

Syllabus Taleem ul Quran Quiz

Majlis Ansarullah, UK

Commentary on The Holy Quran

Volume 1

SURAH FATIHA

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ISLAM INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS LTD

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.

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 Requit. (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 crown 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

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 Sayyed 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 Sadiqeen, 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).

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

الزَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ۝ مٰلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ ۝

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. Requitil 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-alam*; *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.

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-Aala-meen* (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 Requital. 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 Requit 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).

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 *Ihdinas-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 uprightiness 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.