to crucify him and the knowledgeable know it. The expression: erring ones, which occurs after the expression: Those who incurred Divine wrath; has decisive bearing on this meaning and no one doubts it except the ignorant ones. The erring ones are the people who exceeded all bounds in respect of Jesus. It proves that those who were smitten by Divine wrath were a people who were remiss in respect of him and these two are juxtaposed to one another, O ye who observe.

Allah thus warned you against becoming their like, lest His punishment should afflict you, as it afflicted the enemies of the Messiah and the curse of God afflicted them as is said in the Quran (Khutba Ilhamiyyah, pp. 129–131).

An elaboration of this passage is that Allah informs in this Surah about some Jews who incurred Allah's wrath, during the time of Jesus, son of the righteous lady, for their having denounced him as a disbeliever and for their persecuting him and creating every kind of mischief against him, and He next warned that a party from among you will, like them, denounce their Messiah as a disbeliever and will develop fully every kind of resemblance with them and treat him the way the Jews treated their Messiah (Khutba Ilhamiyyah, pp. 136–140).

The expression: Those who incurred Divine displeasure; is in contrast to the expression: The erring ones. The former is

juxtaposed to the latter as is not hidden from the discerning. It has been established with decisiveness and certainty that those who incurred Divine wrath were the people who had gone to the extreme in respect of Jesus in their denunciation of him as a disbeliever and in persecution and humiliation of him, as the erring ones went to the other extreme in respect of him by taking him as the Lord of the Universe (Khutba Ilhamiyyah, p. 122, Footnote).

Know then that in this blessed chapter Allah makes it clear to the believers the fate of the people of the Book and says that the Jews disobeyed their Lord after bounties and gifts had been bestowed on them continuously until they were smitten with wrath. The Christians too disregarded the attributes of their Lord and degraded Him to the status of a feeble and helpless servant and were lost.

Warning to Muslims of latter days

This chapter contains a warning that in the latter days the condition of the Muslims shall become similar to that of the people of the Book. They will take to their ways and their practices until Allah, the Sublime, will favour them with His special grace and bounties and will safeguard them against bestiality and animalism and superstition and will include them among His righteous servants (Karamatus Sadiqeen, p. 83).

The authentic *ahadith* have likewise affirmed that, in the latter days, the majority of Muslims will have developed affinities with the Jews. Surah Fatiha also points to the same, for, it teaches the prayer: Lord, safeguard us against becoming like the Jews who were contemporaries of Jesus (peace be on him) and were hostile to him and were afflicted with Divine displeasure in this very world.

It is the way of Allah that when He gives a people a command or teaches them a prayer, it implies a warning that some of them would be guilty of the sin or default they are being forbidden. Since the expression: those who incurred

Divine wrath, stands for the Jews who were smitten with Divine chastisement, in the latter period of the Mosaic dispensation, in consequence of their denunciation of the Messiah, this verse predicts in accord with the aforesaid way of God, that during the latter days the Promised Messiah will be raised from among the Muslims and the Muslims, through their opposition to him, will cultivate affinities with the Jews of the time of Jesus (Lecture at Sialkot, pp. 15-16).

One like Jesus was to arise from among Muslims

God has adjudged some Muslims Jews and has clearly indicated that the divines of this *ummat* will be guilty of the offences committed by the Jewish divines. This is the meaning of the verse: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath. All the commentators are agreed that those who incurred Divine wrath referred to in this verse, are the Jews who were afflicted with Divine chastisement on account of their denunciation of Jesus (peace be on him). According to the *ahadith* also, the people who incurred Divine wrath are the Jews who were afflicted with Divine chastisement in this very world. The Holy Quran confirms it that Jesus cursed the Jews and they were afflicted with Divine punishment. Undoubtedly and decidedly, therefore, those who suffered Divine wrath are the Jews who planned to compass the death of Jesus upon the cross. Thus the Divine direction to us to pray that we may be safeguarded against becoming like the Jews who planned to slay Jesus, clearly indicates that one like Jesus was to arise from among the Muslims. Otherwise what would be the purpose of teaching us this prayer?

A Prophet from outside Islam would violate seal of prophethood

Further, it is clear from the verses cited that, at a certain stage, some Muslim divines would become replicas of Jewish divines. In such contingency it would be unreasonable to affirm

that, to reclaim them the Israeli Messiah would come down from heaven. First, the advent among Muslims of a Prophet from outside Islam would violate the seal of Prophethood which the Holy Quran explicitly affirms in respect of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Apart from this, the Holy Quran designates the Muslims the best people. There is then nothing more derogatory for them than that they should be identified with the Jews but that the Messiah should come from outside. If it is true that, at a certain time, a large number of Muslim divines will resemble the Jews, it is equally true that to reclaim them the Messiah would not come from another people but, as some Muslims have been designated Jews, so shall one member of this *ummat* be named Jesus. There is no gainsaying the fact that both the Quran and the Hadith have called some members of this *ummat* Jews, as is evident from the verse: Not of those who incurred Thy displeasure; for, if some members of this *ummat* were not to become Jews, this prayer would not have been taught. Since the time the Books of God began to be revealed, it has been the way of God that whenever He forbids a people a certain act, be it adultery or burglary or imitating the Jews, the prohibition implies that some of them will contravene it. There is no single instance of an entire group or a whole people desisting from that which they are forbidden by Divine command. Some of them always disobey. In the Torah, Allah, the Exalted, forbade the Jews perverting the text of the revelation. This implied that some of them would be guilty of this enormity, and so it proved. But, God, the Supreme, laid no such command on the Muslims in the Quran. Instead He promised: We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation and most surely We will be its Guardian (15.10). Thus the Holy Quran has been safeguarded against perversion.

Muslims will develop character and habits of Jews

In short, it is the undoubted way of God that when He forbids a group or a people a certain act or enjoins a virtue, this is a

sure indication that it is within His eternal knowledge that some of them would contravene the injunction. Therefore, His direction, in Surah Fatiha, to the Muslims, to supplicate against their turning into Jews who planned to crucify Jesus (peace be on him) and were visited with Divine punishment, in this very world, on account of it, clearly implies that some members of this *ummat* who will be reputed as divines will, through their wickedness and their denunciation of the Messiah, don the garments of the Jews. Otherwise, there would be no purpose in teaching a meaningless prayer. It is obvious that the divines of this *ummat* cannot become Jews in the sense of becoming literally the children of Israel and then plan to crucify Jesus son of Mary who departed this life long ago, for, today those Jews who attempted the crucifixion of Jesus and Jesus himself are no more. It is clear that the verse points to a future event and means that a person would be raised in the latter days, in the likeness of Jesus, the Messiah, and some of his contemporary Muslim divines would persecute him and abuse him as did the Jewish divines in the case of Jesus (peace be on him). The authentic *ahadith* confirm that when it is said that some Muslim divines will become Jews the meaning is that they will develop the character and habits of Jews and, though they will outwardly pass as Muslims, their hearts will have become corrupt and they will take on the characteristics of the Jews who incurred Divine wrath, on account of their persecution of Jesus (peace be on him). Since, therefore, these very people who are called Muslims will become Jews, would it not be humiliating for this *ummat* that, while a portion of it will become Jewish in character, the Messiah who is to reclaim them should come from outside of Islam? This is contrary to the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran juxtaposes the Islamic dispensation to the Mosaic dispensation, both in good and in evil and not only in evil. The meaning of: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; clearly is that they will be called Jews because of humiliating, rejecting, denouncing and planning to slay the Divine Messenger commissioned to reclaim them, and since they will inflame their rage against him, they

will be labelled in heaven: those who incurred Divine wrath, like the Jews who denounced Jesus (peace be on him), with the consequence that they were afflicted with plague and were later wiped out by the Roman Emperor Titus. The words: Those who were afflicted with Divine chastisement; mean that they will be afflicted with some kind of calamity in this very world, for, every disbeliever will suffer punishment in the hereafter and in reference to the hereafter all disbelievers will be under Divine wrath. Why did then God, the Supreme, label the Jews who planned to nail Jesus on the cross and had in fact, in their own belief, crucified him, victims of Divine anger in particular? It was because they were afflicted with Divine punishment in this very world and it was on that account that the Muslims were directed, in Surah Fatiha, to pray that they should be spared the fate of those Jews. It was in truth a prophecy that a Messiah will be raised among the Muslims and that they, copying the Jews, will rise in opposition to him and will be afflicted with Divine chastisement in this very world. This prayer thus meant that it had been decreed that a Messiah would rise among the Muslims and that those of Jewish character among them will rise against him and shall thus incur Divine wrath in this very world. You have, therefore, been directed to keep praying that you may not become those Jews.

Denunciation of Messiah shall cause plague to spread

It must be borne in mind that every disbeliever incurs the displeasure of God. In this case by punishment is meant affliction suffered in this very world. The Jews who persecuted Jesus (peace be on him) and as the Holy Quran affirms were cursed by him, were the very people who were chastised in this very world. They were first afflicted with a severe plague and the survivors endured painful sufferings at the hands of the Roman Emperor Titus and were banished from the land. The expression: those who incurred Divine wrath; thus in a manner prophecies that those from among the Muslims who will

deserve to be called Jews shall likewise reject a Messiah who will be in the likeness of the first Messiah, in that he will not go to war nor will he take up the sword but will propagate the faith through holy teachings and heavenly signs; and, because of the denunciation of this last Messiah plague shall also spread in the land and all the things that the Prophets had predicted from the beginning shall come to pass. The notion that the Messiah, son of Mary, shall come a second time, during the latter days, is totally opposed to the tenor of the Holy Quran. Whoso studies the Holy Quran in a spirit of righteousness inspired by faith and a sense of fairness and understanding will clearly grasp that God the Mighty, the Noble, has juxtaposed this *ummat* to the people of Moses, in virtue as well as in vice. Among the Muslims there are those who resemble the Prophets of Israel and there are those who resemble the Jews who incurred Divine wrath. This is best illustrated by a mansion with well-appointed halls and apartments which serve the needs of highly-placed and cultured people, and there are also lavatories and toilets in appropriate places. The owner of the mansion then decided to build a similar edifice facing the first, with all the paraphernalia that the first palace had. The second mansion is the mansion of Islam and the first was that of the Mosaic dispensation. This second mansion does not lack anything that the first place had. The Holy Quran does not depend in any respect upon the Torah and the Muslims have not to look to any Prophet of Israel for anything. Every one possessing spiritual excellence who is raised for the Muslims is nurtured by the spiritual grace of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and the revelation that he receives is a reflection of the revelation vouchsafed to the Holy Prophet. This is a truth that needs to be well grasped. It is a pity that our opponents would feign have Jesus back again without realizing that Islam is honoured as a parallel to the Mosaic Dispensation and will not suffer the humiliation that a Prophet of Israel should come back to reform the Muslims (Tazkiratush Shahadatain, pp. 416–419).

Notwithstanding all the evidence and miracles and mighty signs in my support the divines denounce me, but this was bound to be, so that the prophecy contained in the verse: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; may be fulfilled (Tazkiratush Shahadatain, p. 435).

I came as Divine grace for the righteous. But I was ridiculed and called a disbeliever and a hypocrite and was counted among the faithless so that the prophecy contained in the expression: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; may be fulfilled. For, by holding forth the promise regarding those who were Divinely favoured, He has conveyed in this verse that there will also be those among the Muslims who will be like the Jewish divines who planned to crucify Jesus and denounced him as a disbeliever, a hypocrite and a deviate. Now consider, what does this indicate? Surely it indicates that the Promised Messiah will be raised from among the Muslims and that, therefore, those resembling the Jews will also be raised during that time who will have pretensions to being called divines. This prophecy has found fulfilment today, in your land (Tazkiratush-Shahadatain, p. 455).

Resemblance between Jews and Muslims

Divine decree had determined that among the Muslims will arise those who will resemble the Jews. Because of this I was named Jesus in the same way as John was named Elias. The verse: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; points to this. The prophecy concerning the appearance of Jesus among the Muslims had a parallel in the prophecy concerning the second coming of Elias among the Jews. To establish this parallel I was named Jesus. But that was not all. The would-be denouncers of this Jesus from among the Muslims, were named Jews. The verse: Not of those who incurred Thy displeasure; points to these very Jews, the ones who disbelieve the Jesus of this *ummat*, and thus identify themselves with the Jews who rejected Jesus. Thus has been established a perfect parallel in that the Jews who were expecting the second coming of Elias,

rejected Jesus because Elias did not come a second time; and similarly these people did not believe in the Jesus of this *ummat* on the pretext that the Jesus of the House of Israel had not come a second time to the world. Thus has been established a close affinity between the Jews who did not believe in Jesus because Elias did not come to the world again and these Jews who are waiting for the second coming of Jesus himself and that was the purpose of God, the Sublime. Since a parallel has been established between the Jews of Israel and these Jews, by the same token a parallel has been established between the Jesus of the House of Israel and this Jesus, that is myself. For that Jesus was rejected by the Jews on the ground that a previous Prophet had not appeared a second time in the world, similarly this Jesus (that is myself) has not found favour in the eyes of these Jews because a former Prophet has not come a second time to the world.

It is obvious that the people whom the sayings of the Holy Prophet call Jews and to whom the verse: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; refers, are not the original Jews but belong to this very *ummat* who have been called Jews. By the same token, it is not the self-same Jesus, a Prophet of the House of Israel, who has come but a member of this *ummat*.

It is not in conformity with the mercy and grace of God, the Supreme, that He has throughout bestowed on this *ummat*, that He should call them Jews, the ones who made the prophecy concerning the second coming of Elias a pretext to denounce Jesus as a disbeliever and an imposter, but should not designate any member of this *ummat* as Jesus. Would not this indicate that, in the sight of God, the Sublime, this *ummat* is so unfortunate that it can merit the title wicked and recalcitrant Jews but not one of its number merits the title Jesus.

Thus God, the Supreme, in His wisdom, on the one hand called some members of this *ummat* Jews and on the other named one of their number Jesus (Zameema Baraheen Ahmadiyyah, Vol. V, pp. 232–233).

Jesus was alive when he was placed in the sepulchre

The significance of the verse: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray; which occurs in Surah Fatiha is worth keeping in mind. The Jews incurred the displeasure of God, the Supreme, by viciously denouncing as accursed a pure and holy Prophet of God though they had come to know that the Messiah did not remain in the sepulchre and that his prophecy that his case would be like that of Jonas, that is to say, that he would enter the sepulchre alive and would come out of it alive, had been fulfilled. The Christians too, despite their love for the Messiah, agreed out of ignorance that he had become accursed for their sake, not realizing that curse implies an impure heart and that the heart of a Prophet never becomes impure, that is to say, hostile to God and alienated from Him.

Prophecy about Messiah

In this chapter, the Muslims have been warned that they should not, like the Jews, take the hasty step of denouncing the Promised Messiah as an imposter nor pronounce anathemas against him craftily nor call him accursed, as the curse would recoil on them. Nor should they behave like foolish friends as did the Christians and ascribe to their leader qualities and attributes that did not become him. Beyond doubt there is thus a reference to me in this chapter and a prophecy about me. The Muslims have been told in the shape of a prayer that they would pass through a phase when they would take to denouncing the Promised Messiah craftily. For there is the Holy Prophet's saying to the effect that the Muslims would imitate the Jews in every respect, so much so that if a Jew had entered the hole of a lizard a Muslim would also do it. It is a marvellous mercy of God, the Sublime, that He made a prophecy about me in the very first chapter of the Holy Quran which the Muslims recite in their five daily Prayer services. All praise to Allah for this (Tuhfa Golarviyya, p. 15, Footnote).

Muslims admonished not to denounce Messiah

Since this *ummat* has been blessed and God does not desire that it should perish, therefore, He taught the prayer: not of those who incurred Thy wrath; as part of the Holy Quran and, in fact, commenced the Quran with it. Further, He incorporated this supplication into the Prayer services of the Muslims so that they may have occasion to ponder and try to understand why they had been warned against the evil disposition of the Jews, which they displayed so hatefully in their treatment of Jesus (peace be on him). The Muslims had, on the face of it, nothing to do with the people referred to in Surah Fatiha who had incurred Divine displeasure. The Holy Quran and *Ahadeeth* and the consensus of the divines establishes that those who incurred Divine displeasure were the Jews who had persecuted and ill-used the Messiah and denounced him as a disbeliever and an accursed one and spared no effort in planning his murder and their indignities had extended even to the womenfolk of his family. Then what had the Muslims to do with this prayer and why were they taught it? Now we know that it concerned them since a Messiah was to rise from among them like the former Messiah and it had been determined that he should also be insulted and denounced as a disbeliever. The Muslims were, therefore, taught this prayer which in effect means: Lord, safeguard us against the sin of persecuting Thy Messiah and calling him a disbeliever and dragging him into the courts to have him condemned and insulting the women of his family and defaming him and drawing up indictments against him declaring him an outlaw. It was for this purpose that this prayer was taught, so that this *ummat* may be constantly reminded thereby, as is done by means of a memo that one keeps in one's pocket or puts up on the wall of one's living room, that a Messiah would be raised among them and that they too had latent in them some of the qualities of the Jews. Thus this verse contains a prophecy in the form of a prayer. Since Allah, the Exalted, knew that in the terms of His promise, that He would set up Khalifas among

the Muslims, as He had set up Khalifas among the former peoples (24.56), the last Khalifa of this *ummat* would appear in the power and spirit of Jesus (peace be on him) and would suffer like him at the hands of his people and anathemas would be pronounced against him and plans would be concerted to destroy him; therefore, out of compassion, He taught the Muslims this prayer to seek the protection of God against following in the footsteps of the Jews who denounced the Messiah of the Mosaic dispensation as a disbeliever and humiliated him and heaped abuse on him. This prayer has a clear implication that you too shall pass through a similar stage and that many of you possess the same characteristics. Beware, therefore, and be constant in prayer lest you should stumble. The second part of this verse refers to those who have gone astray. This means: Lord, safeguard us against becoming Christians. It is a clear indication that at the time of the advent of the Promised Messiah, the Christians would be dominant and the false doctrines of Christianity would spread over the earth like a tornado, and the preachers of Trinity would lay down such a vast net of hypocrisy as well-nigh to mislead even the righteous. Nothing would avail against them except prayer, and so this prayer was added to the one relating to the Jews. The *hadeeth* directing the Muslims to recite the opening verses of Surah Kahf (Ch. 18) when they encounter the Arch-Hypocrite (*Dajjal*) has reference to this period of misguidance (Tuhfa Golarviyya, pp. 67–72).

Remember and ever keep in mind that, through Surah Fatiha, a prayer has been taught to be safeguarded against two mischiefs; first that of denouncing the Promised Messiah as a disbeliever, and humiliating him and seeking faults in his person and drawing up anathemas against him, declaring him an outlaw as is conveyed in the verse referring to those who suffered Divine punishment. Secondly, the mischief of the Christians. The Surah ends with a reference to it indicating that the Christian mischief will be like a great flood, there being no greater mischief than that.

This shows that the Holy Quran bears witness to this humble

servant in its very first chapter. If that is not so, then who are those who incurred Divine wrath, against whom a warning has been given here? Is it not true that in the *Hadeeth* and the Holy Quran some Muslim divines of the latter days have been referred to as resembling the Jews? Is it not true that by the people who suffered Divine punishment are meant those Jews who called Jesus (peace be on him), the last Khalifa of the Mosaic dispensation and its Promised Messiah, a disbeliever and cast aspersions on him and invented slanderous imputations in respect of his private life?

Some Muslim Divines designated Jews

The same expression: those who incurred Divine wrath; has been used in respect of the representatives of those Jews who denounced the Messiah as a disbeliever and made slanderous allegations against him. Once the full import of the expression: those who incurred Divine wrath; is pondered, it will become clear that it is an unambiguous prediction that the coming Messiah shall suffer at the hands of the Muslims as the former Messiah suffered at the hands of the Jews of his time and that the prayer: Lord, save us from being those who incurred Thy wrath; definitely and decisively means: safeguard us, Lord, against persecuting the Promised Messiah who is the like of the former Messiah and from calling him a disbeliever. This interpretation finds sufficient support from the fact that the group that incurred Divine wrath comprises only those Jews who persecuted the Messiah. In the *hadeeth*, the Muslim divines of the latter days have been called Jews, namely, those who persecuted Jesus (peace be on him). This is a supplication: Lord, make us not the party that incurred Thy wrath. It is thus a prophecy in the form of a prayer and foretells two things; first, that a Promised Messiah will rise among this *ummat*, and, secondly, that some members of this *ummat* will denounce him as a disbeliever and will slander him and will incur Divine wrath. The sign of that period is that the mischief of the Christians who have been called: those who have gone

astray, will be at its height. Though the Christians are also under Divine wrath for not responding to the Divine command, yet their punishment will become manifest on the Day of Judgment. Those who incurred Divine wrath will suffer Divine punishment in this very world, because of calling the Promised Messiah a disbeliever and slandering him and persecuting him and planning to slay him. This is a prophecy of the Quran directed against those who are my inveterate enemies (Tuhfa Golarviyya, pp. 73–74).

Those who incurred Divine wrath comprise those Jewish divines who, in their extreme hatred, would not permit Jesus to be treated even as a believer and denounced him as a disbeliever, proclaiming him an outlaw. The subject of Divine wrath is one whose extreme hatred of a righteous one provokes Divine anger. Here the two expressions: those who went astray; and: those who incurred Divine wrath; are juxtaposed; the former are those who in the exuberance of their love deified Jesus and the latter are those who in their extreme hatred called the Messiah a disbeliever.

That is why the Muslims were warned through Surah Fatiha that they would be confronted with both these trials; the Promised Messiah would come and would be called a disbeliever like the first Messiah and the Christians who deify Jesus would then be in ascendance, and that the Muslims should safeguard themselves against both these evils by supplicating for Divine help in their daily prayers (Tuhfa Golarviyya, p. 104, Footnote).

Christians glorified Jesus beyond limit

Dhallee does not simply mean those who go astray. Here it stands for the Christians who, because of their excessive love for Jesus, glorify him beyond limit. One connotation of the Arabic expression also is such exuberance of love for one person as makes the lover intolerant of even moderate commendation of any other. The expression is used in that con-

notation in 12.96: Thou art assuredly still caught in thy old infatuation [Ibid].

This chapter ends with the mention of the erring ones, that is, with the seventh verse which ends with the expression: *dhalleen*. This indicates that the domination of the *dhalleen* will be a presage of Doom. This chapter, in fact, embodies many subtleties and verities. As we have already explained, the prayer of this Surah: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, and not of those who incurred Thy wrath nor of those who went astray; clearly indicates that this *ummat* will be confronted with a severe trial, at the time of the emergence of a future group of those who shall incur Divine wrath and of the domination of *Dhalleen*. It is necessary that recourse should be had in the five daily Prayer services to this supplication as a means of being safeguarded. The pattern of this prayer of Surah Fatiha is that the first part from *Al hamdu lillahe* to *Malike yaumiddeen* expounds the attributes and qualities of Divine grace and glory, so that the heart may recognize Him as the only One worthy of adoration. Being enamoured of these holy attributes, human nature confesses: We worship Thee alone; and becoming conscious immediately of its own frailty it cries out: We seek Thy help; and then, after receiving strength from Him, the supplication is made which safeguards against an ill and covers all categories of good: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray (Tuhfa Golarviyya, p. 112 Footnote).

Spiritual reflections of past personages

According to the Holy Quran, many past personalities were to appear in their spiritual reflections. First, as a Prophet, like unto Moses (Deut. 18.18) came the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) as is affirmed in the verse: We have sent to you a Prophet who is a witness over you, even as

We sent to Pharaoh a Prophet (73.16). Secondly, the likes of the Khalifas of Moses, including one like the Messiah, as is affirmed in the verse: As He made Khalifas from among those who were before them (24.56). Thirdly, the likes of the Companions of the Holy Prophet as is clear from the verse: Others from among them who have not yet joined them (62.4). Fourthly, the likes of those Jews who drew up an anathema against Jesus condemning him to death and persecuted him and planned to slay him, as is manifest from the prayer taught in the verse: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath. Fifthly, the likes of the kings of Jews that arose in Islam as is deducible from a comparison of the two verses, couched in similar language. Relating to the kings of the Jews: Your Lord will soon destroy your enemy and make you rulers in the land, that He may then see how you behave (7.130); and about the kings in Islam: Then We made you their successors in the earth that We may see how you behave (10.15) (Tuhfa Golarviyya, p. 124).

Had these people abstained from drawing up anathemas of excommunication, then how could the prediction: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; taught in Surah Fatiha, in the form of a prayer, find fulfilment? For, the expression: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; occurring in Surah Fatiha, stands for the Jews, according to Fathalbari and Durre Manthur. The great event involving the Jews that took place close to the period of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) concerned their anathema excommunicating Jesus (peace be on him), denouncing him as accursed and condemning him to death. They were greatly incensed against him and were wroth with him and because of their anger had become, in the sight of God, deserving of His chastisement. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was born some 600 years after these events. Now what was the purpose of teaching his *ummat* in Surah Fatiha the supplication: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; requiring them to offer it, in the course of their five daily Prayer services and their Tahajjud and Ishraq and Eid prayers, when the time

of those Jews had passed centuries before? Why were the Muslims urged to supplicate Him five times daily to safeguard them against becoming the Jews who had incurred the displeasure of God?

This prayer clearly indicates that a Promised Messiah would rise among this *ummat* and a party of the divines will denounce him as a disbeliever and condemn him to death. That is why through the directive to keep offering the Fatiha prayer: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; the Muslims were urged to constantly supplicate God, the Exalted, to safeguard them against becoming the likes of the Jews who excommunicated Jesus son of Mary and condemned him to death and pried into his private affairs and slandered his mother. It is the Divine way discernible in all Divine Scriptures that, when He forbids a certain thing or teaches a prayer against indulgence in it, He implies thereby that some of those admonished will certainly be guilty of it. It is thus clear that the teaching of the prayer: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; portended that a section of the Muslims would follow in the footsteps of the Jews and, by their denunciation of the Divine Messiah and by drawing up anathemas declaring him an outlaw, would provoke the wrath of Allah, the Exalted, and would merit like the Jews, the title: Those who incurred Thy wrath.

Promised Messiah was to be denounced

It is such a clear prophecy that unless a person deliberately chooses to be dishonest he cannot question it. It is not the Quran alone that calls such people Jews. The *hadeeth* also confers the same appellation on them and very clearly states that the divines of this *ummat* shall denounce the Promised Messiah as a disbeliever, as did the Jews and will be the bitterest enemies of the Promised Messiah, for, on account of him their prestige will decline and people will cease to have recourse to them. These *Ahadeeth* are very widely known among the followers of Islam. Even the *Fatuh-at-i-Makki* states that on his advent, the Promised Messiah will be hailed with

excommunication and one divine will exclaim: What kind of Messiah is this; He is distorting our faith, meaning, he does not believe in our traditional doctrines and is antagonistic to our conventional beliefs.

Some *Ahadeeth* go so far as to say that some divines would follow strictly in the footsteps of the Jews, so much so, that if a Jewish divine had committed incest with his mother so shall they and if a Jewish jurist had entered the hole of a lizard so shall they.

Denunciation of Rabbis and priests and not common people

It should be remembered that in all references to the degradation of the Jews in the gospels and in the Holy Quran it is not the common people who are referred to; it is the rabbis, the jurists and the chiefs that are meant, who held the power of excommunication and whose preachings inflamed the masses. That is why in the Holy Quran such learned Jews have been described as donkeys carrying loads of books (62.6). The masses have little to do with books – it is the divines who are concerned with them. It is, therefore, worth remembering that in the Bible and the Quran and the *Hadeeth*, all references to Jews are to their rabbis and their priests. By the same token, the words: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; have reference to the Muslim divines and not to the common people (Tuhfa Golarviyya, pp. 135–136).

The injunction of Allah, the Exalted, issued in the very first chapter of the Holy Quran warning the Muslims against becoming: Those who incurred Divine wrath; and: Those who went astray: which is, in effect, a warning to the Muslims against developing affinities with the Jews and the Christians, implies the prophecy that some of them would do so; that is, that a time will come when some of them will cultivate affinities with the Jews and the Christians. For, a command is invariably given in respect of something which some people are inclined to indulge in (Al-Hakam, March 31, 1901).

The Holy Quran begins with Surah Fatiha which ends with:

Not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray. But when we consider the beliefs of Muslims, the mischief of *Dajjal* (the Arch-Hypocrite) looms large there and we cannot reconcile ourselves to the idea that God, the Supreme, simply forgot to mention Dajjal. That certainly is not so, the truth of the matter being that people have misunderstood the significance of the term Dajjal. In Surah Fatiha, a prayer has been taught against involvement in two mischiefs. One refers to those who incurred Divine wrath. According to the consensus of the learned among the people of Islam, these are the Jews. It appears that this *ummat* must pass through a phase when it will cultivate affinities with the Jews and that is precisely the age of the Promised Messiah when great emphasis will be laid on his denunciation and excommunication, as was done by the Jews in denouncing Jesus son of Mary as a disbeliever. This part of the prayer seeks to safeguard the Muslims against denouncing and defaming the Promised Messiah after the manner of the Jews in the case of Jesus. The other great mischief referred to in Surah Fatiha and with which the Surah concludes is the mischief of the Christian people. This has been referred to in the words: those who went astray.

Now when we consider the closing part of the Holy Quran, we find that it also bears vivid testimony about those two great mischiefs. There is for instance Surah *Tabbat yada* (Ch. 111) which is juxtaposed to the expression: Those who incurred Thy wrath. Before the anathema was drawn up against me I received the revelation: Keep in mind the time when the one seeking thy excommunication will devise his plan concerning thee and will urge one of his influential coadjutors to kindle the fire of mischief against thee so that he might see whether thou hast God's support in thy claim of being a recipient of revelation like Moses, though he will account thee an impostor. Both the hands of Abi Lahab will perish and he too will perish. He should not have concerned himself with this affair but in fear and awe. Whatever hurt comes to Thee is from God.

In short, Surah *Tabbat* points to the mischief referred to in

the verse: Not of those who incurred Thy displeasure; and Surah *Ikhlas* (Ch. 112) is juxtaposed to: Those who went astray. The two Surahs, Al-falaq (Ch. 113) and An-nas (Ch. 114) which follow these two chapters are an exposition of them. In these two Surahs again protection has been sought against this dark and dismal age when the excommunication anathema pronounced against the Promised Messiah would spark the mischief of those who incurred Divine wrath and the misguidance and darkness of Christianity will begin to encircle the world. Just as in Surah Fatiha, the commencement of the Quran, a prayer has been taught to seek protection against these two disasters, in the same way, at the end of the Holy Quran, a prayer has been taught to seek protection against these two evils, in order to establish a corelationship between the beginning and the end.

The last three Surahs stand in juxtaposition to those who went astray. The principal one is Chapter 112 and the other two are its elaboration. In the last Surah, the prayer to seek protection against Satanic insinuations has been taught. Just as Surah Fatiha ends with: Those who went astray; similarly has the last Surah, Chapter 114, ended with seeking protection against the Sneaking Whisperer so that the affinity between those who have gone astray and those who carry out their designs by creating doubts and suspicion may become manifest. How splendid is this sequence designed by God in the shape of a complete circle – concluding Surah Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Quran with: Those who have gone astray; and placing at the end of the Holy Quran two Surahs which are juxtaposed to the last word of Surah Fatiha (Al-Hakam, Feb. 28, 1902).

Holy Quran replete with prophecies concerning advent of Messiah

If a person cared to learn from me, he would find that the whole of the Quran is replete with references to me. At the very outset it says: The way of those on whom Thou hast

bestowed Thy favours, and not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray. Now one might enquire of them, who were those who incurred Divine wrath? All the sects of Islam are agreed that they were the Jews. Again the *Hadeeth* says that this *ummat* will turn Jewish. If there was to be no Messiah how would they become Jews (Al-Badr, Dec. 26, 1902)?

Promised Messiah would refute doctrine of cross

In Surah Fatiha by the words: The way of those on whom Thou bestowed Thy favours; the advent of the Promised Messiah has been foretold. By making reference in this Surah to those who incurred Divine wrath, and those who went astray, He foretold that at the time of his advent a party will offer opposition, they will follow in the footsteps of the Jews who were the ones who incurred Divine wrath, and in the words: those who went astray; it has been conveyed that the Promised Messiah will be charged with the mission of destroying the Arch-Hypocrite and breaking the cross, for, by consensus the Jews are those who incurred Divine wrath and those who went astray are the Christians (Al-Hakam, April 30, 1903).

Three parties have been mentioned in Surah Fatiha. First, those who were favoured, secondly, those who were punished and, thirdly, those who went astray. Those who were punished are by common accord the Jews, and those who went astray are the Christians. It is a simple truth that no sensible father would teach his children that which would be of no benefit to them. Then how can one ascribe to God the inculcation of a prayer that relates to a situation never to be encountered?

Indeed, all these things were to occur. Those who were afflicted with punishment are the Jews. The Holy Prophet (peace of Allah and His blessings be on him) predicted that some members of the *ummat* will develop Jewish characteristics and will become like them, so much so, that if a Jew committed incest with his mother they too would do so. Those Jews who were afflicted with Divine punishment had been

cursed by Jesus. This shows that all these things will be repeated during the time of the Promised Messiah. Now that time has come. These people are not one step behind those others in their opposition to me (Al-Hakam, Aug. 17, 1902).

Second Messiah also designated word of God

In teaching the prayer: Not of those who incurred Divine wrath; God gave the indication that the Jews who were contemporaries of the Messiah (peace be on him) would appear as a reflection in this *ummat* too, so that they may persecute the Promised Messiah who was also to appear as a reflection in this *ummat*. In fact, the directive that Surah Fatiha must be recited in the course of daily Prayers, predicates that the advent of the Promised Messiah had been decreed. Further, the wicked of this *ummat* have been compared to the Jews in the Holy Quran. Not only that, the man who was to receive, for his Mary-like disposition, the Messianic impress through Divine breath, has been named son of Mary in Surah Tahrim (66.13) where it is said: We breathed into her of Our Spirit, meaning thereby that the Messiah, son of Mary, was not signally qualified for being the word of God, the last Messiah also is the word of Allah and the spirit of Allah; in fact he is far more advanced in both respects than the first Messiah as is deducible from Surah Tahrim, Surah Fatiha, Surah Nur and the verse: You are the best people raised for the good of mankind (3.111) (Tiryaqul Qulub, p. 159).

This dispensation is in no way behind the Mosaic dispensation. In respect of this mutual resemblance, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) has said that this *ummat* will get a full measure of evil as did the Jews. This dispensation has been repeatedly mentioned and also that it will sustain its ascendancy till the last. This finds mention in Surah Fatiha also in the expression: Not of those who incurred Divine punishment, nor of those who went astray. Those who incurred Divine punishment are the Jews.

Now how did the Jews become liable to Divine punishment

should be considered. They rejected the Prophets and denied Jesus. This *ummat* must, therefore, encounter the advent of a Messiah whom this people would likewise repudiate so that the resemblance is completed.

But if there were to be no such encounter, no such period and no Messiah was to come, what was the purpose then of the prayer taught in Surah Fatiha (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1903)?

Warning against rejection of Messiah

Open the Book of Allah and see for yourselves. It gives its decision. Read the very first Surah, the Fatiha, without which no Prayer service is complete. Consider what it teaches: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours and not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray.

It is clear that in this prayer protection has been sought against going the way of those who incurred Divine punishment and of those who went astray. Those who incurred Divine wrath are, by consensus of opinion, the Jews and the Christians are those who went astray. If there was no danger of a similar mischief arising in this *ummat* then what was the purpose in teaching this prayer? The biggest mischief that threatened was that of the Arch-Hypocrite (*Dajjal*). But here the Arch-Hypocrite did not find any mention. Did God, the Supreme, not know of this mischief? The truth of the matter is that this prayer comprises a great prophecy. This *ummat* was to pass through a time when it would acquire the characteristics of the Jews. The Jews were the people who had rejected the Messiah. Therefore, the directive to pray against becoming Jews is a warning against rejecting the Promised Messiah.

The directive to pray against following the way of the Christians shows that the mischief of the cross would have assumed dangerous proportions at that hour and that this distemper will be the root and parent of all troubles. The wickedness of the Arch-Hypocrite (*Dajjal*) will not be anything

apart from this. For, if it were apart from this it would certainly have been mentioned (Al-Hakam, Feb. 21, 1903).

The bare translation of the Quran is not enough, unless it is accompanied by its exegesis. For instance, how would one know that the expression: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray; stands for the Jews and Christians, until it is fully explained! Again, why was this prayer taught to the Muslims? It purported to convey that as the Jews earned Divine wrath by their repudiation of the Messiah, so would the Muslims reject the Promised Messiah and merit Divine wrath. They were, therefore, warned in advance in the form of a prophecy so that virtuous souls may be safeguarded from Divine wrath (Al-Badr, Oct. 29, 1903).

Allah, the Exalted, has taught us this prayer in Surah Fatiha: Lord, make us not of those who incurred Thy wrath nor of those who went astray. It is worth noting that Jesus is the common point of both. Those who incurred Divine displeasure are the people who exceeded all limits in their animosity towards and persecution of Jesus, and those who went astray are the people who had such excessive love for him that they ascribed Divine attributes to him. We have been taught this prayer to safeguard ourselves against both these attitudes. Had there been a Dajjal (Arch-Hypocrite) besides them, then this prayer would have run: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath nor of the Dajjal (the Arch-Hypocrite). This is a prophecy that warns the Muslims in advance against both these types of mischief. It is the Christian missions that are straining every nerve to wipe out Islam from the face of the earth. They are doing great harm to Islam (Al-Badr, Sept. 13, 1906).

Founder of Islam was like unto Moses

There is no doubt that our Master, the Choicest of creation, the Founder of Islam was like unto Moses. For the completion of this resemblance it was necessary that there should be raised the like of Jesus in the latter period of this *ummat*. It is to this

that our Lord has pointed in Holy Writ. Reflect then on Surah Nur (Ch. 24), Surah Tahirim (Ch. 66) and Surah Fatiha. This is what our Lord has decreed; the knowledge of the divines cannot rise to that level on its own. What then will you believe in after this (Mawahibur Rahman, p. 60)?

On account of its similarity to the Mosaic dispensation it was necessary that a Messiah should appear in this *ummat*; also because it had been said of it that it would develop the characteristics of Jews. The consensus of opinion has been that those who incurred Divine wrath were the Jews. But this *ummat* could become Jewish only if they were confronted with a Jesus and they denounced him. Thus has it happened. The Messiah who was to come did appear and they rejected him (Al-Hakam, Nov. 10, 1905).

Allah, the Sublime, has taught in Surah Fatiha the prayer: Not the way of those who incurred Divine wrath, nor of those who went astray. When we pondered this we discovered that the expected one should possess two types of qualities, the qualities of Jesus, as well as the qualities of Muhammad (on both of whom be peace); for, those who incurred Divine wrath are the Jews and those who went astray are the Christians. When the Jews created mischief, Jesus came to reform them and when the mischief of the Christians waxed great, the Holy Prophet came to suppress it. In our time God, the Supreme, has synchronised the internal mischief of the Jews and the external mischief of the Christians. Therefore, the person who was to come should combine in himself a perfect reflection of the Holy Prophet and a complete picture of Jesus (Al-Hakam, May 17, 1903).

Two periods of great danger

It appears from the Holy Quran that this *ummat* will go through two periods threatening great danger, one was the time of the Khilafat of Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) after the death of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him); and the other the period of the mischief of

the Arch-Hypocrite (*Dajjal*) which was to be the time of the Messiah. The verse: Not of those who incurred Divine wrath, nor of those who went astray; urges the seeking of protection against it. About this period there is also a prophecy in Surah Nur (24.56) which read with the earlier verse means that during the latter days this religion shall face an upheaval which will threaten its global dissolution. God, the Exalted, will then re-establish it throughout the world, granting security after a period of danger (Lecture at Lahore, p. 41).

Not the way of those who incurred Divine wrath, has reference to the divines. In matters of this nature, it is the divines who take the lead; the common people have little concern with religion (Al-Badr, May 15, 1903).

The Jews are a nation – they are the people of Moses. These ill-starred ones behaved with insolence. They persecuted all the Prophets. It is well known that if a person develops a wicked habit to the utmost and earns notoriety in it, his name comes to be associated with it. There are many dacoits but some become notorious. There have been thousands of wrestlers but Rustam alone is considered outstanding. Since the Jews were most wicked and were outstanding in insolence towards the Prophets, therefore, they were named: Those who incurred Divine wrath; though there were many others who also suffered Divine punishment (Al-Badr, Jan. 9, 1908).

There is an urge in the verse: Guide us along the straight path; to pray for true knowledge of God, as if He were directing us and saying: Call on Allah to enlighten you concerning the nature of His attributes and to make you grateful; for those before you lost the way because they lost the understanding of the attributes of Allah, the Glorious, and His bounties and His pleasure. They wasted their lives in the pursuit of activities that augmented their sinfulness. The wrath of God then visited them, and they were afflicted with humiliation and joined the doomed. Allah, the Exalted, has referred to this in His words: Not the way of those who incurred Divine wrath. It appears to be the rule that the wrath of Allah afflicts only those who had been favoured by Allah, the Sublime, with bounties before

they incurred His displeasure. In this verse the expression: Those who incurred Divine punishment; comprises the people who violated His commandments in respect of the gifts and bounties which Allah, the Supreme, had bestowed upon them especially, and followed their own devices, forgetting the Gracious God and all that was due to Him and joined those who denied Him. Those who have gone astray are those who were minded to take to the right path but lacked true knowledge, illuminating insights and protecting and strengthening prayers. They became a prey to superstitions and yielded to them and wandered away from the right course and missed their true calling. Thus they were lost and did not let their thoughts pursue the channels of righteousness.

One wonders at their thinking, their wisdom and their vision. They held valid in respect of Allah and His creatures that which healthy nature and inner light would not endorse, ignoring that laws serve nature and the physician seeks to help nature and does not fight it. Alas, how very unaware are they of the way of the righteous!

Allah does not respond to prayers of those who associate partners with Him

In this Surah, Allah, the Sublime, teaches His obedient servants, as if He were saying: O My servants, you have seen the Jews and the Christians; guard, then, against imitating their conduct and hold fast the rope of prayer and of seeking help and ignore not the bounties of Allah like the Jews, else His wrath will afflict you; and neglect not true knowledge and prayer and be not slack in seeking guidance like the Christians, lest you should be lost (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 81-82).

The expression: Not the way of those who incurred Divine wrath; calls for the observance of due reverence and the adoption of attitude of proper respectfulness towards the Lord of lords; for, prayer has an etiquette which only those comprehend properly who turn to God often. Allah is wroth with him who fails to observe this etiquette. If he persists in his

disregard and would not repent, his prayer yields him nothing but frustration and torment. That is why so few reach their goal through prayer and so many perish against the barriers of arrogance, indifference and ostentation. Most people while they pray yet associate partners with God. Their minds are fixed on others than Allah. Allah does not respond to the prayers of those who associate partners with Him and leaves them bewildered in their wilderness. The favours of Allah are indeed within easy reach of the humble-minded. That one is not a supplicant whose gaze wanders in different directions and is allured by every glimmer and ray and who is eager to line his pockets, even through the help of images and who in his greed for gain scales every height and seeks his adored objective even through the help of the mean and the corrupt. The true supplicant is one who turns to Allah whole-heartedly and would not beg the least favour of anyone other than Him, and who comes to Allah like one who has cut off every other contact and has fully surrendered himself to Him and whose journey is towards God and who cares not for anyone other than Him, be he a king or a sovereign. He who bows at the threshold of anyone other than God and does not hold God as the end and goal of his journey, is not a supplicant who believes in the uniqueness of God but is like the associates of Satan. Allah heeds not the glamour of his words but sees the impurity of his motives. In the eyes of Allah, despite the sweetness of his tongue and the beauty of his discourse, he is but a dungheap covered with silver-leaf or a whited sepulchre. His lips utter words of faith but his heart belies them. These are the people who incite Allah's wrath and His words: Those who incurred Thy wrath; apply to them. These are the people who were called to the ways of righteousness but abandoned them, after having known them and took to wickedness, after being apprised of its filth and set out to the left and did not turn to the right. They leaned towards falsehood till they came close to it, and truth died for them after they had discerned it. The lost ones to whom Allah, the Lord of Glory and Honour, has referred in His word: Those who went astray; are the people

who did discover in the darkness of night the way that had become dim but who deserted this right course before they had begun to tread firmly on it by virtue of clear Signs, and drifted away heedlessly into falsehood. They had no lamp to guard them from slipping and to illumine for them the guide-posts of truth. Thus they dropped into the pits of misguidance undesignedly. Had they been given to the supplication: Guide us along the straight path; their Lord would surely have safeguarded them and showed them the true faith and saved them from the ways of ruin and would have led them to the ways of righteousness and wisdom and equity, so that they would have found the right direction and would have escaped all blame. But they hastened towards satisfaction of their vain desires and did not call upon their Lord for guidance and stood not in awe of Him but turned away their heads haughtily and were filled with the spirit of self-approval. Thus they discarded the truth, in favour of the vain talk that issued from their mouths, and their prejudices consigned them to the valley of the doomed (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 93–94).

The middle way is the way of the favoured ones

Those who incurred Divine wrath are the people who employ their sense of anger in opposition to God, the Supreme, and follow the dictates of the bestial instinct. The ones astray are those who follow their animal instincts. The middle way is the way of the favoured ones. The Holy Quran guides the Muslims to the middle course. In the Torah, God, the Supreme, had stressed retributive measures and in the Gospel He stressed forgiveness and forbearance. This *ummat* has been taught appropriateness and the middle course (Report of the Minutes of the Great Religions Conference, p. 126).

Those afflicted with Divine wrath are in the grip of bestiality. The Jews are in that condition while the Christians fell victims to superstition. *Shirk*, association of partners with God, derives from superstition. The subject of bestiality goes to one extreme; he does not fear even when fear is called for. The victim of

superstition goes to the other extreme and is afraid of everything. He takes a rope for a snake and is frightened. Thus, it was that the Christians fell so far that they made a dead man their God and the Jews were so obdurate that they disclaimed him outright.

Allah, the Exalted, has referred to three groups in the Holy Quran and has also placed people in three categories. First, those who act in a balanced manner. They are the people who are favoured with bounties; their way is the straight path. Secondly, those who exceed the limit; they have been named: Those who incurred Divine wrath. Thirdly, those who fall short. These are the ones who have gone astray. The expression: Those who incurred Divine wrath; shows that God, the Sublime, does not visit anyone with wrath; on the contrary, man draws His wrath through his own evil conduct (Al-Hakam, Feb. 10, 1901).

Going astray is the mother of mischiefs

In the Holy Quran mention has been made of those who have gone astray. If *Dajjal* (Arch-Hypocrite) were another personality, he should also have found mention. All commentators are agreed that those who incurred Divine wrath and those who went astray are the Jews and Christians respectively. A prayer to be safeguarded against these mischiefs, not to be included among those who went astray, nor among those who incurred Divine wrath, has been taught. This must be repeatedly offered in the five daily Prayer services. It is thus clear that this is the biggest and most serious mischief which must be safeguarded against. It should be called the mother of mischiefs (Al-Hakam, Oct. 31, 1902).

Holy Quran teaches moderation

Those who incurred Divine displeasure are the Jews and those who went astray are the Christians. The Jews became such formalists that they totally disregarded the spirit of the com-

mandments. The Christians emphasised the spirit so much that they utterly disregarded the form and discarded as superfluous the Divine commandments that served as beacon lights and guides to reality. They adopted esoteric interpretations of everything and assumed that all of these had found their fulfilment in the Messiah. Both groups stumbled into misguidance being caught up in two extremes. The Holy Quran reconciles the two extremes and teaches moderation (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1903).

In the word of Allah, the Jews have been named: Those who incurred Divine wrath. They exalted the form and disregarded the inner reality. The Christians have been named: Those who have gone astray. They disregarded the form and lost the way; for, the form is a model and a lamp for the spiritual. One who gives up the model misses the way. In Surah Fatiha the reference to those who incurred Divine wrath and those who went astray points clearly to those two extremes of these two groups (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1903).

Deliberation over Surah Fatiha shows and the commentators are agreed that those who incurred Divine wrath, stands for Jewish divines and those who went astray, stands for Christian priests. Reference to both these groups together indicates the appearance of someone as a spiritual reflection of the Prophets. Those who suffered Divine punishment were rebels against the Messiah and those who had gone astray were those who rebelled against the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). He who was to come, thus shares the characteristics of both. The teaching of this prayer to the Muslims shows that they would be confronted with this situation. Thus the two stations were combined, for he, the coming one, would partake of the spirit of both (Al-Badr, May 15, 1903).

The reflection of a person in the mirror, a separate entity by itself, is called *buruz*. This is illustrated in Surah Fatiha which says: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, and not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray. All

commentators have interpreted those who incurred Divine wrath as meaning the Jews, and have interpreted those who went astray as meaning the Christians (Al-Badr, Sept. 4, 1903).

Surah Fatiha first reveals the beauty and beneficence of the Divine. If a person would not turn to God through these, there is the alternative of wrath. That is why the warning has been conveyed in the expression: Not the way of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray. But the blessed one is he who appreciates His beauty and beneficence and observes His commands. God draws near to him thereby and hears his prayers (Al-Hakam, March 31, 1903).

The commentators interpret those who incurred Thy wrath, as meaning the Jews. The truth is that whoever misbehaves will be called to account and will incur Divine wrath, not only the Jews (Al-Badr, Jan. 9, 1908).

Two groups of favoured ones

There are two large groups of the good and virtuous, free from false beliefs, one is the party of the forerunners, who were the Companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and the others are of the latter days who are considered to be counter-parts of the Companions because of their spiritual training at the hands of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) as is understood from the verse: Others from among them who have not yet joined them (62.4). These two groups of Muslims are truly those who have been favoured by Him. His favour consists in His safeguarding them from different kinds of errors and innovations and purifying them from every kind of *shirk* (ascribing partners to God) and granting them a pure and bright concept of Divine Unity in which neither the *Dajjal* (Arch-Hypocrite) is deified nor is the son of Mary made an associate of God in His attributes. He has strengthened their faith by His signs and has purified them with His own hands. Of them those who

receive His word and are drawn towards Him by His special attraction are like Prophets and those who prove their sincerity and truth by means of their conduct and worship Allah, the Exalted, out of personal love, without any selfish motive are like the faithful (*siddiq*); and those who suffer hardships in the hope of a return in the hereafter and risk their lives, having viewed the Day of Requitall with their inner eyes, are like martyrs; and those who keep aloof from every kind of mischief are like the righteous. The object of every true Muslim is to seek these grades and not to slacken in effort and search until he has attained to them. The two groups that have been mentioned in contradistinction to them are those who incurred Divine wrath and those who went astray. A prayer seeking to be safeguarded against being included among them has been taught in this very Surah, the Fatiha. When this prayer is offered in conjunction, that is to say, when it is said: Lord, include us among those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours and safeguard us against being included among those who incurred Thy wrath and those who went astray, it is clearly understood that, in the knowledge of God, the Supreme, a party of the favoured group is contemporary of those who incurred Divine wrath and those who went astray. Since, in this Surah, those who incurred Divine wrath stand definitely for the people who rejected the Promised Messiah, denounced him as a disbeliever and as an impostor and defamed him, then, without a doubt, in juxtaposition to them are those who were favoured with Divine bounties, that is to say, those who have believed in him with sincerity of heart and truly honour him and are his helpers and his witnesses before the world. As for those who have gone astray, they are the Christians, as we have explained before, in terms of the testimony of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and of all the authorities of Islam. The prayer to seek protection against being included among those who have gone astray is also a prophecy. For, as we have said before, the Christians did not possess any great power during the time of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). In fact, the Persian

Empire possessed great power and enjoyed tremendous prestige. Among the religions, Buddhism claimed the largest number of adherents in the world and the Zoroastrian religion was also in ascendancy. Even the Hindus had national unity and enjoyed great glory, empire and solidarity. The Chinese too commanded great resources.

Prophecies about the rise of Christians

The question then arises why was not a prayer taught to seek protection against the mischief of these ancient religions which had old and powerful empires and national solidarity and wealth and strength and tradition and other resources contributing to their great prosperity, but a prayer was taught to seek protection against the mischief of the Christian people, a relatively weak power at the time? The answer is and, it must be well remembered, that it was in the knowledge of God, the Sublime, that this people would grow in power, day by day, until they would spread all over the world and would use every resource to convert people to their faith, for instance, by polemics, financial advances, kindness and courtesy, glimmer of wealth and grandeur, pandering to carnal desires, freedom and permissiveness, criticism and fault-finding of other faiths, tending the sick, helping the poor, sheltering the orphans; in short, by using every device, taking advantage of the weakness of a stupid victim of circumstances, or of a greedy person, or of a libertine, or of a social climber or of one forlorn or of an orphan to cajole him into their fold. This was then a great tribulation in store for Islam, threatening the annihilation of millions. It was because of this that God taught the prayer in Surah Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Quran, to seek security against this fatal visitation. It must be realised that this is a glorious prophecy of the Holy Quran, which is without parallel (Tuhfa Golarviyya, pp. 82-83).

Surah Fatiha opens up for you the gateway of guidance. God commenced it with the Source of creation and concluded it with a reference to the age of those who have gone astray

and these are the Christians, as our Chosen Prophet is reported to have said. Now where does your *Dajjal* find a mention in it? Show us from the Quran (Khutba Ilhamiyyah, pp. 67–68).

Exaltation of Jesus like other prophets

This is not a matter that you should pass it by with indifference; it is, in fact, the source of the verity wherefore the Christians have been named the erring ones. Allah has given them this appellation in Surah Fatiha to draw attention to their misguidance and to stress that belief in the life of the Messiah is the source of all their errors just as the Fatiha is the key to the Holy Scriptures. They would indeed never have deified him if they had not lifted him to the heavens with his physical body. It is not possible for them to revert to faith in the Unity of God without turning away from this belief. Allah, then, by His compassion, has unravelled this knot for this *ummat*, establishing it with clear evidence that Jesus was not put to death on the cross nor was he lifted up bodily to heaven and that his elevation was not anything extraordinary and peculiar to him but was spiritual elevation like the elevation of his brother Prophets (Al-Huda, p. 110).

The Holy Quran teaches the Muslims in Surah Fatiha to seek protection against the mischief of the Christians. All commentators have interpreted the expression: Those who have gone astray; in this sense (Tatimma Haqiqatul Wahi, p. 62).

In Surah Fatiha, the Christians have been called: Those who have gone astray. This indicates that while there are hundreds of sects in the world abounding in misguidance, the misguidance of the Christians will be at its climax and in that sense they would be the misguided people (Tatimma Haqiqatul Wahi, p. 65).

Allah, the Exalted, has in this Surah, divided the Jews and the Christians into three groups and has exhorted us to join one of them. He has, by His grace and benevolence, given us the good news that we shall join it, and has taught us a prayer so that we may become like the Prophets and Apostles. As to

the other two groups: they are the Jews who incurred His wrath and those who went astray, that is, the people of the cross. He has commended us to seek His protection lest we should be included among them through ill-fortune and rebelliousness. From this Surah it has become clear that our affair has been placed between fear and hope and reward and trial, that we should either become like the Prophets or drink out of the cup of the unfortunate. Fear Allah, therefore, Whose punishment is overwhelming and Whose promises are bright. Whoso would not follow the guidance of the Prophets, by the grace of Allah, the Loving, it is to be feared that he would become like the Christians or the Jews. Therefore there is great need for the example of the Prophets and Apostles so that their light should dispel the darkness of those who incurred Divine wrath and the doubts of those who went astray. On this account the advent of the Promised Messiah is called for, in this age, from among this people, for the erring ones have multiplied greatly and the juxtaposition calls for the Messiah. You can see for yourselves the legions of missionaries who are the ones who have gone astray. Then where is the Messiah who should repel them, if you know? Has any sign appeared in response to your prayer, or have you been abandoned in the darkness of the night? Were you taught the prayer for guidance to the way of the favoured ones only to add to your frustration so that you may be left empty handed? The truth is, and the truth I declare, that Allah certainly did not specify in this Surah the three groups until He had assigned a counterpart of each in this *ummat*. Now you undoubtedly see large numbers of those who have incurred Divine wrath and also a large number of those who have gone astray, but where is the one who should have come as an example of the former Prophets and Apostles? Why do you not reflect over this and pass on unheeding?

Seek the way of Prophets and Apostles

This chapter has mentioned both the beginning and the end

and has indicated the people who are the last of the nations and the culmination of wickedness. It concludes with the mention of those who have gone astray and therein is a hint for those who reflect. Allah has mentioned these two groups at the end of the Surah and has made no mention of the Arch-Hypocrite (*Dajjal*) explicitly or by implication while, at this point a reference to him was called for. Yet the Surah has by using the expression: those who have gone astray, definitely specified the last wickedness and the greatest peril. Had the mischief of *Dajjal* in the knowledge of Allah, been a greater trial than this mischief, He would certainly have concluded the Surah with a mention of that and not with a reference to this group. Turn it over in your minds then, whether our Lord of Majesty forgot the real danger and made a mention of the erring ones instead of making a reference to *Dajjal*. Had it been as the ignorant ones claim then Allah would certainly have said here: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of *Dajjal*.

Allah desired in this Surah to urge this *ummat* to follow the path of the Prophets and to warn them against the ways of the disbelieving transgressors. So He spoke of a people on whom He had bestowed His blessings in full measure and His bounties in the widest range; and promised that He would certainly raise from among this *ummat* one who would be like the Prophets and would resemble the Apostles. He next mentioned another people who had been abandoned in darkness and declared their mischief as the last of mischiefs and the greatest calamity; and commanded that all men should seek refuge with Him against this mischief until the day of Judgment and should supplicate in their five daily Prayer services for its dissipation. But He made no reference in all this to *Dajjal* and his great wickedness.

Can there be a stronger argument in refutation of this belief? There is further support for it in that Allah has made mention of the Christians towards the end of the Quran as He did make mention of them in the beginning of the Furqan. Reflect over: He begets not, nor is He begotten (112.4) and

over: The mischief of the sneaking whisperer (114.5). These have reference to none but the Christians. Seek then asylum against their divines with the Lord of mankind. Thus as Allah ended the Fatiha with a reference to those who had gone astray, so did He conclude the Quran with a reference to the Christians, and undoubtedly those who had gone astray are these very Christians as is reported from our Holy Prophet in the Durre Manthur and in the Fathilbari. Turn not away then from a proven and known word which is accepted by the mass of the community (Ijazul Masih, pp. 86–91).

Could they tell us where mention has been made of the people whose mischief shall exceed the wickedness of *Dajjal*? The Holy Quran does not mention the word *Dajjal* but warns against those who have gone astray. They are the Christians. Why has not the word *Dajjal* been used? The truth of the matter is that it is this very people against whom all the Prophets have warned their peoples (Al-Hakam, April 10, 1903).

Dajjal is no other than the erring Christian missionaries

The *Dajjal* mentioned in the Ahadeeth is none other than Satan who will be slain in the latter days, as was said by Daniel and also occurs in some *Hadeeth*. Since Christianity is the fullest manifestation of Satan, therefore, the word *Dajjal* is not mentioned in Surah Fatiha but there is the command to seek God's protection against the mischief of the Christians. Had *Dajjal* been a separate mischief-monger, then instead of mentioning those who had gone astray in the Holy Quran, God, the Sublime, would have mentioned *Dajjal* (Arch-Hypocrite) (Haqiqatul Wahi, p. 39).

This Satan, *Dajjal*, has been called, in other words, the genie of Christianity. During the days of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) this genie was confined to the Christian Church and used to get intelligence about Islam through its spies. Then after three hundred years this genie was released, as the Prophets (peace be on them)

had foretold. His power has been on the increase since then, day by day, until in the 13th century of the Muslim era (19th century of the Christian era) he rose with tremendous force. This very genie has been named *Dajjal*. Whoso desires to understand may comprehend. At the end of Surah Fatiha, God, the Exalted, has warned in the prayer: Not of those who have gone astray; against this very genie (Haqiqatul Wahi, p. 42 Footnote).

Where is the *Dajjal* against whom you warn us? But the *Dajjal* referred to in the expression: Those who have gone astray; is growing in power day by day and on account of his mischief the earth and heavens may well-nigh burst asunder (Haqiqatul Wahi, p. 46).

God, the Sublime, has taught us through Surah Fatiha that *Dajjal* against whom we have been warned is the group of erring Christian Missionaries who have abandoned the way of Jesus. He has taught us the prayer in the above-mentioned Surah that we should supplicate God against becoming the Jews who were afflicted with chastisement for their disobedience of and hostility towards Jesus, and against becoming the Christians who discarded the teachings of Jesus and made him God thus perpetrating a lie in excess of all lies and in support of it had recourse to every type of cunning and deception. They were, therefore, called *Dajjal* in heaven. Had there been any other *Dajjal* it would have been made obligatory in this very verse to seek protection against him. In that case Surah Fatiha would have made use of the word *Dajjal* instead of the expression: Those who went astray. These are the meanings that the events have unfolded. This age has produced the last mischief against which we had been warned, namely, the mischief of insistence upon the Trinity (Haqiqatul Wahi, p. 310 Footnote).

These people have made the Messiah a claimant to a moiety in the Divinity. In the same way they entertain strange beliefs concerning *Dajjal* that he will raise the dead and will work many other wonders. The Quran slays with the shining sword: There is no one worthy of worship save Allah; every false deity

believed to possess Divine attributes; whence, then did this Dajjal emerge? God taught in Surah Fatiha a prayer for seeking protection against beoming Jews and Christians. Did He then forget to mention Dajjal, who constituted such a great mischief (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1901)?

Those who have gone astray has reference to Christian missionaries as I have stated and not to the British people. For, there are many British people who have not read the Bible even once in their lives. Islam weighs heavy on the minds of these missionaries; they know that Islam is a religion that they can never subdue. My reference to those who have gone astray applies to those missionaries who are not only misled themselves but employ all their resources and efforts towards misleading others. The reference to *Dajjal* in the *Hadeeth* applies only to those who have gone astray. If this were not so, it would have to be admitted that while God, the Supreme, warned against those who had gone astray and even taught a prayer for being safeguarded against their great mischief, yet He did not at all mention Dajjal whose wickedness was so enormous as to threaten the going astray of millions of people. The truth of the matter, however, is that Dajjal and those who have gone astray are the same group that is engaged in misleading people and is at the height of its power in this age and is using every device and stratagem in aid of its campaign to mislead mankind. Since the word *Dajjal* also means one who misleads, therefore, it has been used in place of those who have gone astray in the works of *Hadeeth*. Another reason for this substitution is that Allah, the Exalted, knew that people would make up a Dajjal on their own and attribute to him strange things such as that he would hold heaven in one hand and hell in the other and claim to be both God and Prophet and that he will bear on his forehead the word *kafir* (infidel) and that he will have a donkey the distance between whose two ears will be so many yards, etc. God has said that those who have gone astray are the party of Dajjal. They are occupied with misleading people in diverse ways. They hold out every kind of temptation, pervert Divine scriptures and turn people away

from Divine commands so much so that they have made a filthy thing like the flesh of swine lawful while, in the Torah, it has been specially prohibited. Even the Messiah expressed his aversion to swine by saying: Cast not your pearls before swine. Moreover by fabricating the evil doctrine of vicarious atonement they have opened wide the door of iniquity. A person may commit a host of the most heinous sins and go free and be saved if he would believe in Jesus as God or the son of God.

Is it not obvious now that it is this misleading group that has been called Dajjal in the Hadeeth and has been called: those who have gone astray, in the Holy Quran (Al-Hakam, Jan. 10, 1908).

In its very opening, the Quran makes mention of those who incurred Divine wrath and of those who went astray and also towards the end, as the verse: He begets not, nor is He begotten (112.4) clearly indicates. All this is by way of emphasis so that the prophecy about the advent of the Promised Messiah and the ascendancy of Christians should be clearly apprehended and should not remain obscure (Tuhfa Golarviyya, p. 88).

If it is said that Prophethood having been terminated there would be no occasion for anyone to incur the wrath of Allah by opposing a Prophet, particularly when this *ummat* is approaching the end; the answer is that Allah, the Sublime, knew that many from among this *ummat* will behave like Jews. The Jews had planned to crucify Jesus. The *Hadeeth* states that these people would also become Jews in that they will denounce as impostor the one who would come to them from God and would deem it an act of great merit to plot to kill him. The words of God are not without significance. Are not these days the days of tribulation? I have suffered with patience for 25 years. These people have left no stone unturned. I have seen their edicts of anathema. They say that my disbelief is greater than that of the Jews and the Christians. It is strange indeed that those who recite the creed, face towards the Qibla (the Sacred House) in their Prayers, speak reverentially of the

Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and are ready to lay down their lives in his cause, should be deemed worse than those who defame the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) all the time. Except one who is totally bereft of faith and honesty, no one can advance such a grave charge. If they have no sense of faith, have they lost even the sense of decency?

Allah, the Exalted, knew well about the emergence of a group who would consider the denunciation of the Messiah as an article of faith. That is why He taught, through this prayer, the way of being safeguarded against this evil (Al-Badr, Jan. 9, 1908).

Deifying a creature is grave sin

Not of those who went astray; that is to say, those who discarded the teaching of the Gospel to worship the One God. They were told to worship the God Who is the God of Jesus also, but now they call Jesus (on whom be peace) God, and affirm that he is the Master of Judgment (Badr. Jan. 9, 1908).

Do not imagine that the expression: Those who incurred Divine wrath; is harsh, and that the expression: Those who went astray; is comparatively mild. That is not so. The truth of the matter is that the sin of the Jews was less heinous than that of these erring ones. The Jews followed the Torah. I asked a Jew about his religion and he said their belief in God is the same as is taught in the Quran and that they have never deified any human being. In this respect they are far better than the erring ones but in wickedness and mischief they are far ahead of them. Since, however, they were punished for their transgression in this world, they have been mentioned first in the Quran. In a case before a subordinate magistrate, if a light penalty is involved, he will pass sentence himself; but if the charge is a serious one and is beyond his jurisdiction he will commit the case to a higher tribunal. The misdeeds of the Jews could be punished in this world. But the sin of those who have gone astray is far graver; they deified a creature. They shall suffer

for it in the next world. They are guilty of a sin concerning which Allah, the Supreme, says: The heavens might well-nigh burst thereat, and the earth cleave asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces (19.91).

Punishment of those who have gone astray is severe

He did not say that in respect of the Jews. Their sin was less grave and the punishment was meted out to them here; but the punishment of those who have gone astray is severe. There is always a gradation in punishment. A first offender is awarded a lighter sentence than a habitual offender; the leader of a gang is dealt with more severely than a member. The Christian missionaries have propagated their false beliefs so widely that often as many as fifty thousand leaflets are issued in support of a doctrine which is utterly opposed to truth and is pernicious in every respect (Badr, Jan. 9, 1908).

In Surah Fatiha which is recited in every *rakaa* of every Prayer service three past groups have been cited; first, those on whom God bestowed His favours, secondly, those who incurred His wrath and, thirdly, those who went astray. Incurring Divine wrath does not mean punishment in the hereafter only, for all those who discard the Book of Allah and violate the Divine commandments shall suffer punishment. By consensus of opinion those who incurred Divine wrath are the Jews and those who went astray are the Christians. It is clear that this prayer is designed to secure inclusion among the favoured ones and to safeguard against being included among the other two. It is the way of Allah and the law established by Him since the inception of Prophethood that whenever He commands a people concerning something or enjoins something upon them, there are invariably some who observe the commandment and others who violate it. It follows, therefore, that, of the Muslims there shall be some who will be afflicted with Divine wrath and still others who shall go astray from the straight path.

Now it is perfectly clear that the third group mentioned in

the Surah, namely, the Christians, has already established its position. You can see for yourselves how many have joined its ranks. A bishop has claimed in a speech that some 2 million Muslims have become apostates. The fanfare with which this group has emerged and the ways it has adopted to mislead people show that there is no greater peril than this. Thus the last of the three factors predicted has clearly emerged. The second are those who incurred Divine wrath. I feel that their hour has also arrived and the prediction is being fulfilled. The Jews incurred Divine wrath in this world and plague played havoc with them. In this age also because of iniquities, corruption and vice plague is rampant. Those who are known as divines have no scruples in concealing the truth. With the emergence of those two factors the appearance of the third may be expected. When three factors out of four are known, as a rule the fourth may be confidently surmised. Millions have joined the Christians, and many are swelling the ranks of those who have incurred Divine chastisement. Now God designs to show examples of those who are favoured by Him. Since there was a prayer in Surah Fatiha and there is a promise in Surah Nur; it appears that Surah Nur affirms that the prayer has been heard. We hope, therefore, that God, the Sublime, will now manifest the third factor, the emergence of the favoured ones in a brilliant manner. This is the word of God, the Supreme, which is bound to be fulfilled.

Allah, the Exalted, desires people to participate in the merit of the achievement, so that they may be qualified for heaven as happened at the time of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). God, the Supreme, surely had the power to grant the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) all types of success without the assistance of his Companions. He included them in the effort so that they may achieve merit. In conformity with this Divine rule our community is repeatedly called upon to make sacrifices through contributions and the like (Al-Hakam, April 17, 1901).

Prayers of Fatiha

Three prayers have been taught in Surah Fatiha. (1) First, that God, the Sublime, may be pleased to keep us with the party of the Companions of the Holy Prophet and with the party of the Promised Messiah referred to in the Quran in the verse: Others from among them who have not yet joined them (62.4). These are the only two parties of Islam who have been favoured with Divine bounties, and it is to them that the verse: Guide us along the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; refers. You may go through the entire Quran, you will come across only two such groups, one, the party of the Companions of the Holy Prophet (may Allah be pleased with them) and the second, others from among them; who take after the Companions of the Holy Prophet and are the party of the Promised Messiah. Therefore, when you supplicate: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; during the Prayer services or outside the Prayer services then keep in mind that you are seeking the way of the Companions of the Holy Prophet and of the party of the Promised Messiah. This is the first prayer in Surah Fatiha.

(2) The second prayer is: Not the way of those who incurred Thy wrath; that is, the people who will persecute the Promised Messiah. Juxtaposed to this petition, there is at the end of the Holy Quran, Surah *Tabbat yada abi Lahab* (Ch. 111).

(3) The third prayer is: Nor of those who went astray. Juxtaposed to this is Surah Ikhlas at the end of the Holy Quran (Ch. 112). Proclaim: He is Allah, the Independent and Allah the Besought of all. He begets not nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him. The two Surahs that follow it, Surah Al-falaq and Surah Al-nas are explanatory of Surah *Tabbat* and of Surah Ikhlas. In both these Surahs, God's protection has been sought against the dark age when people would persecute the Messiah of God and when the misguidance of Christianity would be widespread in the world. The teaching of these three prayers in Surah Fatiha is so arranged that the

great objective that has been explained in the Quran in detail has been epitomized in Surah Fatiha and later in Surah Tabbat and Surah Ikhlas; and in Surah Falaq and Surah Nas at the conclusion of the Quran, protection of God, the Sublime, has been sought against these two calamities. Thus these two prayers make the prologue of the Book of Allah and also its epilogue.

It must be kept in mind that the Holy Quran deals at length with these two catastrophes, while in Surah Fatiha and in the four concluding Surahs there is just a brief reference to them. For example, in Surah Fatiha, in two words: Not of those who went astray; a directive has been given to keep supplicating to be safeguarded against the mischief of Christianity. This is a warning that a great calamity is looming ahead to ward off which a provision is made by way of incorporating this petition in the five daily Prayer services as an indispensable part of the service as is clear from the *hadeeth*: There is no Prayer without Fatiha.

Widespread mischief of Christianity foretold

It is obvious that there are numerous religions spread wide in the world. There are for instance, the Parsi religion, the Hindu religion, and Buddhism which holds within its allegiance a large part of the globe. There is also the Chinese cult which claims millions of adherents and then there are the idolators whose number exceeds that of the followers of all other religions. All these religions enjoyed great popularity during the time of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) while Christianity was an insignificant creed in comparison with them. Then why was not a prayer to be safeguarded against the misguidance of the Chinese cults or that of the Parsis or of Buddhism or of the Aryas' faith or of the erroneous ways of the idolators included in Surah Fatiha? Instead the direction was given to keep supplicating to be safeguarded against the misguidance of Christianity. What is the secret underlying it? What tremendous mischief was

apprehended from the Christian religion that all the Muslims of the world were directed to seek protection against it? Understand clearly and keep in mind that this prayer has been taught in conformity with God's knowledge of the future. He knew that the religions of the idolators, the Chinese, the Parsis, the Hindus, were all on the decline and that no such enthusiasm will be developed in support of any of them as might imperil Islam but that the day was coming nearer when great zeal would be worked up for Christianity and millions of rupees would be devoted and every device, trick and strategy would be employed for the promotion of its cause, namely, to make the Messiah the idol of the world. Islam would then be sorely tried and it would be in dire peril.

The present time, your age, is that period of tribulation. The 1300-year old prophecy comprised in Surah Fatiha is today coming true in your midst and in your country. The East is thus the source of this mischief. As the mischief was forecast in the beginning of the Holy Quran so is it mentioned at the end of the Divine Book so that through this double affirmation it may be impressed upon the minds (Tuhfa Golarviyya, pp. 76-77).

Mighty Prophecy

Surah Fatiha is not merely a teaching; it also embodies a mighty prophecy. After setting forth His four attributes, *Rabubiyyat* (Providence) *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness), *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion) and *Malikiyyate yaumiddeen* (Mastership of the Day of Requital) that is, the power of dispensation of reward and punishment and manifestation of His all embracing might, God has, in the verses that follow, taught the prayer: Lord, do Thou make us heirs to the righteous Prophets and Apostles of old and open their ways to us and bestow upon us the bounties bestowed upon them. Lord, safeguard us against being included among the people who suffered Thy chastisement in this very world (that is, the Jews who were contemporaries of Jesus, the Messiah, and perished

by plague); and Lord, safeguard us against being included among those who were not favoured with Thy guidance and who lost the way (that is, the Christians).

This prayer comprises the prophecy that some Muslims shall become heirs to the former Prophets because of their truth and sincerity and shall be honoured with the bounties of Prophethood and Apostleship, and that there shall be some of them who will become Jews in their dispositions and shall suffer Divine chastisement in this very world, and that there shall be others who will turn Christians. For, it is a recurring Divine tradition supported by the scriptures that whenever He enjoins something on a people or lays a command on them there invariably are in His knowledge some of them who would do as bidden and others who would not. This Surah thus foretells that one of this *ummat* shall emerge in the full glory of the Prophets so that the prophecy comprised in the words: The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours may be fully and completely fulfilled. Also that one group from among them will appear in the likeness of the Jews who were cursed by Jesus and who were afflicted with Divine chastisement, so that the prophecy comprised in the words: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath; may be fulfilled; and that another group, from among them, will take after the Christians and will become Christians, who forfeited Divine guidance, because of wine-bibbing, innovations, corruption and vice so that the prophecy comprised in the words: Nor of those who went astray; may be fulfilled. Since it is a part of the belief of the Muslims that during the latter days thousands of so-called Muslims will become Jewish in disposition, which finds support in several passages of the Holy Quran; and hundreds of Muslims have turned Christians or are leading an unbridled life, free from any restraint, like the Christians, openly and publicly; some of them even express a preference for the Christian way of life and are contemptuous of Prayers, fasting and commands and prohibitions; and both these Jewish-minded and Christianized groups are found all over the earth. You have thus witnessed the clear fulfillment of these

two prophecies of Surah Fatiha. You have seen with your own eyes how many Muslims have become Jewish tempered and how many have become Christianized. The third prophecy is now sure to be fulfilled. Since the Muslims have partaken of the delinquencies of the Christians and Jews by becoming Christians and Jews, it is their due that some of them should partake of the honour and rank of the righteous and holy ones of Israel. It is unjust to hold that God, the Sublime, has assigned part of the wickedness of Jews and Christians to the Muslims and even named them Jews but denied this *ummat* a share in the honour enjoyed by their Prophets and Apostles. How could this *ummat* then deserve to be called the best of all peoples? Indeed, it would be the worst of peoples, for it would exhibit every evil example but would not exhibit any example of virtue. Is it not then called for that one from among this *ummat* should appear as an heir to all the Prophets of Israel and as their spiritual reflection? It is not consonant with the Mercy of Allah, the Exalted, that He should cause to appear in this *ummat*, in this age, thousands who possess the qualities of the Jews and thousands who should turn Christians but should not raise a single one who should be the spiritual heir of the former Prophets and should be the recipient of the bounties bestowed on them so that the prophecy implicit in the verse: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, may be fulfilled, like the fulfillment of the prophecy about some members of this *ummat* turning Jews and Christians. When thousands of derogatory epithets have been heaped on this *ummat* and the Holy Quran and the *Hadeeth* show that it is their portion that some of them shall turn Jews, surely the grace of God would demand that they should be favoured with the heritage of bliss also as they inherited evil from the Jews and the Christians. That is why God gave the happy tidings through the verse: Guide us along the straight path; in Surah Fatiha indicating that some members of this *ummat* would receive the bounties bestowed on the former Prophets and not merely that some

would turn Jews and Christians and thus partake of their evil but not of their goodness (Kishti Nooh, pp. 42–44).

Allah chooses for Himself whom He pleases

Allah has spoken of three groups in Surah Fatiha to indicate that this *ummat* would demonstrate the characteristics of all three. This demonstration has undoubtedly become so obvious in the case of the Muslims of this our latter age, and constitutes such a full manifestation that every one recognizes it without the need of a close scrutiny. It is not at all hidden from those who can spare a glance for the Muslims of our time and their doings. Each of these three groups comprises three grades. Among those who resemble the Divinely-favoured ones, there are some who partake of only a small share of the bounty in the shape of beliefs and directives and are content with that. Then there are among them some who are in the middle; they stay at that point and do not strive towards perfection. Of them is one whom his Lord chose and made perfect and foremost in virtue; He chooses for Himself whom He pleases and favours him with high grades of honour. This chosen one is the Promised Messiah who has appeared among this people and they know him not.

Muslims following in footsteps of Jews and Christians

Of those who resemble the people who had incurred Divine wrath there are the Muslims who have like the Jews cast aside obligatory duties and disregard prohibitions; they do not observe the fast nor do they pray. They do not keep in mind death, nor have they any fear. They include those who have made the world their god and they work for it day and night. There are also those who outstrip others in vice. It is these who make the people of God the targets of their ridicule and the butts of their laughter, and are hostile towards them and denounce them as disbelievers and defame them. All their works are for show and ostentation and they lack all sincerity.

They attack the Messiah of Allah and his party and drag them into courts and take their stand along every path to waylay them and incite people to slay them, alleging that they are disbelievers. When they are invited to the Word of Allah and to make it the arbiter of differences, their eyes become blood-shot with rage and they pass on vituperating, wildly angry. Many are the signs of Allah they have seen but they pass by haughtily as if they cannot see. They have cast the Book of Allah behind their backs, unjustly and arrogantly, and tell people not to give ear to its arguments and to raise a clamour against them so that they may appear the winners.

Of those who are successors of the erring ones there are some who love the ways of the Christians and adopt their habits and are inclined wholly towards them. They imitate their dress, coats, trousers and shoes and their cultural pattern and all their habits, and laugh at those who differ with them. They marry Christian women and dote on them. A group of them lean towards the philosophy the Christians expound and are neglectful in the matter of religion. Their mouths utter many a word derogatory to the religion of Allah and they fear not. Some of them have gone beyond the limit in their error and have repudiated Islam and have become its enemies through ignorance and have written books in its rebuttal and have defamed the Prophet of Allah and attacked his honour. There are legions of them in this country who were at one time Muslims. Thus has that been consummated which was implicit in the Fatiha. To Allah we belong and to Him is the return (Khutba Ilhamiyyah, pp. 104–108).

The fortunate group that will be shielded against torment is the Divinely-favoured party. The one to be afflicted with chastisement is the one that has incurred Divine wrath. The difference between those who have incurred Divine wrath and those who have gone astray is the same as between one suffering from typhoid and one stricken with tuberculosis. One dies quickly, the other dies slowly, but both die in the end, one a little before, the other a little after (Al-Badr, Oct. 31, 1902).

The best prayer is the one that is comprehensive of all good

and is a shield against all harm. The supplication for being included among those who were Divinely favoured is comprehensive of all the bounties bestowed on the Divinely-favoured from Adam down to the Holy Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be on him).

The supplication: Not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray; seeks protection against every harm. Since according to consensus those who incurred Divine wrath are the Jews and those who went astray are the Christians, the purpose of this prayer is evident and the sayings of the Holy Prophet confirm it, namely, that the divines of the day of the Promised Messiah shall be unjustly hostile to him as were the Jews in their own day, so much so that they will follow in the footsteps of the Jews in every respect (Al-Hakam, May 31, 1903).

In supplicating God, the Sublime, it is necessary to observe true reverence. When a wise person begs a favour of the sovereign he takes good care to observe due reverence. That is why God, the Supreme, teaches in Surah Fatiha how to supplicate Him. The worshipper begins with the affirmation that all praise belongs to the Lord of universal Providence, the Gracious One Who bestows without prior petition, the Compassionate One Who rewards sincere effort generously and is the Master of Requital, having the power to spare or to punish as He determines and has power to punish or to reward here as well as in the hereafter. Having rendered so much praise, the worshipper then ponders how great is God, the Lord, the Gracious, the Compassionate in Whom he had so far believed without seeing Him and then he starts feeling His watchful Presence and he makes a transition from the third person to the more direct second person: We worship Thee alone and seek only Thy help; guide us along the straight path, the path that is altogether free from any crookedness. There is, for instance, the way of the blind which even after great striving leads nowhere; and there is the way following which a person arrives at beneficent results. The worshipper continues his supplication to be guided along the way of those on whom

Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. It is in effect the same straight path travelling along which brings blessings. He further implores to be safeguarded against the way of those who have incurred Divine wrath and the way of those who have gone astray.

Progress without limit

The straight path comprises all material and spiritual objectives. For instance, when a physician undertakes to treat a patient, he cannot proceed until he discovers the right approach. Similarly, there is a right approach for everyone, lawyers, professionals, scientists, etc. When the correct approach is discovered the rest becomes easy.

The Prophets and the righteous make this supplication for the purpose of continuing in pursuit of ever closer communion. The believers will continue to make this supplication: Guide us along the straight path; even in the hereafter. For, just as Allah, the Supreme, is without limit the grades and degrees of honour in progress towards Him have also no limit (Badr, Feb. 13, 1903).

Observe that Allah did not inaugurate His book with gratitude (*shukr*) or with mere praise (*thana*) but with *hamd*. The word *hamd* is much more comprehensive than the former two and comprises both. Further, it is a refutation of the worshippers of creatures and idols. They praise their false deities and ascribe to them the attributes of the Gracious; whereas true praise (*hamd*) belongs to Allah alone.

God combines all kinds of glorification in His being

By the use of the word *hamd* Allah, the Blessed and the Glorious, in effect says: O My servants, know Me by My attributes and believe in Me by My excellences. Cast a look at the heavens and the earth. Do you find anyone like Me, Lord of universal Providence, the Most Merciful among the Compassionate, Master of the Day of Requit!

The word *hamd* also conveys that your God combines all kinds of glorification in His being and is unique in all His beauties and attributes. *Hamd* also connotes that He is the Sublime, His glory is free from every defect and is not subject to any change and is immune from every affliction and drawback to which all created beings are subject. Indeed He is the Perfect, the Glorious, and subject to no limitations. To Him is due all praise in the beginning and in the end through eternity. That is why He named His Prophet Ahmad and likewise He gave that name to the Promised Messiah also in order to stress what He had determined. Allah put *hamd* at the head of the Fatiha and then made reference to His *hamd* at the end of the Surah also. At the close of the Surah occurs the word *dhalleen* and they are the Christians who turned away from the duty of rendering praise to Allah and bestowed that which was His due upon one of His creatures. Truly the essence of being misguided is to discard the Being Who is worthy of all praise and magnification, as did the Christians. They carved out, on their own, another object of glorification, and glorified him with excessive exaggeration and followed their own fancies and drew away from the spring of life and perished like one who loses his way in the wilderness. The Jews had perished in their initial stage and were afflicted with the wrath of Allah, the Lord of overpowering might. The Christians went along for a few paces and then deviated and lost the source of spiritual water, and died wandering helplessly in the wilderness.

Two Ahmads

In short, Allah undoubtedly created two Ahmads, one in the beginning of Islam and the other in the latter age and there is an indication of this for the discerning in the mention of the word *hamd*, expressly in the beginning and implicitly at the end of the Fatiha. He did this to refute the Christians and sent down two Ahmads from heaven to serve as two battlements

in support of the early Muslims and the latter-day Muslims (Ijazul Masih, pp. 191–194).

We cannot win the pleasure of the Ever-Living and Life-Sustaining Lord, through our own devices. For this purpose the only right course is to dedicate our lives with all our faculties to the service of God, the Sublime, and then to engage in prayer for union with Him so that we may win His pleasure through Himself. The sweetest prayer that guides us as to the occasion and opportunity for supplication, depicting the spiritual yearning of our nature, is the one that our Noble Lord has taught us in His sacred Book, the Holy Quran, in Surah Fatiha. That prayer is: All holy praise belongs to Allah the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds, the Lord Who provides us with the means of His mercy prior to any effort on our part and blesses our effort mercifully with beneficent results, Who is the sole Master of the Day of Requit. O Thou Who art worthy of all aspects of this praise, we worship Thee alone and seek only Thy help in every undertaking. The use of the plural pronoun in this context indicates that all our faculties are devoted to His adoration; for man by virtue of his inherent faculties is, as it were, a community or a nation. The utter prostration of all faculties before God in this manner is the state that is called Islam.

Show us the right path and make us tread steadfastly along it, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours and who became recipients of Thy grace and bounties; and safeguard us against treading along the way of those who incurred Thy wrath and those who could not reach Thee and lost the way. Amen!

These verses teach that Divine grace and bounties descend only on those who dedicate their lives in the way of God, devoting themselves wholly to His cause and to seeking His pleasure, and then keep engaged in prayer so that they may partake of all the spiritual gifts of closeness to and union with God, of His speech and His address, that can be available to man. At the same time they carry out the duties of worship with all their faculties and avoid sin and abide at the Divine

portal and keep off vice and shun the ways that would incur Divine displeasure. Since they seek God with high resolve and complete sincerity, they find Him and are given to drink deep of pure Divine knowledge. The reference to steadfastness in this verse indicates that the true and perfect grace that leads to the spiritual realm is dependent upon steadfastness and perfect steadfastness is that condition of sincerity and loyalty which no trial can damage. It is a bond that no sword can cut asunder and no fire can burn away nor can any other calamity weaken it. The deaths of dear ones cannot wean one away from it nor can separation from loved ones cause any disruption in it. Fear of disgrace and threats of death through agonizing torture have no power to frighten the heart away from it. This door is then extremely narrow and this way most arduous and very hard (Report of the Minutes of the Great Religions Conference, pp. 129–130)!

Three ways of strengthening faith in Allah

There are three ways of arriving at faith in Allah, the Exalted, and of strengthening and invigorating it and all three have been set out by the Supreme God in Surah Fatiha. First, Allah, the Sublime, has emphasised His beauty by declaring Himself as comprising all praiseworthy qualities. It is obvious that beauty attracts hearts towards itself. Beauty has a magnetic quality which draws hearts close to it, such as the ray of the pearl, the comeliness of the horse, the splendour of raiment. In short, beauty, wherever it may be found, in flowers, leaves, stones, beasts, vegetables or minerals, draws hearts towards it involuntarily. God, the Sublime, has therefore set the first stage of faith in His Divinity through beauty, by saying that every type of praise belongs to Him. Next comes beneficence. Man is as much drawn by beneficence as by beauty. Therefore Allah, the Supreme, has next enumerated His attributes Lord of Universal Providence, Gracious, Compassionate, Master of the Day of Requit, to draw attention to His beneficence. If, however, someone should happen to be so evilly-disposed that

beauty and beneficence have not the power to move him, then he has been warned in Surah Fatiha in the words: those who were afflicted with Divine chastisement. People of a high degree of purity are captivated by Divine beauty and those next below them are affected by beneficence. But those who are evil-minded, have been warned by a reference to His majesty and wrath. The Jews have been called the people who incurred Divine displeasure. They were afflicted with the plague. God, the Supreme, has warned in Surah Fatiha against following the way of the Jews. In other words, He has warned against the painful visitation of the plague. Satan has such a grip over the headstrong ones that they hear but would not follow. The truth is that until passions and lusts suffer a death and are frozen, true faith in God, the Exalted, is difficult (Al-Hakam, March 10, 1902).

Idolatory and worship of elements are such ancient creeds in this country (India) that research has failed to establish their origin. All that can be said is that they have possibly co-existed with faith in the Vedas. Yet, reflection over some verses of the Quran has sometimes inclined me to consider it likely that the original teaching of the Vedas was free from the worship of elements and that the glorification and praise of the elements in the Vedas might be susceptible of some interpretation. This idea of mine will, however, be confirmed only if at least fifty to sixty verses of the Vedas are found affirming unequivocally that it forbids the worship of all elements and celestial bodies which have been praised and glorified in the Rig Veda.

Allah working through agencies

The interpretation of certain passages of the Vedas to which I have just referred occurred to me, as I have said above, on pondering over certain verses of the Holy Quran. The first of these verses is the one in which Allah, the Exalted, says, in Surah Fatiha: All types of praise belong to Allah whose Providence is observable and is being felt in every sphere, in

every shape and in every phase and through every beneficial Divine handiwork. That is, in truth there is a hidden Power, Allah by name, which is working through the various agencies on which the survival and welfare and development of the people of the world depends. For instance, to keep the mechanics of the world in working order, the sun furnishes a certain type of providence by keeping the blood in circulation, through providing a measure of heat to the human body and this keeps people from dying. The sun also sustains the sight of human eyes. The true sun, however, that actually provides heat and grants sight is God, as the sun functions only through the power bestowed by Him. Of that real and true Sun the only function is not to keep human blood in circulation, to sustain life, through making the human heart the instrument for this operation and He does not sustain only the sight of the eyes through heavenly light, but in order to enliven all the limbs of the human species with spiritual life He chooses an individual out of the whole of mankind and appoints him as the heart for the collective body of mankind making him an instrument for communicating the blood of spiritual life to all the members of the human species. This one is then dedicated to this service, receiving from one side and transmitting in all relevant directions. Just as the symbolic physical sun gives full light to the eyes and reveals to them all the good and the bad, in the same way, this true Sun, by elevating the eye of the soul to the towering minaret of insight, reveals to it the broad spiritual day. Again, just as the physical sun ripens fruits through its power derived from the true Sun, putting in them sweetness and lusciousness and dissipates foul smells and clothes all the trees in the spring in a green mantle, filling their aprons with an abundance of wholesome fruits and then, in the autumn, works in the contrary direction, causing all the foliage of the trees to drop and gives them an ugly look, stripping them of all fruit and exposes their nakedness, with the exception of the ever-green trees which it does not affect in that way; the same is done by the true Sun Who is the fountain head of all light and all grace. He demonstrates the variety of His powers

through His various manifestations. Through one manifestation He brings about the spring and through another ushers in the autumn. Through one manifestation He furnishes the delights of spiritual insight for the seekers and through another He dissipates the stench of heresy and rebellion from the world. Thus, reflection would show that all the functions that are performed by the physical sun are but a reflection of the hidden power of the true God which manifests itself through the sun. This is illustrated in the Noble Quran in the story of a Queen of the name of Bilquis who was a worshipper of the sun and was sovereign in her own dominions. The Prophet of the time summoned her to his presence warning her that in case of default his armies would invade her territory and that would not bring her any good. She was awed and set out from her town to seek an audience of the Prophet. Before her arrival a palace was constructed for her instruction the floor of which was paved with transparent slabs of glass under which ran a swift current of water in which different kinds of fish disported themselves. When the queen arrived she was invited into the palace. As she approached she saw in front of her a current of water with fish swimming in it. This spectacle impelled her to pull up her skirt, thus exposing her shins, lest it should get soaked in water. Thereupon the Prophet called out to the queen and pointed out her mistake, explaining that she was not confronted by water, fear of which had caused her to pull up her skirt, but that in front of her was a plate-glass floor and that the water was running beneath it. This incident is referred to in the Holy Quran in the verse: He pointed out to her: This is only a palace paved with smooth slabs of glass (27.45). She then realised that she had in this manner been rebuked in respect of her religious misconception and that she had been in error in her worship of the sun. Thereupon she believed in the Lord, the One without partner, and her eyes were opened and she realized that the Great Power, worthy of worship, was other than the object she had worshipped and that she had been greatly mistaken in deifying a superficial object. The purport of that Prophet's instruction was that the world is a

crystal palace and that the sun and the moon and the stars and the elements perform certain functions merely as agents and instruments of another power which is hidden behind them and works through them and that power is God. All these functions are truly His functions. On observing this Bilquis repented sincerely of her sun-worship and knew that it was another power that made the sun function and that all these others were but glass-plates.

Sun and moon illustrate Divine attributes

So much for the sun. The same is true of the moon. The attributes ascribed to the moon are in truth the attributes of God, the Great. The moon illumines the nights of fearful darkness. When it shines, the darkness of the black night is dispelled forthwith. On some nights the moon appears early and on some it appears a while after darkness has set in. It is a wondrous spectacle to see the moon rise and instantly dispel the darkness. In the same way God sheds His light over foul and dark-souled men when they bend down before Him and illumines them as the moon illumines the night. There are some who partake of the light of this Moon in early life and some in middle age and some in their declining years, but there are also some unfortunate ones who are like moonless nights, steeped in darkness all their lives; they have no share in the light of that True Moon. In short, this function of moonlight is very much akin to that of the light of the True Moon. The moon also provides nourishment to fruits and freshens them up. Similarly those who grow fruits in their persons through worshipful obedience, attract the mercy of God, which blesses them like the light of the moon and nourishes these fruits and freshens them up. This is the meaning of *Rahim*, one of the Divine attributes mentioned in Surah Fatiha. This may be illustrated in the following manner. There is a fourfold providence which supports the universe. One of these is the providence which descends from the sky and which is the main source of physical growth, namely the providence through

which rain-water descends upon the earth. If rain does not fall for a length of time, then the water in the wells also dries up as is borne out by our knowledge of physical laws. This heavenly providence, that is water from the sky, quickens the earth, bringing the non-existent into existence. Thus the sky is, in a manner of speaking, the first nourisher of a sort, whence rain falls and which has been named Indar in the Vedas. Allah, the Most High says in the Holy Quran: As proof of our sending revelation, We cite the heavens whence rain descends (86.12); meaning that your spiritual state is in need of a kind of water which comes from heaven as your physical water also comes from the sky. If the spiritual water (i.e. revelation) were not available then your intellect would also dry up. In fact, reason derives its freshness and light from Divine revelation. In short, the service in which the sky is engaged is the service of raining water. This duty of heaven is a reflection of the first attribute of God, the Exalted, as He has said that all life began with water (21.31), even man's creation also began with water. According to the Vedas, the sky is the deity of water which is named Indar, in the terminology of the Vedas. But it would be wrong to conceive of Indar as an entity; in fact, it is God the hidden Super-power that works through veils within veils. It is to stress this that God, the Most High, says in Surah Fatiha of the Holy Quran: All praise belongs to Allah alone, the Lord of the worlds. Do not ever entertain the least notion that there is another one besides God who sustains this world by means of his Providence. Your God is the only God. His power works everywhere. Here, by virtue of the order that is observed in this Surah, the rebuttal of the concept of an Indar intended for primary providence starts with this concept. In other words, it has been called the sky. That is why worldly people are prone to ascribing fate to heaven. In the estimation of idolators the biggest titular God is the one called Indar. It is his rejection that has been aimed at here, with the purpose of making it clear that the true Indar is the One and only God. It is His power that causes the rain to fall. It is folly to

call heaven the Lord of the Universe. The Lord of universal Providence is Allah alone.

In brief, this is the primary providence of God, the Supreme, which the ignorant ones have ascribed to the sky (Indar). It is true that the spiritually blind conceive rain as coming down from the sky but the cause of rain is another Power and sending down water in this manner is to demonstrate it as an attribute of the Divine. The physical Providence of the sky is thus a reflection of the true Providence of God and the lightning and thunder that are the accompaniment of clouds are a part of His multi-coloured splendour.

Divine attribute reflected through manifestations

The second shape of Divine Providence operative in the World is His *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness). The word Rahman is designed to rebut the sun-god of the idol-worshippers. According to the notion of the idolators, the sky creates things by means of water. The sun clothes all the trees in the spring. It is, in other words, a grace which is unrelated to any deed on the part of the trees. The sun is thus a manifestation of *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) for it clothes the nude trees during the springtime while the trees have yet put forth no effort on their own. That is to say, they have no performance to their credit so that something could be built upon it; on the contrary, they stand totally naked and nude and then, by the kindness of the sun, each tree starts sprucing itself until, by the aid of the sun this process reaches the stage when the fruits begin to form. When this process is completed the moon begins to shed on them the shadow of its *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion). Rahim is one who helps an active agent to complete its process, so that its action may not be left incomplete. The moon, accordingly, helps the fruits of the trees to flourish and infuses freshness in them by means of its effective action. It is a recognised fact that horticulturists hear the pomegranate crack in moonlight. In short, metaphorically, the moon, which is the second luminary orb, is named Rahim, its main function being

to help fruits grow and gain in substance and freshness. When fruits are ready and reach their stage of ripeness, the earth plucks them down towards it, like a master, so that they may meet their reward or punishment. If they are good and fine they are highly favoured and they are placed in positions of honour. But if they are rotten they are dumped in lowly places. This power of requital is, in a manner of speaking, vested in the earth which God has made inherent in its nature, that it appreciates good fruit and downgrades rotten fruit.

In short, these four names occur in the Vedas and in a metaphoric sense are assigned to the four principal deities. The first of these is the sky called Indra, the bestower of water. The Holy Quran says: We have made every living thing from water (21.31). Therefore, this metaphoric god, i.e., Indar, who should be called the sky, is the biggest of all the metaphoric gods. The sun and the moon flourish under its care. In relation to the others it is the lord of universal providence. Next to it is the sun-god, the manifestation of *rahmaniyyat*, its *rabubiyyat* (Providence) is greater than that of the moon and less than that of the sky, i.e., Indra. The function peculiar to it is that without any work on their part, it extends kindness and benevolence to the trees, while they stand bare and nude and are stricken down by autumn, as if they are dead bodies held fast in the soil, standing on one leg like empty-handed beggars, whom the sun-god, moved to graciousness, grants robes in spring-time, filling their aprons with flowers and fruits, in a few days, ornamenting their heads with wreaths of blossoms and clothing them with the cloak of green silky foliage and enriching them with a wealth of fruits, thus turning them into resplendant bride-grooms, leaving little doubt about his *rahmaniyyat* (graciousness), by his charitable and benevolent treatment of these nude mendicants, without reference to any antecedent effort on their part. Metaphors of this type abound in the Vedas. At first sight they strike one as poetic but a slight reflection discovers a ray of meaning also.

Next to the sun, the moon is a deity according to the Vedas, in that, taking pity on the imperfect performance of the weak,

it leads their efforts to perfection, by means of its help. The trees grow fruits in the spring-time, but, without the moon, their performance would remain incomplete, their fruits would lack substance in freshness and lusciousness. The moon is thus the perfector of their ripening process. Therefore, it would deserve to be styled, metaphorically, *rahim* (compassionate) and so do the Vedas describe it. There would be no great harm in naming it thus in a metaphoric sense.

Next to the moon there is the earth, the *dharti* goddess, which has made its back wide enough to accommodate the travellers. Every fruit on a tree is like a sojourner. Its permanent place is on the earth and the earth uses its proprietorial rights in assigning it a space on its back wherever it chooses. The Holy Quran says: We carry people on land and sea (17.71) so does the earth carry everything and the permanent abode of every earthly thing is the earth, it may assign a place of honour to whom it pleases and it may accord a lowly place to whom it pleases. In this sense the earth bears the name master of the day of requital. In a metaphoric sense all these four Divine attributes appear reflected in the book of nature. God chose in this manner to reflect His attributes through temporal manifestation, so that seekers after truth may attain satisfaction in respect of His subtle and hidden attributes by observing these manifestations.

Four gods of Vedas reflections of Divine attributes

This analysis shows that these four metaphoric gods mentioned in the Vedas possess four metaphoric attributes; the sky possesses metaphorically the attribute of universal Providence and the sun has the quality of *rahmaniyyat* (graciousness) and the moon partakes of the attribute *rahimiyyat* (compassion) and the earth has been invested with the attribute lord of the day of requital. These four attributes are tangible and observable. It is because of this phenomenon that people of dull perception regard them as gods and worthy of worship. In their rebuttal, God, the Exalted, says in His sacred Scripture, the Holy

Quran, in Surah Fatiha: All praise and glorification belong solely to the Great God, whose name is Allah, the Lord of universal providence, the universally Gracious, the universally Compassionate and the Master of Judgment for the entire universe. This worthiness of adoration belongs exclusively to God, for, His Providence and Graciousness and Compassion and Lordship in the matter of requital are not confined to one sphere or one manifestation, but appear in numberless manifestations, the end of which is beyond ken. On the other hand the providence of the sky and the sun etc., is limited to a special manifestation and category and cannot travel beyond their limited spheres and therefore cannot be accounted worthy of worship. Besides, their operations are not deliberate; the Divine power operates through them. The Fatiha thus proceeds: O Lord of all, Who dost manifest Thy attributes in numberless ways, Thou alone art worthy of worship and the sun and the moon and others are not worthy of adoration at all. As stated in 41.38: Prostrate yourselves not before the sun nor before the moon but prostrate yourselves before Allah Who created them all. The use of the plural in the end is designed to forbid the worship of all the objects that non-Muslims worship, the sun, the moon, the sky, fire, water, etc.

Surah Fatiha also furnishes the answer to the question: When worship of the sky, the sun, the moon, fire and water is forbidden what is the advantage in worshipping God which is not to be had through the worship of these objects? The answer couched in the shape of a supplication is that God bestows both temporal and spiritual bounties and reveals Himself to His servants of His own accord. Man cannot know Him solely through his own wisdom, but the Almighty Lord of absolute power reveals Himself through His special manifestations and overpowering might and signs. When His wrath is inflamed against the world, it is He Who safeguards His servants against it; it is He Who illumines the intellect of man and through grant of insight saves him from misguidance and does not let him go astray.

Three objects of supplication

This is the purport of the Fatiha which Muslims recite in their five daily Prayer services. In fact, this very supplication is the essence of Prayer and until one recites it with an aching heart in the Presence of God, and seeks the unravelling of the knot for which this supplication has been taught, one has, in fact, not performed the Prayer. Three things have been taught in this Prayer. First, the Unity of God and His attributes, so that His worshipper may turn wholly away from the sun, the moon, and all other false deities, to the worship of the One true Lord and that his soul may cry out: Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help.

Secondly, he has been taught to include his brethren in his prayers and thus to discharge his debt to mankind. The supplication is in the plural: Guide *us* along the straight path; and not merely: Guide *me* along the straight path.

Thirdly, the object of the supplication is to implore that He may not leave our faith at the theoretical level of mere verbal affirmation but may be pleased to bestow upon us spiritual bounties that He conferred upon the righteous in the past. We are also directed to pray, at the same time, that He may safeguard us against the way of those who were not granted spiritual sight and who indulged in practices that brought down punishment upon them in this world or who were saved from wrath in this world but died in misguidance and were involved in punishment in the hereafter.

The purport of this prayer is that if God would not grant a person spiritual favours and seeing eyes and would not fill his heart with certainty and insight he is doomed in the end; and because of his insolence and wickedness he is punished in this very world, for he takes to slandering the righteous, protruding his tongue like a dog, and is, therefore, annihilated as were the Jews, because of their wickedness and impertinence and were afflicted time and again with the scourge of plague which utterly ruined them. Or, if he does not act wickedly and insolently in this world and does not lend himself to campaigns

of slander and mischief, his chastisement is merely postponed to the next world after he has passed away from this world (Nasime Dawat pp. 43–53).

All praise, all eulogy and all glorification belong admittedly and exclusively to God, the Creator and Sustainer of everything. There is not a thing that is not created by Him and that He does not sustain. He is the Gracious, that is, He bestows bounties upon His servants, believers and non-believers alike, without reference to their deeds and has already granted them innumerable gifts for their well-being and comfort. He is the Compassionate, that is, first through His *Rahmaniyyat*, which is not actuated by any effort on the part of man, He grants man such powers and faculties as enable him to do good deeds and provides all kinds of means for the perfection of deeds, and when through the grace of His *Rahmaniyyat* man is enabled to perform good deeds, then for enabling man to merit reward for his deeds, the name of God, the Exalted, is *Rahim*. When through the grace of His *Rahimiyyat* man is qualified to receive lasting gifts and honours, then for the award of this everlasting reward and honour the name of God, the Sublime, is Master of the Day of Requit.

After this, He directs us to supplicate: O Lord Who art the aggregate of these attributes, we worship Thee alone and for this worship and for doing other good works we seek only Thy help. Guide us along the right path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed favours and safeguard us against following the way of those who are under Thy wrath (that is, behave with such arrogance and wickedness that they are afflicted with chastisement in this very life) and safeguard us against following the path of those who lost Thy way and have taken to paths that are not approved by Thee. Amen.

Observe then how this Surah of the Holy Quran, called Surah Fatiha, brims over with teachings on the Unity of the Divine Being. There is nowhere in it any claim on the part of man that he is self-existent, nor that his deeds derive from his own power and potential, nor is there in it a prayer like the Vedic prayer: God, grant us many cows and many horses and

a lot of spoils; on the contrary, the only supplication is: Guide us along the path by following which man finds Thee and earns Thy spiritual rewards and honours and is safeguarded against Thy anger and against going astray (Chashma Maarifat, pp. 197–198).

This Surah indicates the blessings of prayer and emphasises that all good things descend from heaven and that one who recognises the truth and is firmly established in guidance and is disciplined and becomes righteous will never be let down by Allah and will be admitted by Him among His favoured servants, and whoso disobeys his Lord will be ruined.

Divine attributes operate in proportion to supplicant's faith

This Surah points out that the fortunate one is he who is eager for prayer and has no care for anything else and is never tired of praying nor frowns on it nor despairs and relies firmly on the grace of his Lord until His benevolence favours him and he is numbered among the successful. This Surah also indicates that the attributes of Allah the Most High, are operative in proportion to the degree of a servant's faith in them. When a discerning one contemplates an attribute of Allah, the Exalted, and perceives Him with the eye of his soul and believes and continues to advance in faith until he is totally immersed in his faith, the spiritual essence of the attribute pervades his heart and takes possession of it. The seeker then finds himself emptied of all except the Gracious Lord, his heart is at rest with faith, his life is sweetened by the remembrance of the Beneficent and he becomes one of the happy ones. Then he experiences further manifestations of that attribute until his heart becomes the throne of the attribute and he is dyed in its colour after the removal of all trace of his ego and his total devotion to Him.

Surah Fatiha furnishes this indication in its very opening phrase: All praise belongs to Allah. Allah, the Supreme, does not command us here: *Proclaim*: All praise belongs to Allah; but simply affirms: All praise belongs to Allah. In other words

He makes human nature affirm this truth and thus discloses to us what is inherent in our nature. This shows that the nature of man is in accord with Islam and that it is in his nature to render praise to Allah, the Sublime, and to believe Him to be the Lord of universal providence, the Gracious, the Compassionate and Master of the Day of Requital and that He helps those who seek His help and guides those who supplicate Him. It is thus established that insight into the Divine and His worship have been embedded in human nature and that His love has been infused in the heart of man. But this state is revealed after the intervening veils have been lifted and then the remembrance of God, the Most High, becomes the spontaneous occupation of the tongue, the tree of divine knowledge is born and starts yielding its fruit all the time.

In the words of Allah, the Supreme: The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; there is an indication that Allah has made the later generations similar to the former generations. When the souls of the later people, through perfect following and mutual temperamental affinities, are put in accord with the souls of the former, then grace descends from their hearts on the hearts of the later people and, when the recipient of the grace has established complete communion with the transmitter of grace and their accord reaches its limit, then the persons of both become one and they are lost in one another. This is the condition which has been called the condition of union and at this stage the seeker is given the title of the Prophets in heaven for he acquires a perfect resemblance with them in temperament and in essence. This is not unknown to the seers (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 83 and 84).

Fatiha compared with Lord's prayer

We deem it proper now to compare the prayer in Surah Fatiha with the prayer taught by Jesus (peace be on him) in the Gospel, so that it may be manifest to the fair-minded which of the two is a better healer of the sick and is more likely to quench the thirst of the thirsty and has greater dignity and is

more perfect in its reasoning and is more beneficial to the seekers. Know then that in Luke (Chapter 11, Verses 2-4) Jesus (peace be on him) taught the Apostles a prayer in these terms: Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us day by day our daily bread and forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. This is the prayer that the Christians were taught. It would be observed that this prayer is depreciative of Divine attributes. Besides, it does not embrace all the demands of human nature. Instead, it accentuates the anguish of the sense of spiritual privation and rendering man indifferent to the beatitude of the hereafter, stimulates the faculties in seeking the fulfillment of ephemeral desires and physical needs.

One of the components of this prayer is: Hallowed be Thy name. Now deliberate over it intelligently and sagaciously and see whether you really find it worthy of the perfect glory of the Being for Whom there is no further stage of perfection to be awaited nor a higher grade to be expected in the pinnacle of His Holiness and Majesty. Most surely praise and glorification are the recognized due of the Lord of Honour; naught of it is expected to arise in the future. This is the teaching of the Quran and exhortation of the word of Allah, the Gracious, as we have already explained in this discourse.

Whoso turns to the Honoured Discriminator (the Quran) and understands it and deliberates on it and looks into it with a perceptive eye, will discover that the Discriminator has dealt exhaustively with this matter and has made it clear that Allah possesses every excellence in its perfection and that all excellence is clearly established for Him in fact. There is no possibility of question about it. Proposing, in respect of Him, an expected state of perfection is an act of ignorance, injustice and sinfulness. On the other hand the Gospel represents the Lord of Illustrious Names as waiting for an expected stage of perfection and solicitous for excellences that are yet missing and non-existent. It does not believe in the perfection of His tree and merely expresses a desire for the ripening of its fruit.

It does not admit the full shining of His Moon, but awaits the time of the consummation of His glory, as if the Lord of the Gospel is silent because of the non-realization of His objectives and is too feeble to achieve His aims. He spent many a night looking for excellences and waiting for the change of conditions until He despaired of success and then turned to His servants so that they may earnestly wish for Him attainment of His objectives and so that they may resolve on dissipation of His grief and treatment of His ophthalmic disorder. Holy is our Lord; this is nothing but an open calumny. Whenever He wills a thing, all that He has to do is to command it: Be; and lo! it is. How can the Lord of Majesty, the Lord of universe, be ever a prey to anxiety?

Again the prayer taught by Jesus does not import anything more than declaring His Holiness; as if it proclaimed that Allah is free from falsehood and affectation but that there are not to be found in Him any other excellences or a trace of any positive attribute. For, being free from shortcomings is a negative quality as is recognized by the knowledgeable and the discerning, and negative qualities are no substitute for positive attributes as is obvious to the erudite. But the prayer taught by the Holy Quran comprehends all the perfect excellences possessed by the Illustrious Lord. Do you not observe in the words of the Lord of Honour and Glory: All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of universal Providence, the Gracious, the Compassionate, Master of the Day of Requit; how they comprehend all the attributes of Allah in principle and in detail? In: All praise belongs to Allah; it is declared that Allah is the Being whose attributes are beyond computation and whose excellences cannot be numbered. The Lord of universal Providence connotes that the rain of His providence encompasses all the heavens and the earths and bodies and souls. The words: The Gracious, the Compassionate; announce that mercy of all types emanates from Allah, the Eternal, Sustainer of life and the Noble Super-creator. Master of the Day of Requit signifies that the Sovereign Dispenser of reward and punishment is Allah and not any of His creatures and that the

oceans of His requital are constantly in motion all the time like clouds; and that whatever a servant experiences of the grace of Allah and His beneficence, after his virtuous deeds and sincerity and sacrifices, all of it is by virtue of the grace of His requital. These descriptive and praiseworthy attributes establish that every excellence belongs to Allah, Who combines in His Being all beauty and glory.

It is a matter of common knowledge that the *Al* in *Al-hamdu-lillahe* indicates comprehensiveness. It connotes that all excellences belong to Allah, as a matter of right. But the prayer of the Gospel: Hallowed be Thy name; does not connote perfection; on the contrary, it implies the risk of decline and merely expresses a hope for the perfection of the Holiness of the Divine as if Holiness is not yet possessed by Him in perfection. Thus this prayer is puerile, for you certainly know that Allah truly is Holy from eternity to eternity as is worthy of the Unique, the Besought of all and the Independent of all, and He is the Pure, free from all shortcomings at all times for ever and evermore, not lacking aught in excellence nor waiting for perfection.

Again, the Gospel addresses Allah, the Sublime, with the title Father, while the Quran calls Him the Lord of Providence. Between these two is a wide difference and the one who is intelligent understands it though one who is foolish may not. The word Father is in common usage and is applied to man. Its application to Allah, the Exalted, is an act that savours of *shirk* (associating partners with God) and is likely to bring about spiritual ruin, as is not hidden from those who are given to deep reflection (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 95-98).

Again, know well, O you discerning and knowledgeable seers and divines, that Jesus (peace be on him) taught a preamble before prayer and the Quran too has taught a preamble before prayer and the difference between the two is manifest to the learned. Undoubtedly the preamble of the Quran moves the soul to the worship of the Gracious God inducing the supplicants to engage themselves in seeking His Presence with purity of purpose and sincerity of heart and makes manifest to them

that God, the Exalted, is the Source of all mercies and the Fountainhead of all beneficence and is exclusively entitled to the attributes Rabb (Lord of Providence) Rahman (Gracious) Rahim (Compassionate) and is the sole Dispenser of reward and punishment. Those who obtain a concept of these Divine attributes are never separated from the One Who is worthy of them, even if they happen to be in the wilderness of death. On the contrary, they run after Him and make their abode near Him with sincerity of heart and purity of motive. They urge their horses towards Him, speeding with fierce longing. The fire of love for the Beloved flames up in them and they entertain no other desire in the height of their love for the Lord of the universe. It is thus established that the preamble of this prayer furnishes a great incentive for the worshippers.

Now we turn our scrutiny on the prayer taught by Jesus and the one that our Lord, the Sublime, taught so that the difference between the two may become patent to the wise and so that the righteous may profit thereby.

Know then that our sense of justice rejects the prayer: Give us our daily bread; taught by Jesus (peace be on him), as imperfect; while the Quran disdains the mention of bread and water in its prayer and has taught us the way of wisdom and guidance. It urges us to supplicate: Guide us along the straight path; and to seek from Him firm faith and His protection against the ways of those who were afflicted with His wrath and of those who went astray. This prayer also indicates that the comfort of this life and of the hereafter are bound up with search for the right way and sincere obedience. Now look at the prayer of the Gospel and the prayer of the Quran coming from the Lord of Majesty and judge for yourselves. The exhortation towards seeking forgiveness which occurs in the prayer taught by Jesus is but ancillary to the supplication for bread like a people driven to desperation, so that Allah may have mercy and grant plenty of bread in return for such confession. Therefore even the entreaty for forgiveness is in fact a petition to seek bread and the real objective is the prayer for loaves from Allah, the Munificent. This prayer shows that

the majority of the followers of Jesus are steadfast lovers of gold and silver and abandon the truth for the two species and trade their faith for a few coins and carry hidden in their clothes coins of gold and silver and discard the apron of the Sustaining Compassionate as rebels and delinquents. They have been exhorted to make the way of greed and the love of the world their objective. Study deep the Gospel then, so that the truth of what has been said may dawn on you and fear the Lord of Magnificence and disregard made-up stories (Karamatus Sadiqeen, pp. 100–102).

The Beauties of Surah Fatiha

Besides these verities and this wonderful conciseness one should consider the beauties embedded in this blessed Surah. Were we to set out here all those fine points it would need a volume. We propose to mention here only a few of them as samples. First, in this Surah God, the Sublime, has taught such an excellent way of prayer that a better is not possible. It comprises all elements needed for stimulating heartfelt fervour for prayer. Eagerness and fervour are indispensable factors for the acceptance of prayer. A prayer that lacks fervour is mere verbal patter and not genuine prayer at all. At the same time, it is obvious that fervour in prayer is not at the command of a person at all times. Therefore it is of paramount importance that all the factors that generate fervour in the heart should be present in the mind of the supplicant at the time of prayer. Every sensible person knows that there are only two incentives towards heart-felt enthusiasm. First, the realisation that God is Perfect, Mighty and the embodiment of all excellences and that His mercy and His benevolence are indispensable for one's being and one's survival from beginning to end, and that He is the Source and Fountainhead of all grace. Secondly, estimating oneself and one's fellow beings as humble and poor and utterly dependent on His help. These are the two incentives to fervour in prayer, and they are the perfect means for arousing enthusiasm for prayer. For, enthusiasm in prayer is

induced only when one sees oneself utterly weak and hapless and in need of Divine help, and believes with firm faith that He is the Almighty in the highest degree and the Lord of universal providence and Gracious and Compassionate and the Master of Requital and that it is only in His power to provide for all human needs.

Accordingly in the beginning of Surah Fatiha, it is said that Allah, the Exalted, is the only Being Who possesses all praiseworthy excellences and combines in Himself all attributes, and is the only Being Who sustains all the worlds and is the Source of all mercies, and grants every one the fruits of his labour. By enumerating these attributes, Allah, the Most High, clearly sets forth that all power is in His hand and all emanates from Him. He has glorified His Being so highly that He sets Himself forth as the Disposer of all the affairs of this world and the next, and the Cause of all causes, in relation to everything and the source of every benefit, pointing out, at the same time, that independently of Him and His mercy, the life and comfort and tranquillity of no sentient being was possible. Next He instructed man in humility in the words: O Thou Fountainhead of every benevolence, we worship Thee alone and seek help from Thee alone as we are altogether humble and can do nothing on our own without the favour of Thy help and support. God, the Sublime, has thus furnished two incentives to prayer; first, His own glory and its accompanying compassion, and secondly, the humility and unworthiness of man. These are the two incentives that must be kept in mind at the time of prayer by the supplicants. Those who have tasted some of the flavour of prayer know well that without these two incentives no true prayer can be offered and without them the fire of Divine love can scarcely burst into flame. It is evident that one who does not keep in mind the glory and mercy and perfect power of God, can in no wise turn to God and that the soul of one who would not confess his own humbleness, helplessness and destitution, can never bend down before the Generous Lord. This is a verity which does not call for any deep philosophy to be fully grasped. In fact, when the Mag-

nificence of God and one's own humility and helplessness are borne in on one's mind, that particular condition itself convinces one that it is the only approach to true prayer. True worshippers appreciate well that the concept of these two aspects is essential for prayer; first, that God, the Glorious, has the power to grant every kind of providence and sustenance and mercy and reward and that His perfect attributes are ever-operative in their respective spheres and secondly, the conviction that man can do nothing by himself, without Divine help and support. Without doubt both these concepts are such that once they take hold of the mind at the time of prayer, they transform suddenly the whole attitude of man so much so that a haughty one falls down crying and a conceited and hard-hearted one bursts into tears. This is the mechanism that quickens an indifferent corpse. Through the realization of these two factors, every heart is drawn towards prayer. In brief, this is the spiritual means which turns the soul of man towards God and gives him an insight into his own weakness and the reality of Divine help. It is by this means that man is transported to a state of self-forgetfulness where no trace of his own opaque existence remains and only the Majesty of the One Being meets the eye and only that Being, All-Mercy, the Support of every entity and the Remedy of every ill and the Fountainhead of every grace comes in sight, until, ultimately, through it, a state of obliteration-in-Allah takes shape at the advent of which man is bereft of all inclination towards any created being or towards his ego, or towards his volition, and is totally lost in the love of God and through true perception his own entity and the entity of all created beings appears non-existent to him. God has called this state *sirat-i-mustaqeem* – the straight path – to seek which He has taught the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; meaning, Grant us the way of obliteration and Unity and Divine love which the above verses signify and cut us off totally from all others than Thee. Thus in order to generate fervour in prayer, God, the Sublime, has provided such true incentives as transport the supplicant from the state of ego to that of self-forgetfulness

and negation. It should be remembered that Surah Fatiha is not just one of the ways of prayer for guidance; in fact, as we have shown, it is the only effective way to induce fervour in the heart for prayer and which appeals to human nature as truly responsive to its urge. The truth of the matter is that as God has laid down laws in respect of other matters, so has been set down a particular way of prayer which comprises the incentives mentioned in Surah Fatiha and unless these two incentives are kept in mind no enthusiasm can at all be aroused in prayer. The natural attitude in prayer is the one set down in Surah Fatiha. This then is one of the beauties of this Surah that it teaches prayer together with its incentives.

Another beauty of this Surah is that it has enumerated exhaustively, in every respect, the incentives towards the acceptance of guidance, for, perfect persuasiveness expressed in a cogent manner, is most effective. In terms of rational exposition perfect persuasiveness comprises three ingredients. First, the inherent merits of the object towards which the persuasion is directed should be set out. This has been supplied in the words: Guide us along the path of integrity, rectitude and steadfastness which runs straight. In these words the inherent quality of the way has been described, to induce enthusiasm for attainment to it. The second ingredient of persuasiveness is that the benefits of the object of persuasion should be stated. This has been done in the words: Guide us along the way by treading along which those who preceded us were rewarded and honoured with Thy bounties. Thus by reference to those who succeeded by travelling along this path, He generates enthusiasm for it. The third ingredient of persuasiveness is to describe the privation and wretchedness of those who discard the object of persuasion. This has been done in the words: Safeguard us against the ways of those who abandoned the right path and took to other ways and incurred Divine wrath and were lost. Thus He warned us against the harm that would befall in the event of deviating from the right path.

Thus Surah Fatiha incorporates all the ingredients of per-

suasiveness, in a beautiful manner. It refers to the inherent qualities of the right path and to its benefits and to the privation and wretchedness of those who abandon it, so that people of good disposition may be inclined towards it on learning of its inherent virtues and those who seek advantages may be eager, in their hearts, for it on learning about its benefits and others may fear the afflictions that befall those who deviate from it.

The third point of elegance in the Surah is that in addition to the highest standards of eloquence and fluency, its supplicatory clauses have been perfectly juxtaposed to the Divine attributes mentioned in the earlier part. Those practised in the literary art appreciate how delicate this task is. Surah Fatiha first describes the four Divine attributes of grace. He is the Lord of universal Providence, the Gracious, the Compassionate, Master of the Day of Judgment. Next the supplicatory expressions, rendering worship, seeking help, prayer, and begging favour have been juxtaposed to them, with such art that the expression having utmost correlation with an attribute is paired with it. We worship Thee alone is juxtaposed to the Lord of universal Providence for the right to be worshipped originates in Providence and We worship Thee alone is thus befittingly and appropriately juxtaposed to it. We seek Thy help alone is juxtaposed to Rahman (the Gracious), for, Divine help, that is the capacity to worship Him, and the provision for all requirements, on which the welfare of the worshipper here and in the hereafter depends, do not represent the reward of any of his acts but are the manifestations of Graciousness, thus presenting a very close correlation between *Rahmaniyyat* (Graciousness) and supplication for Divine help. Similarly, the prayer: Guide us along the right path; is juxtaposed to Rahim, the Compassionate. For prayer is an effort and a striving and the reward that follows upon effort proceeds from the Divine attribute *Rahimiyyat* (Compassion). Finally the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray; is juxtaposed to Master of the Day of Judgment, for requital pertains to the Master of the Day of Judgment. Therefore, the juxtaposition

of the supplication for bounty and for security against torment is appropriate to that attribute alone.

The fourth beauty of Surah Fatiha is that it epitomizes all the objectives of the Holy Quran. In other words, this Surah is a fine summary of the objectives of the Noble Quran. It is to this that Allah, the Most High, has referred in 15.88: We have indeed bestowed on thee, O Prophet, the seven oft repeated verses of Surah Fatiha which comprehend briefly all the objectives of the Holy Quran and have also granted thee the Great Quran which expounds in detail all religious values. That is why this Surah has been called the Mother of the Book and the all-comprehensive Surah. It is the Mother of the Book in that all the objectives of the Quran can be gathered from it, and it is the all-comprehensive Surah because it comprehends in summary form all the branches of Quranic sciences. It is because of this that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said that he who has read Surah Fatiha, has, in a manner, read the whole Quran.

Objective of the Holy Quran

In short, both the Holy Quran and the Hadeeth establish Surah Fatiha as the mirror of the Quran. This may be illustrated as follows. One of the objectives of the Holy Quran is to describe all the perfect excellences of the Supreme Lord and to explain in detail the perfectness of His Being. This objective is expressed concisely in Surah Fatiha in the words: All praise belongs to Allah. For, it means that Allah is worthy of all perfect praise as possessing all excellences in their perfection and is deserving of every kind of homage and worship.

The second objective of the Holy Quran is to proclaim that God is the Perfect Architect and Creator of the universe. It deals with the origin of the universe and proves everything in the universe to be God's creation, and refutes those who are at variance with it in these respects. This objective is summed up in Surah Fatiha in the expression: Lord of universal Prov-

idence. The third objective of the Holy Quran is to establish the operation of Divine grace, without reference to merit or effort and to dilate on His general mercy. This purpose is expressed in Surah Fatiha in the word Rahman (the Gracious). The fourth objective of the Holy Quran is to describe the beneficence of God that is attracted by striving and effort. This is conveyed in the word Rahim (the Compassionate). The fifth objective of the Holy Quran is to describe the process of requital. This is summed up in the Fatiha by the expression: Master of the Day of Requital.

The sixth purpose of the Holy Quran is to expound such matters as sincerity, worship, deliverance of self from everything beside Allah, the cure of spiritual maladies, the perfection of morals and exclusive adoration of the One, the Only. This purpose is summed up in the Fatiha in the expression: Thee alone do we serve.

The seventh objective of the Holy Quran is to establish that God is the moving spirit behind everything and that all capacity and grace and help and steadfastness in obedience and security against disobedience and all means of achieving welfare here and hereafter proceed from Him and that all supplication for seeking support and help in all undertakings must be made to Him alone. This purpose has been expressed in Surah Fatiha in the expression: We implore Thee alone for help.

The eighth purpose of the Holy Quran is to expound the details concerning the right path (sirah-i-mustaqeem) and to stress the need of seeking it through prayer and humility. This purpose is served in the Fatiha in the expression: Guide us along the right path.

The ninth purpose of the Holy Quran is to describe the way and disposition of those upon whom God bestowed His favours and beneficence so that the hearts of the seekers may find comfort and tranquillity therein. This purpose has been covered in the Fatiha by the expression: The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours.

The tenth purpose of the Holy Quran is to describe the ways and dispositions of those who incurred Divine wrath or who

strayed away from the right path and became involved in different kinds of innovations so that seekers after Truth may shun those ways. This purpose has been expressed in the Fatiha in the expression: Not the way of those who incurred Thy wrath nor of those who went astray.

These are the ten objectives expounded in the Holy Quran which are the fundamental basis of all verities. All these objectives have been summarised in Surah Fatiha.

The fifth beauty of the Surah Fatiha is that it comprehends the most complete and by far the most perfect body of teaching essential for a seeker after truth, and which is a complete code of practice for progressive proximity to the Presence and for insight into reality. The first step in the direction of progress towards proximity towards the Presence is taken when the wayfarer, seeking purely the pleasure of Allah, accepts death for his ego and preferring hardship and suffering, foregoes the selfish desires that create a gulf between him and his generous Lord and divert his attention from Him and direct it towards the pleasures of the flesh and selfishness and self-indulgence and selfish thoughts, habits and designs and towards his fellow beings and involve him in their fears and hopes. The second stage in this progress is reached when the hardships suffered in the initial period for the annihilation of self and the pains that have to be endured in giving up established habits begin to appear as bounties and instead of hardship one feels pleasure and instead of pain one feels relief and instead of privation there is joy and delight.

Highest grade achieved through close affinity with God

The highest grade in this progress is reached when the pilgrim develops such close affinity and union and identification with God and His will and designs that his own identity and desires are eliminated and the Being and the attributes of the Divine are reflected in his mirror-like person without a shadow of darkness and without the least consciousness of state and situation and through the mirror of total self-annihilation

which has put the utmost distance between him and his selfish desires, that the reflection of the Divine Being and His attributes becomes clearly visible. This is totally distinct from the false theories of pantheists and vedantists, for they fail to maintain the distinction between the Creator and the creation and because of their hallucinations, which are encountered in the course of an unfinished spiritual progress or are the products of strenuous penance, they get involved in serious error. Or, it may be that in a state of stupor or self-forgetfulness, which is a kind of dementia, the distinction between the spirit of God and the spirit of man, in respect of capacity and power and excellence and holiness is overlooked and lost sight of. Otherwise, it is obvious that the Omnipotent Lord from Whose eternal knowledge nothing is hidden and to Whom no loss or damage can be ascribed and Who is immune to every type of ignorance, and stain and weakness and grief and sorrow and pain and hurt and incarnation, can never be identified with one who is subject to all these afflictions. Can man whose spiritual progress is subject to innumerable contingencies and unending hazards be the like of or identical with the Being who possesses every excellence and Who suffers from no lack of perfection? Can one whose being is mortal and whose soul obviously suffers from the deficiencies inherent in its state of createdness notwithstanding all his stains and weaknesses and impurities and defects and drawbacks, be the equal to the Being of Majestic attributes, Who is ever and eternally the most perfect in His excellences and holy attributes? Holy is He and far above that which they ascribe to Him (6.101). By this third stage of progress, we mean that the pilgrim becomes so lost and consumed up in his love of God and the Peerless and Timeless Being comes so close to him with all His perfect attributes that the flashes of Divinity overwhelm his selfish desires and draw him so completely away from them that an estrangement and aversion is generated between him and his selfish desires and even those who are slaves of their selfish inclinations. The difference between this and the second grade of progress is that while the pilgrim in the second grade is also

in complete agreement with the will of the Lord and His inflictions appear like bounties, yet he lacks that sense of communion with Allah that generates in him antipathy towards all else and makes love of the Divine not only the object of his heart, but the very nature of his heart. In brief, in the second grade of progress, full accord with God and antipathy towards all else is the aim of the pilgrim and in its achievement is his pleasure. But in the third grade of progress, accord with God and antipathy towards all else becomes his very nature which he cannot discard under any circumstances, for stripping a thing of its nature is impossible. As against this, in the second stage, such alienation is still possible and thus the saintliness of a saint is contingent and is not immune to perils until it reaches the third grade. Until the love of God and antipathy towards all else becomes a part of the nature of man, a trace of alienation still lingers in him. He has not yet acquainted himself completely with his full obligations due to Divine Providence and has not yet attained to full communion. But when his nature is surcharged with love for Allah and accord with Allah's will, so much so that God becomes the ears by which he hears and becomes his eyes with which he sees and becomes his hands by which he grasps and becomes his feet with which he walks, then there is naught of alienation left in him and he becomes secure against every danger. It is this grade which is indicated in Allah's words: Those who have faith and do not let their faith suffer from any detraction are the ones who shall have peace and it is they who are the truly guided (6.83).

Spiritual birth is contingent upon annihilation of self

It should be recognized that these three grades of spiritual progression which are the basis of all knowledge and insight and are the essence of faith, are set out in Surah Fatiha with the utmost elegance, conciseness and beauty. The first grade of progress, which is the first step in the field of closeness to the Divine, has been set out in the words: Guide us along the

straight path. To turn away from every distortion and misguidance and to turn one's face wholly to God choosing the right path is the steep ascent which has been described as annihilation of self (fana). A sudden withdrawal from every cherished and customary pursuit and abandoning at one stroke all selfish desires that had by long usage grown into habits and discarding all considerations of honour and prestige and pride and ostentation and recognising all besides Allah as non-existent and turning wholly to God, is to suffer a type of death. But this death is the prelude to spiritual birth. Until the grain-seed mingles with dust and loses its identity, new grain cannot be produced. In the same way spiritual birth is contingent upon annihilation of self (fana). As self retreats and man's actions and volition and interest in creatures begin to be displaced, the limbs of spiritual birth start taking shape, until when total annihilation of self is achieved, the robe of the new body is granted and the stage of: Then We develop him into a new creation (23.14) is reached.

As this total annihilation of self is not possible without the help and support and special grace of the Lord of absolute power, therefore the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; is taught, meaning: Lord, establish us firmly in the right path and deliver us from every kind of distortion and error. This steadfastness and rectitude that we are commended to implore is a grievous affair. Its first impact on the pilgrim is like that of confrontation with a lion which brings one face to face with death. If the pilgrim steadies himself and accepts this death then there would be no death for him any more and God is too noble to confront him a second time with this burning hell. In short, this perfect uprightness is the total suppression of man's structure of life and a complete withdrawal from desire and passion and volition and self-will. This stage in the journey and pilgrimage of man involves a large degree of effort and striving. The efforts of saints and exertions of spiritual pilgrims however end here and are followed by special heavenly bounties towards which human effort makes no further contribution and at this stage God bestows as a bounty from Himself an

exceedingly fleet heavenly transport, for a tour of supernal wonders.

The second stage in spiritual progress towards the expanse of the Divine Presence has been inculcated in the verse: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy bounties.

Favoured ones welcome trials as bounty

It should be remembered that those who are favoured with Divine gifts, both physical and spiritual, are not exempt from hardships. On the contrary they encounter so many trials and hardships in this life that a less steadfast person in that situation would run the risk of losing his faith. But they have been designated as the *recipients of bounties*, for they look upon calamities as gifts because of their all-enveloping love for Allah and thus every pain and hurt they receive from the True Friend is a source of pleasure for them because of their intoxication in love. This is the second stage in the spiritual progress towards the Divine Presence where all the manifestations of the Adored One are a source of delight and whatever comes from Him is welcomed as a bounty. This state is brought about by the perfect love of man for the Beloved Lord and true communion with Him. This is a special bounty which is not the result of any device or planning on the part of the recipient; it proceeds direct from God and when it arrives the pilgrim experiences a transformation and all burdens are taken off his shoulders and every affliction appears as a bounty and not the slightest feeling of complaint or grievance is experienced. This state is akin to coming alive after death. For all tribulation encountered in the first stage which confronted the pilgrim with death every moment is left behind. Now he perceives bounties in every direction and it is on account of this that he is appropriately named as one of the favoured ones. In other words, this state is called *baqa* (perpetual life). For in this stage the pilgrim feels as if he had been dead and has now come alive. He experiences a great felicity and

cheerfulness and all his constraints are dissolved and the fostering light of Divinity pours down on him like a benison. At this stage the door of every bounty is opened for the pilgrim and he becomes the object of Divine favours. This stage is also called sojourn with the Divine, for in this stage mysteries of Divine Providence are revealed to him and Divine favours that are hidden from others are experienced by him. He is benefited by true visions and is honoured with Divine address and is informed about the secrets of the hereafter and is granted abundant knowledge and insight. In short, he is given a great share of physical and spiritual blessings so much so that he reaches the stage of complete certainty, as if he were beholding the Divine Determiner with his own eyes. He is thus granted so much insight into heavenly secrets that this stage is called *sair fillah* (sojourn with Allah). This is the stage when man is favoured with love for Allah, which dwells in him but which has not yet become part of his nature.

The third stage of spiritual progress towards the Divine Presence which is the last step in the pilgrim's journey has been inculcated through this verse: Not the way of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray. This is the stage when the love of God and antipathy towards all else become part of the nature of man and become his permanent characteristics.

At this stage the pilgrim loves Divine qualities as naturally as they are held in high esteem by the Unique One, and the love of the Generous Lord so pervades his heart that it becomes impossible to drive it out of his heart. If his heart and soul were crushed in the mills of great trials and tribulations and severe calamities they would yield nothing but the love of God. At this stage the pilgrim seeks pleasure in aching for Him and regards Him alone really and truly His heart's ease. This is the stage where all progress towards the Presence is completed and man reaches the perfection of excellence destined for human nature.

These are five of the beauties of Surah Fatiha that we have described as a sample. The spiritual marvels and other verities

and insights with which this Surah abounds are so numerous that it would take a large volume to describe even a fraction of them. The spiritual qualities of this blissful Surah are so sublime and so wonderful that a seeker after truth is constrained to confess it, without a doubt, as the word of the Lord of absolute power (Baraheen-Ahmadiyyah, pp. 524–576, Footnote).