

THE SPIRIT OF ISLAM

A summary of the commentary of
MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD
on **AL-FATEHA**, the first chapter of the Quran

ASHFAQUE HUSAIN

PROGRESSIVE BOOKS
40/B, Urdu Bazar, Lahore – Pakistan

Contents

Preface	9
Introduction to the 2nd Edition	11
Al-Fateha	19
The Significance of Al-Fateha	21
Praise be to God	25
Cherisher and Sustainer	27
The Merciful, the Compassionate	40
Lord of the Day of Judgment	51
Thee (alone) do we worship	54
The Straight Path	59
Conclusion	70
Appendix : Islamic Order	75

Preface

WHEN A person who has no claim to scholarship or even to be considered a competent student of Islam offers a tract with the ambitious title. "The Spirit of Islam", a word of explanation is called for.*

In my endeavour to understand the Quran, I have read a number of translations and commentaries and the one which I have found stimulating and rewarding above all others is Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*. Quite apart from its literary excellence, the lucid and illuminating commentary on the opening chapter of the Quran is a masterpiece by any standard. It has certainly helped at least one of its readers to understand the full meaning of that chapter and the teaching of the Quran as a whole far better than he could have done otherwise. It is unfortunate therefore that it is not so far available in any other language except Urdu. An adequate English translation will be a most valuable addition to Islamic literature in the English language.

Meanwhile it appeared to me that an English summary of the commentary may be of some interest and profit to those who wish to understand the main spiritual teachings of Islam and are unable to read the original. I wish that someone more competent had attempted this task. All that I have at-

*The original edition was published under the title "The Spirit of Islam" which was changed at the Publisher's request to "The Quintessence of Islam" for the second edition.

tempted to do is to present merely a simple resume of the argument, without trying to convey anything of the literary style or scholarly content of the original. I am grateful to Maulana Saheb for generously permitting me to take this liberty with the text, but this does not imply that he has authorised or approved this summary; the responsibility for any shortcomings in presentation is entirely mine. I am indeed fully conscious that this summary does not at all do justice to the original; and I can therefore only hope that it may at least in some measure help the lay reader to understand the real teaching of the Quran so that he may be able to distinguish it from what so often goes by the name of Islam.

I have not attempted, in this brief tract, to present a comprehensive picture of Islam, of its social code or even of its distinguishing features. It was suggested by a valued friend that I should at least deal with Islam's notable contribution to the conception and practice of democracy and brotherhood. It was a tempting suggestion but it would have altered the scope and purpose of this work, which is but a short account of the spiritual teachings of Islam, based on Maulana Saheb's commentary on the opening chapter of the Quran.

ASHFAQUE HUSAIN

*New Delhi,
29th November, 195*

Introduction to the Second Edition

PERHAPS THE most distinguishing trait of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's personality was his extraordinary individualism, an individualism which took birth and grew in spite of a tradition-laden parentage and upbringing and which remained unshaken by the pressures of public life in the midst of which he spent most of his seventy eventful years. It was a supreme example of the triumph of mind and character over circumstances.

He was born in 1888 and was given the name of Mohiuddin Ahmad, which was, however, forgotten before he was twentyfive years old. By then he had already become a national figure and his self-assumed name of Abul Kalam Azad had become almost a legend. He was the son of a learned divine with a considerable following and it was taken for granted that the young scion would one day succeed to his father's position. His training was directed to that end and his quite unusual natural gifts not only confirmed the assumption that he would inherit his father's large religious following but also held out promise that he would be a great divine. He received his education entirely at home, along traditional lines and under his father's supervision. His progress was so phenomenal that by the time he was fourteen he had mastered Persian and Arabic and passed from the status of pupil to that of teacher.

Young Mohiuddin Ahmad had, however, a mind of his own.

He was not content to be a scholarly teacher or a learned theologian. His vision was far broader. He had strong literary tastes—he started a poetry magazine at the age of sixteen—and an innate enlightenment that would not be contained by tradition or fashion, and he was more interested in the destiny of man than in the personal glory of scholastic or theological eminence. This explains the Maulana's answer of silence to the oft-repeated wistful criticism that, because of his political activities, he deprived scholarship and learning of the contribution that his natural gifts warranted and which it is given to so few to make. The Maulana chose instead the path of an enlightened humanist, retaining his individuality but discharging his responsibilities as a member of the society in which he lived and serving his fellow-men according to his best judgment and in all ways that he was capable of.

And so it was that he threw himself into the struggle for the country's freedom, and in 1912 he brought out a journal *Al-Hilal* which took the country by storm. The nationalism he preached ran counter to the prevailing trends in the Muslim community to which the journal was primarily addressed, and at the same time it naturally evoked the wrath of the British Government. In 1914, he became a political detenu and *Al-Hilal* came to an end. Within its brief career of two years, however, its fiery eloquence had brought about turmoil in the thinking of Indian Muslims and it had fed the fire of nationalism in a lasting measure. Even at this distance of time the very mention of *Al-Hilal* inspires a feeling of warmth and awe. It is like a highlight of the political literature of Indian nationalism and a permanent contribution to Urdu literature.

During his first detention, he was prevailed upon by a friend to write an autobiography, which he called *Tazkirah*. The result was, however, very unsatisfying to the publisher, for it did not contain the sensational events of the Maulana's own life; instead, it surveyed the background of his life and thought and was only a piece of scintillating but unsensational literature. From then onwards the ever increasing demands of the national struggle to which the Maulana had dedicated himself took a heavy toll of his time and energy, and scholarship and literary writing took a second place. Scholarship remained of course to the end of his life his first and last love but the fruits of his

scholarship and literary genius could be available to others only when Government chose to give him leisure in prison. So it was that in the last forty years and more of his life he could write but two books, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* and *Ghubar-i-Khatir*. Either of these, however, is sufficient to give its author a permanent place in Urdu literature. When he died in 1958, his mourning fellow-citizens crowded in their hundreds of thousands to pay homage to a selfless upright patriot, and it was a rare demonstration of popular affection and respect not easily to be forgotten. But long after it is forgotten and even long after the Maulana's great services in the cause of national freedom and reconstruction pass into cold history, the fiery and eloquent editor of *Al-Hilal*, the brilliant letter writer, story teller and essayist of *Ghubar-i-Khatir* and the learned translator and commentator of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* will continue to shine in the living world of literature, learning and scholarship.

The strong uncompromising individualism, coupled with a lively sense of his duty to the society of which he was a member, that was the key to his political career also marked his work as a writer and scholar. While, to appreciate his literary style, one will no doubt turn to his prodigious performance, *Al-Hilal*, and his last masterpiece, *Ghubar-i-Khatir*, *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* is no less a work of literature than one of scholarship. It is marked by the same spontaneity and directness, the same aesthetic appeal and intellectual force which are characteristic of his other writings. The style is so simple and direct that what he says goes home at once to a person of even moderate education, and yet its literary flavour is such as to give the reader the same intoxicating pleasure that one derives from a poem rich with original ideas, dressed in beautiful words and, at the same time, the intellectual content satisfies and stimulates the most discriminating seeker of knowledge. It is these manifold qualities of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* which give it such a pre-eminent place among all the translations and commentaries of the Quran so far published in any language. In order, however, to appreciate its value fully, it is necessary to remember that, while it is useful to anyone who desires an understanding of the Quran and of the basic message of Islam, it was written primarily for Indian Muslims at a time when they were caught in a vortex of mental confusion.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were disastrous for Indian Muslims. Their political dominance crumbled away and, with that, the very foundations of their social and economic life were shaken. The new conditions demanded large scale adjustments and the Indian Muslims were bewildered, not knowing which way to turn. This confusion could not but affect their religious thought also, and there arose several reformers to show a new way. The great divine, Shah Waliullah, attempted to bring Islam into harmony with the new social, political and intellectual trends. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the College which grew into the Aligarh Muslim University and one of the most earnest and purposeful social reformers, set about reassuring his community of the soundness of their faith by trying to prove the truth of Islam with new scientific and philosophical arguments. Shibli, a great writer and a distinguished scholar, chose the path of leading his co-religionists back to the pristine traditions and, to that end, began a monumental work on the life of the Prophet, *Seerat-un-Nabi*. It was against this background that Azad grew up and felt the need for a definitive and clear exposition of Islam. His approach was individualistic without being dialectical or controversial. It was the simple approach of avoiding the morass of pedantic learning which had for long centuries blurred the actual message of the Quran and of seeking, instead, to interpret Islam from the Quran itself and from the life and teaching of the bearer of that Divine Message, Mohammad. And for that task the Maulana had been splendidly equipped by his training and his natural gifts.

✱ While his upbringing and training had given him a vast knowledge of traditional literature on the subject, nature had endowed him with a creative and romantic temperament and an objective mind. He thus combined true conservatism with true modernism. He did not set aside the old simply because it was old and he did not adopt the new merely because it was new. He was a conservative and a revivalist, but he wished to revive not institutions or customs but the fundamental message itself; he insisted over and over again on the distinction between religion that is eternal and law that is necessarily ever changing. He was a modern, but he refused to be carried away by new scientific discoveries and new trends in thought. In his

exposition of the Quran he pressed into service historical research and made use of the new scientific knowledge, but at the same time he warned that the message of God could not be tested by the ever limited knowledge of man. Science and philosophy can lead man only so far and no further; the ultimate guide of man must be inspiration beyond philosophy, faith beyond logic. He was modern in the sense that he was utterly objective. He did not start on his quest for truth with any preconceived notions; if he reached faith it was only after traversing the tortuous path of doubt and denial. He was also remarkably free from bias and prejudice; he spent his whole life in controversial politics but his writings betray no sign of any prejudice or bias flowing from his political activities and experiences. Indeed this writer has never come across anyone so completely free from all bias, religious, political, social, linguistic or personal, as the Maulana.

Tarjuman-ul-Quran is a translation—alas, incomplete by more than two fifths—of the Quran and also a commentary. Strictly speaking, it contains a commentary only of the first chapter, which has but seven brief verses; for the rest, it is only a translation with interpolations (within brackets to show that they are interpolations) to make the meaning clearer and marginal comments, almost as lengthy as the translation itself, and footnotes to give the context and bring out the meaning fully or discuss some particular points of importance or controversy. The commentary of the first chapter, however, of which this book is a brief summary, deals with all the spiritual teachings of the Quran, the fundamentals of Islam. It also deals with several problems which have been a standing challenge to religious thought, such as Destiny, Freedom and Compulsion and the different conceptions of God. It reconciles the theological conception of God Transcendental with the mystical conception of God Immanent and does so from the words of the Quran itself: "Reflect on God's creation and not (get lost in arguments about) God's attributes."

It is this firm adherence to the Quran itself and his clear, objective mind which make the Maulana's exposition of Islam so simple and so telling. The reader gets the same feeling that a traveller experiences when a thick mist suddenly lifts and the sun lights up the path which he has been struggling to find and

which, he now sees, lies straight in front of him. The light is that of Quran itself and Islam emerges as the simple path that was shown to Mohammad and that remained clear till the mists of theology, mysticism and scholasticism blurred the vision. Islam is not superior to other religions, for all religions are equally true; it is but a reiteration of the eternal message of God and the message of God cannot be truer or superior at one time than at another. Every prophet brought the same message of the unity of God and brotherhood of man; only later did the waywardness of man and growth of mutually hostile groups create differences. Islam once again tried to bring home to men that they were one common, indissoluble brotherhood, with no distinctions of creed, caste, class or colour; it reminded mankind that customs, forms and rituals were necessary but secondary and that of basic importance were only (1) submission to One God, (2) unity of religion and (3) good deeds.

The Maulana stressed these three basic teachings of Islam and, in explaining their real meaning, turned away from the traditions to which he was born and which so strongly influenced his early life. In effect he raised the banner of determined and uncompromising revolt against religious bigotry and obscurantism but he did so quietly and without the strident fanaticism of a rebel; and to regard him as a rebel would therefore hinder a correct understanding of his temperament and character and of his whole life. The Maulana's approach in all matters was essentially positive; it was never negative. He never raised a mere revolt even in the political field; as an objective and constructive intellectual, he saw the goal clearly and worked towards it with uncompromising determination, unhampered by passion and undeterred by any traditions or beliefs, howsoever firmly entrenched. If, on his journey, he had to sweep aside any tradition or belief he did so without hesitation but also without emotion; it was necessary but purely incidental. His one purpose was to see and present Islam in its true original form, as set forth in the Quran, before the picture got blurred and distorted by "the unduly rigid and impracticable religious dictates and restrictions, the dead weight of unintelligible dogmas, the confusing mass of superstitions, the shackles in which priests and divines held their

followers and the chains with which worship of religious leaders and saints kept man's spirit in thrall", which had plagued Islam no less than all other organised religions before it.

The Maulana denounced these burdensome and vicious fetters but not by way of revolt; he only pointed them out as impediments which man must avoid or break through in his quest for truth. Only then can the human spirit attain emancipation and be free to answer the call of the Divine Message. The Quran's simple words, shorn of the far-fetched interpretations of theologians and pedants, once again become crystal clear. "Submission to One God" is not worship of any man-made god but total and unqualified submission to the one and only Creator and Sustainer of all that is. "Unity of religion" is not confused by the existence of different religious systems; religion is not confused with the laws, customs and forms that grow round an organised religion to answer the needs of a particular people at a particular time and place and situated in particular circumstances. Just as the concept of justice is one, universal and eternal, though laws differ from time to time and place to place, so it is necessary to distinguish between religious laws, customs and forms, that are and must be flexible and variable, and religion, which is and must be universal and eternal, the same for all mankind at all times, for it is man's everlasting guidance. Similarly, "good deeds" are not to be understood in the narrow sense as the performance of certain formal duties, important as they may be for man's spiritual and social welfare. Man must go beyond them and do everything, to the best of his capacity and in accordance with his circumstances, to fashion his whole life to conform to the twin basic concepts of Unity of God and brotherhood of man. One must not serve man except in the service of God, and one cannot serve God without serving mankind.

And so, through his attempt to understand and explain Islam, the Maulana overcame the circumstances of his birth and upbringing, which would have made a theologian and a devotee of him, and emerged as a modern intellectual, a steadfast humanist and a man of integrity and faith.

*New Delhi,
March 1960*

Al-Fateha

(Opening Chapter of the Quran)

In the name of God, the Merciful, the

Compassionate.

Praise be to God, the Sustainer of the Worlds,

The Merciful, the Compassionate,

Lord of the Day of Judgment.

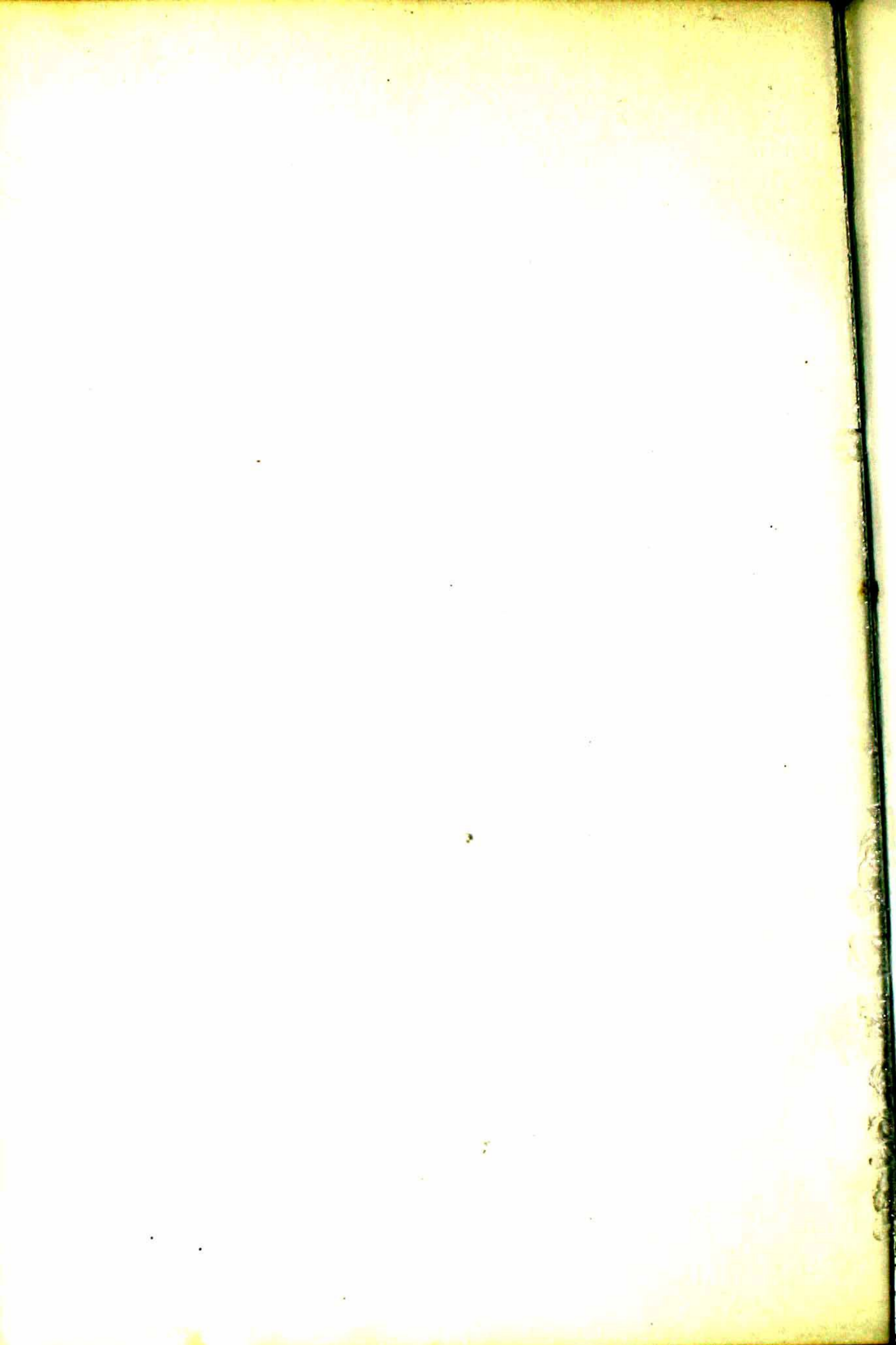
*Thee (alone) do we worship, and Thee (alone) do we ask for
help.*

Guide us on the straight path,

The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed

Thy grace,

*Not (of) those upon whom is (Thy) wrath and who have gone
astray.*



The Significance of "Al-Fateha" (The Opening)

THE OPENING *sura* (chapter) of the Quran has been variously referred to as *Fatehatul-Kitab* (the opening of the Book), *Ummul-Quran* (the most prominent in the Quran or, alternatively, the essence of the Quran), *Al-Kafia* (the sufficient), *Al-Kanz* (the treasure), etc. The Quran itself gives a special place to this chapter, for it refers to it thus: "We have bestowed upon thee the seven oft-repeated and the great Quran" (XV: 87).¹ The expression "seven oft repeated", it has been established, refers to this chapter which contains seven verses and which is repeated over and over again in prayers and also on other solemn occasions.

The prominent place given to this chapter is due to the fact that it is not only the introduction to the Quran but also its essence. All that has been stated at length in the Quran about the fundamentals of religion has been said in the seven brief verses of this chapter. If a man is unable to read anything else of the Quran but can master the meaning of these few short phrases, he will have fully grasped the fundamental purpose of religion and the path to truth and self-fulfilment.

The entire *sura* is in the form of a prayer and its words are so simple and telling that even an uneducated person can understand them and be moved by them. It was with this in view that this chapter was made the central piece of Islamic literature, and it is repeated several times during each prayer

and on all other solemn occasions.

What are the fundamentals of true religion? They can perhaps be reduced to the following :

- (a) To have a correct conception of the attributes of God. The errors into which man has fallen in his worship of God have all emanated from his misunderstanding of God's attributes.
- (b) To believe in the law of just returns. Everything in the world has particular properties and a natural effect, and so man's actions also have certain properties and effects; good actions lead to good and evil actions to evil.
- (c) To believe in life after death. Man's life does not end in this world; life will continue beyond it and man will continue to reap the returns of his actions.
- (d) To recognise the path of rectitude and grace.

This *sura*, *Al-Fateha*, sets forth these fundamentals, with incomparable effect, in words which are few and numbered and yet so precise and simple that they make a direct impact on the mind and heart of the reader. That is as it should be, for the more simply a truth is stated the more convincing it is; nature itself is simple and it is only artifice and ornamentation which make things complicated. So this *sura* says the simplest things in the simplest words. It addresses God by those very attributes whose manifestations surround one all the time; even if one is ignorant or negligent enough not to notice them; it proclaims submission to the Lord of the Universe; it acknowledges His help in everything; it prays for the path of rectitude, avoiding the world's temptations and pitfalls. There is apparently nothing remarkable in all this; it contains no difficult thought or novel idea or esoteric formula. Now that we have been repeating it countless times and its message has been before mankind for centuries, it appears commonplace; yet, when it was presented to the world there appeared to be nothing more obscure and strange.

Very briefly, this short simple prayer, without entering into any argument or even explanations, sets before mankind in the clearest possible terms the following basic spiritual lessons :

- (1) One of the greatest spiritual errors of man has been to conceive of God as an awesome and terrifying being rather than as Love. The *sura*, therefore, begins with *hamd*, adoration through praise; there is no reference to any fearsome aspect of divinity.
- (2) The first attribute of God referred to is that of *Rabbil-Alameen*, the Cherisher, Nourisher and Sustainer of the Universe, and it contains two lessons. It tells man of God Who gives him all he needs by way of sustenance, material and spiritual, so that he may protect himself from all evil and proceed to his full development. Secondly, it tells him that God is the God of the Universe, not of any part of it. There is no room left for any narrow-mindedness, prejudice and exploitation, whether individual, tribal, communal, racial, national, religious or of any other kind. His grace and gifts are for all mankind, not for any particular group or any particular religion.
- (3) He is the Lord of the Day of Judgment. Firstly, He is the Supreme Judge; to none else is it given to sit in judgment upon man. Secondly, there is a Day of Judgment or Reckoning. Man must be prepared to face the consequences of his acts, as he expects everything else to have a known, natural and inevitable effect. Thirdly, man should expect only justice, the due result of his acts; God is neither arbitrary nor revengeful.
- (4) In making submission to Him and acknowledging and seeking His help, it is not said merely that we worship Him and seek His help. It is said instead: "Thee (alone) we worship; and Thee (alone) we ask for help." Not only has it fixed the relationship between man and his Lord, but it has also proclaimed in unequivocal terms the unity of God, and it closes all paths to polytheism. in whatever form.²
- (5) The path of profit and grace is described as the Straight Path. The Straight Path is easier to recognise and follow, and the more one deviates from it greater the danger of one's going astray.
- (6) Often, however, it is not easy to distinguish which is

the Straight Path. Man is helpless, for the answer to the question is hidden in the womb of the future, and he can but proceed on the basis of his very limited knowledge and very restricted reason. He can then but seek the grace of God and pray : "O Lord, direct us on the right path, 'the path'—for I know not which it is—'of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy grace, not of those who have brought upon themselves Thy wrath and have gone astray'".

NOTES

1. These references are to the Quran, the chapters being indicated by the Roman numerals and the verses by Arabic numerals. For instance, this reference is to the 87th verse of the 15th chapter.

2. Not only that; it bars the path to the worship of might, power and riches to which the frailty of human nature is ever and everywhere an easy prey. Even one who would indignantly deny being a "polytheist" constantly installs for himself little gods before whom he bows innumerable times every day. This verse, which is perhaps the core of Islam, while enjoining complete submission to God, also raises human dignity and self-respect to the highest possible level; a true Muslim must rely on none but himself and God, and he cannot bow before or seek favours from anyone else.—*A.H.*

Al-Hamdo L'illah

*Praise be to God: All that can be said by way of
praise and adoration is for God*

THE FIRST verse of the first chapter of the Quran opens with *hamd* (praise), just as the very first impression the mind and instinct of man, when he sets out in quest of God or Truth, is that of wonder and admiration.

The seeker after Truth is described by the Quran as one who "reflects on the creation of the heavens and the earth (with the thought): 'Our Lord! Thou didst not create (all) this in vain'" (III : 191). As he looks around and reflects, his mind is immediately illumined by the realisation that everything within him as well as outside reveals the hand of a Creator of transcendental wisdom and power; the care and bounty of the Creator manifest themselves in every particle of the universe. He is filled with wonder and admiration and he proclaims it with an instinctive exclamation, phrased differently according to the individual seeker's tradition and extent of knowledge but conveying the same homage to the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe; and this instinctive tribute to the Creator saves him for ever from the fatal error of losing himself in the beauty of the created and forgetting the Creator.

The word *Allah*, even before the Quran, was used as a proper noun for God; and the Quran adopted it not only because it had gained currency but also because it was more suitable than any other word.

There was a stage in man's spiritual development when he

bowed in adoration before various manifestations of nature; and that, gradually and inevitably, led to idol worship. The number of gods grew, each representing some particular godly quality before which man bowed; and, as the pantheon grew vast and bewildering, man's spirit longed and sought for one supreme god, the lord of all gods. Thus, while there were numerous names for gods, referring to their different attributes, there was always a special word for the Supreme Being. The basic letters of that word, in all Semitic languages, were *Alif* (A) *Lam* (L) and *Hay* (H), and the Arabic *Ilah*, with the definite article (Al), became *Allah*.

As for the meaning of *Ilah*, there are various interpretations, but the soundest appears to be that which derives the word from *alhu*, which means astonishment or wonder. (Alternatively, *Ilah* is said to be derived from the word *walah*, which also has the same meaning). There could not be a more appropriate word for the Creator and the Lord of the Universe. However much man may come to know about Him, He remains beyond the range of human knowledge. The more one tries to understand that Absolute Being, the greater is one's bewilderment. The quest begins and ends in wonder and humility. No other name could therefore be used for the Supreme Being. All other names refer only to some particular attribute of God and, in that sense, are restrictive; but the word *Allah* immediately directs our mind to a Supreme Being Who is all-embracing, beyond description and beyond cognition. ✓

Rabbil-Alameen

Cherisher and Sustainer of all the worlds

LIKE *Ilah*, *Rab* is also a much used root word in all the Semitic languages. It means, in the most comprehensive sense, to bring up or, in other words, to rear and nurture some living being, whether a plant or an animal or a human being, through its different stages of growth and according to its particular condition and needs till it attains maturity, i.e. that stage of its development when it ceases to need someone to look after it and can find its own wherewithal of life for future progress; and even then the function of the *Rab* does not cease altogether but merely becomes less intense and less constant. The interest, devotion and readiness to guide and help are still there, but they are not seen in constant play as before, because their object has attained a measure of self-reliance and independence. Thus it was that the words *Rabbi* and *Rabbah*, in Hebrew and Aramaic, and *Rabu*, in Old Egyptian and Chaldean, were used for one who brought up, the teacher and also the master.

When a child is born, it is but a helpless lump of flesh and it instinctively cries for a protector and nourisher. The mother fills that role and she fulfills it with boundless love and devotion and never ceasing vigilance and care. According to its changing needs, she suckles it and gradually feeds it on different food which gives it strength and independence. She carries it in her lap, then supports it when it begins to stand and guides it as it begins to walk till it can run on its own and requires no help

or guidance. This is the most perfect instance of "nurture" or "bringing up" that man can show. How imperfect and limited it becomes obvious as soon as one lifts one's eye from that infinitesimal part of existence that is human life and casts it upon that vast and marvellous panorama of existence that includes countless beings and limitless forms of life and that is ever unfolded before one's eyes, if one but stops to see. With no one to teach them how to mother or nourish, one finds animals, birds and insects performing those functions with greater devotion and constancy than even a human mother. There are also creatures beyond perception that have apparently none to nourish them but nevertheless find their nourishment provided for them from the moment they come into existence.

As one reflects on this, one is struck by the fact that not only are all the necessary means of existence and nourishment to be found—that is nature's bounty—but that they are found arranged in such perfect order that, if man does not disturb it, everything is provided in the form, measure and manner in which it is required. Over and over again, the Quran draws attention to the order and right proportion in which every need of every being is provided for. "Verily, We have created everything in (the right) proportion and measure" (LIV: 49). Air, water and food are the three indispensable requirements of life, and not only are they found in greater quantity than anything else but, among themselves, they are to be found in a quantity which is exactly in proportion to their indispensability, water more than food and air in much greater abundance than either.

Apart from the means of existence and the quantity and proportion in which they are available, one cannot but wonder at the evident order with which the entire universe is organised. Everything appears to have been created and ordered as if with one single object, to create life and to enable it to attain its fulfilment to its utmost capacity. The sun is there to serve as a lamp and an oven and also to lift water and store it in the heavens to be distributed when the need arises. The sun could not, however, perform this last function without the help of the wind, which, with its cool breath, congeals that water into rolls of cloud. The sun then transmits heat to those clouds

and makes them melt and yield water to a needy earth. The earth is there to catch that water and, with its help, to bring forth in the right form and at the right time the treasures which it ever stores in its bosom, like a woman's milk, for the furtherance of life; to every seed it offers life and to every plant nourishment, so that they, in their turn, may be the means for continuing and sustaining life. So it is with every particle of existence and in every nook and corner of the universe. Every force seeks strength and every cause effect, and no sooner do they begin to strive for fulfilment than the entire existence turns to their aid; the sun and the moon, the heavens and the earth, the atmosphere and the elements, it would appear, are all in attendance to help the birth of an ant or the planting of a seed that drops from a farmer's hand.

As soon as a being comes into existence it finds that nature has already prepared the means of nourishment and sustenance for it in the quantity, form and place best suited for that being. Notwithstanding the unparalleled pain of childbearing, the mother is filled with love for the offspring which no devotion can equal; nature has thus ensured continued existence and its flowering. With an irresistible passion, the mother clasps the child to her bosom, and there the child finds its nourishment in sufficient quantity and of the right quality. The milk is at first thin because the child's stomach is weak; but, as its digestion grows stronger, the milk thickens till nature dries it up altogether and thus announces that the child is ready for other less scarce and more suitable nourishment. So it is with mother's love, which is essential for the continuance of existence. Instinctively, it is at its intensest when the new born is but a helpless lump; it diminishes as the child grows stronger till it dies out altogether among the animals and is reduced almost to a memory even among human beings, with their family system.

Another striking aspect of this organisation for the continuance and fulfilment of life is its universality. The same laws apply equally to all beings, whether they are human, animal, vegetable or mineral. A piece of dry stone or a fresh fragrant rose, a tender plant or a lusty child, a humble ant or a proud elephant, an insignificant insect or a mighty man, they are all subject to the same universal cycle of helpless birth, tender

infancy, strong maturity, inexorable decay and again helpless death; they disintegrate or wither or die. Different words are used but they imply the same meaning; they are different garbs to clothe the same reality, the same universal process of creation, sustenance, fulfilment and continued existence.

Even more marvellous than the ordered provision of means of sustenance is nature's organisation of the inner capacity of beings to utilise those means of sustenance. But for such inherent and trained capacity, all the means of sustenance would be useless and life would come to an end. Nature has, therefore, so fashioned every being and endowed it with such capacities that it is fully equipped for the conditions and requirements of its environment, for it is in its own environment that it must seek its fulfilment. This adjustment is brought about in two ways, which the Quran refers to repeatedly and describes as *taqdir* (destiny), and *hidayat* (guidance).

★ *Taqdir* means the proper assessment of something and prescribing a certain state or condition of existence for it. Nothing can move outside the limits of that fixed state. The planets cannot leave their orbit; the oceans cannot leave their bed; the birds cannot live in water and the fish cannot exist on land; the tropical plants cannot be transplanted in the Polar regions and the Polar bear cannot survive near the Equator. That is the Destiny ordered by a wise and beneficent Maker. Every being is equipped for life within its environment, and similarly every environment is so ordered that its products and effects are according to fixed laws, so that there is stable adjustment between the environment and the beings which exist in it and life is not endangered.

Every step in life is subject to guidance, whether external or internal, of some kind and some degree. In the present context, it is necessary to refer to only that aspect of guidance from the *Rabbil-Alameen* (Cherisher and Sustainer of the Universe)³ which enables all beings to seek and obtain the means of their sustenance without which all life would cease. This guidance first comes to every being in the form of instinctive revelation and then it lights the lamps of senses and understanding which give man the illusion of power and independence and lead him to imagine that he guides himself. Man has a very short memory; he forgets that when he came into

the world it was no human guidance which taught him to cry and make his lungs function or to seek his means of sustenance from his mother's breast. No man told him that his mother's nipple was his fountain of life and no man taught him to use his jaws so as to suck that nipple hard and thus to drink from that fountain.

This divine guidance, in the form of instinct, is given to every being so that life may go on. Take, for instance, a cat. It is her first experience of pregnancy and yet, without any external guidance, she knows that she is going to give birth to beings like herself and that she must not only suckle them, so that they may live, but also protect them till they are strong enough to look after themselves. As the moment of arrival of these new beings approaches, she knows that the time has come for her to assume the responsibilities of motherhood. She runs hither and thither, frantically searching for a place where her offspring will be safe. She delivers the kitten and forgets everything as she licks them in her joy of fulfilment. They, on their part, have already begun to seek the means of sustenance and blindly grope for their mother's teats. They cannot see and they cannot be helped in their quest by their mother, who cannot, like a human mother, place her nipple herself in the child's mouth. As soon as they find a teat, they suck it with all their strength, as if they knew that their very life depended upon it. Certainly no human or other being on earth taught the cat and the kitten all the varied and extremely complicated vital processes on which the continuance of life depends.

The next stage of divine guidance is that through the faculties of sense perception and mental understanding. Beings "lower" than man lack intellect and reason, but they possess the powers of senses and understanding in the fullest measure necessary for all the functions relating to self-preservation and reproduction. These powers, it is also to be noted, are not of the same kind or degree for all beings; to each is given exactly that power and in that measure which would enable it to live in the environment or that particular state in which *taqdir* has placed it. The ant is given a relatively stronger sense of smell; the eagle has relatively stronger sight. It would be irrelevant to examine whether these different faculties of animals and insects were so "from the first", whatever that might mean, or whether

they developed to meet the requirements of the situation. What is to be noted is that these faculties could not have been so developed by any human or other earthly agency; they are Nature-given, and Nature has prescribed the laws of existence, adjustment, growth and development which are unalterable.

Thus it is that, after naming *Allah*, the first divine attribute that this *sura* directs our attention to *Rabbil Alameen*, the Lord Who cherishes, nourishes and sustains everything and guides it to its fulfilment. It was this attribute to which Moses referred when he said: "Our Lord is He Who has given everything its form and nature and then granted it guidance" (XX : 50). The same truth is more fully stated elsewhere in the Quran as: "The Lord Most High, Who hath created and then given order and proportion, Who hath fixed a measure for every being and then granted it guidance" (LXXXVII : 2-3).

It is this divine attribute of Cherisher and Sustainer of the Universe upon which much of the argument of the Quran is based, and it may be well, before proceeding further, to state that argument briefly.

The first principle of the Quran's argument is an invitation to the intellect to understand and reflect. Over and over again it impresses upon the reader that the only path to Truth lies through intellect and reason. Man must try to understand and reflect upon everything he feels or perceives within himself and outside. "For those of firm faith, there are signs (i.e. signposts of Truth) (enough) on earth and also within yourselves. Will you not see?" (LI : 20-21). "How many are the signs on earth and in the heavens which they (carelessly) pass by and from which they turn away (their faces)" (XII : 105).

If man will but make use of his intellect and reflect on the created universe, the very first truth that will dawn upon his realisation will be the fundamental and universal law of purposeful creation. Everything in the universe is so made that it is subject to a particular law and discipline and part of an ordered system; there is nothing without good reason or a beneficent ultimate purpose. Were it otherwise, there would not have been this universal discipline and order which so carefully, to the minutest detail, holds together everything in the universe in a single integrated whole. "God has created the

heavens and the earth with good purpose. Verily, in this there is a sign for those who believe" (XXIX : 44), and "yet most of them do not know it" (XLIV : 39).

This doctrine of purposeful creation is applied to, among others, the law of reward and punishment. Everything carries with it a particular effect or result, and all such effects or results are immutable. So must it be with man's actions; they too lead to their due results, good or bad, which cannot be avoided. The law of nature which distinguishes between good and bad in everything else cannot ignore man's conduct. "Do they who do evil think that We shall make them as (equal to) those who believe and who do good, equal to them in life and death? (If so,) bad is their judgment. And God has created the heavens and the earth justly, so that every soul should be given a return according to what it has earned. And no injustice shall be done to any one" (XLV : 21-22).

So it is with life after death. Everything in the universe has a purpose and an end, and it must necessarily be so with human existence also. It cannot be that man, "God's finest handiwork", was created just to live for a brief while and then be destroyed altogether.

The following, in brief, is the argument of the Quran:

1. When the Quran was revealed, the current conceptions of God and systems of faith and worship were untouched by intellect and reason and were based, instead, on irrational dogmas. The Quran offered a rational conception for the worship of God.

2. The call of the Quran is basically addressed to intelligent understanding and rational reflection; it particularly invites man to look carefully at everything in the universe and to reflect upon it.

3. If man will use his powers of understanding and reflection he will realise that everything in the universe has been created with a particular purpose and that it is related to the rest of the universe under a superior discipline and order.

4. Once man begins so to reflect on the purposefulness of creation, the scales will drop from his eyes, his mind will shed ignorance, and the path to Truth will unfold itself before him.

Of all the manifestations of nature, the Quran has drawn mostly, for its argument, on the spirit and power of a Supreme

Nourisher and Sustainer, which is evident in the organisation of the universe as a whole, in every separate nook and corner and in every single being within it. That the universe should so function, that everything in it assists in the fundamental function of sustaining and continuing life, that everything that happens should prove to be a life giving force and, finally, that there should be evident an inherent organisation which takes into account every possible state and circumstance and makes every necessary adjustment cannot but instil in the instinct of man the assurance that there must be a Lord and Sustainer of the Universe. Otherwise such a perfect and flawless organisation for the sustenance and continuance of life in a wholly intelligent and ordered manner could not be possible.⁴

Could such a universe come into existence by itself, without any purpose, will or life force behind it? Is it blind nature, lifeless matter and senseless electrons which have made this perfectly conceived and organised universe, without there being any intelligent will behind it? Can it be that the function of nourishment and sustenance is performed without anyone to perform it, that there is a vast, complicated edifice but no architect, that things damaged are set right again without a repairer, that there are manifestations of mercy but no merciful being, that there are evident signs of intelligence and wisdom without there being a wise intelligence, that there is an organisation without an organiser, a drawing without an artist, a deed without a doer? Man's instinct refuses to accept such a proposition; his reason revolts against it. His nature strives for constructive belief and faith and, in so doing, can pass through but cannot dwell in the barren regions of doubt and disbelief.

The Quran's approach in this matter is not dialectical; it does not propound metaphysical theses and frame logical arguments for them so as to compel an adversary to submission; it addresses itself always to man's natural instinct. According to the Quran, the sentiment of God worship is ingrained in human nature. If a man is inclined to turn away from it, it is but a lapse on his part, and it is necessary to redirect his attention. Arguments will no doubt have to be used for this purpose but they must be such as will not merely create a ferment in his intellect and reason but will knock at the inner recesses of his heart and awaken his natural instinct. Once his instinct is

awake and active, he will need no argument or sermon to take him to his goal. "Man's (very existence) is witness against himself, however he may seek excuses" (LXXV: 14-15).

"Who provides you with nourishment from the sky and the earth? Who has power over your hearing and sight? And Who brings out a living being out of a lifeless one and a lifeless being out of a living one? And Who rules and regulates everything (with such discipline and order)?" (X: 31). "Who created the heavens and the earth? Who sends down for you rain from the sky, then causes to grow orchards, full of beauty and delight, whose trees it is not in your power to cause to grow? Is there another god (to be worshipped) besides Allah? (But alas,) there are people who stray from the right path. Say then, Who fixed the earth as an abode and ran rivers in its folds and, for (giving) it (balance), placed firm mountains and erected a barrier between two waters (i.e. between oceans or between an ocean and a river)? Can there be any god other than Allah? And yet, (alas,) there are many that know not" (XXVII: 60-61). "Let man consider his food (and how We provide it). We (first) pour forth water in abundance, then split the earth in clefts and cause to grow therein corn and grapes and nutritious plants and olives and dates and enclosed gardens of thick foliage and fruits and fodder, provision for you and for your cattle" (LXXX: 24-32). "And verily in the cattle (too) there is a lesson for you. From within their bodies, between excretions and blood, We produce milk which is pure and agreeable to drink. And from the fruits of the date-palm and the vine you obtain both strong drink and good nourishment. Therein also is a sign for the intelligent. And, (consider again), thy Lord inspired the bee to dwell in the hills and in the trees and in the structures (men) put up, and then to suck the juice of all kinds of flowers and to follow the directions of its Lord till there issues from within its body a drink of diverse hues, wherein is healing for men. Verily, herein is a sign for those who reflect" (XVI: 66-69). The argument can go on into infinity, for His mercy and the signs of Truth are infinite.

From an all-pervading Providence, the Quran proceeds directly to the unity of God. To whom can man bow in adoration and submission but to the Lord, Who cherishes and sustains the entire universe and Whose limitless bounty and

mercy one acknowledges with every beat of one's heart? "O mankind, reflect upon Allah's grace. Is there a creator other than Allah who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth? No, there is no God but He" (XXXV: 3).

The argument naturally leads also to the need, for man, of a moral code, of revelation and of a messenger from God. It is not possible that the Lord, Who has provided every necessary thing for man's material well-being, should not also have provided a discipline and order for his spiritual sustenance and progress. The spirit has needs just as much as the body, and it cannot be that God should provide all the wherewithal for the development of the body but nothing for that of the spirit. When the earth is parched and cannot feed man's body, Providence sends down rain from the heavens. Can it be that the same Providence has no life-giving drop for the soul? Does it not follow, therefore, that when mankind is spiritually thirsty and starved, Providence should again be merciful and send down from the heavens guidance to refresh and revitalise the spirit and reveal to it the path of its sustenance and development? If it causes no astonishment that rain descends and revives dead earth, why should it cause any wonder that revelation descends and quickens dead souls to life? It would be a poor reply for the modern science-minded man to say that he can see one but not the other. "Surely, they make no just estimate of God when they say: He sends down naught to man (by way of revelation)" (VI: 91). 'He it is Who has set for you stars that you may guide yourselves with their help through the dark spaces of the land and the sea. Verily, for those who know, We have set forth Our signs in plain terms" (VI: 97). There are nevertheless people who refuse to see and understand. They accept the gift of the stars as a matter of course but refuse to accept that God has also created other "stars" for their spiritual guidance.

The next step in the argument leads to the doctrine of life after death. The greater the care and trouble taken in making a thing the greater must obviously be its intended utility and the more important the purpose it is designed to serve. It does not, therefore, stand to reason that man, the most developed and most carefully and delicately fashioned being among all God's creation, should have been created but for a brief fleet-

ing existence of eating and drinking, toil and merrymaking, without a further end and a higher purpose. "Did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you would not be brought back to us? Allah, the True King, is far above (such a purposeless act)" (XXIII: 115-116).

Man is the last and most perfect link in the chain of creation and has been fashioned after millions and billions of years of unceasing growth and development. All that has taken place on the earth since that immeasurably distant point in the past when this planet came into separate existence has been, as it were, but preparation for the making of man, as he now is. Is it conceivable that all this effort of ages is to end in a flicker-like life for this man? To look at it from another point of view if animal life has in the past been passing from one stage of evolution to another and changing form accordingly, there is no reason to assume that the process of evolution has come to an end and that there are no new forms of life in the future. If, in the past, innumerable forms and shapes of life have disintegrated and disappeared, giving birth to new forms and beings, there is no reason why the present life also should not disintegrate and disappear, to be followed by another and higher form of life. "Does man think that he will be left aimless (without purpose or future)? Was he not a drop of fluid emitted, then a clot and then shaped and fashioned in due proportion?" (LXXV: 36-38). The Lord, Who has cherished, nourished and fashioned man through innumerable stages and forms will surely not leave him suddenly but will continue to raise him to higher stages of development. Man may be the most perfect form yet created on earth, but he is still very far from being a perfect creation.

NOTES

3. Literally Universes, i.e. not only the Universe which we know and to which we belong but all the universes as yet and perhaps for ever beyond our cognition.—A.H.

4. "The argument", says a distinguished writer, "that nature shows a design, which cannot have come into being without a creator or God, could so easily be answered by the contrary assertion that there is little evidence of design or order in the universe, that in fact life is continually bursting from the contours of the known world in the most unforeseen

and wanton manner; and that whereas the God who created such a universe piled up evil and pain, science and human knowledge seek to limit them. And every atom of intelligence in me was forcing me to accept the evidence which the new spotlight of scientific theories casts on the many inexplicable human problems" (Mulk Raj Anand : *Apology for Heroism*). This argument, if I may say so with all respect, is rather a series of assertions which arise from impatience and which beg so many questions and leave so many hanging in the air.

Is there one instance in the universe of lack of design or order? Is there one thing that happens that is "disorderly" or arbitrary, that is outside the orbit of the law of cause and effect, that is incapable of being understood and explained by knowledge and intelligence? What is science but the ever growing and yet ever limited effort of man to know, understand and explain the "design or order" which governs the universe? If life appears to be "continually bursting forth from the contours of the known world in the most unforeseen and wanton manner", it is only because our knowledge of the world is still so woefully limited; but, as the frontiers of human knowledge extend, what is "unforeseen" and appears "wanton" today is a simple and common fact tomorrow which fits into the pattern of the universe in a perfectly orderly and intelligible manner.

To say that God has "piled up evil and pain" is to give in to anger which clouds reason and perception. God has "piled up" not "evil and pain" but the possibilities of joy and pain, construction and destruction, good and evil, in short of everything that goes to make life. God does not arbitrarily dispense reward and punishment. It has been repeatedly stated in the Quran that had God so willed, He could have made man and the universe in a particular pattern; He had but to will a thing and it would be done. He, however, created man and not only provided for him the wherewithal of life but also gave him freedom to act and to put that wherewithal to whatever use he desired. It is for man to use his opportunity well or ill, and whether he extracts good or evil from his environment (to use the word in its most comprehensive sense) is his own responsibility, for it is the result of his acts or omissions. Man is not a puppet or automaton but a free agent. If his freedom is limited by the basic law of cause and effect, that is no limitation but an advantage, for without this certainty he could not increase his knowledge and would be utterly helpless in organising his life; he would ever be a prey to "accidents". It is only through the operation of this law of nature that "science and human knowledge seek to limit" pain and evil.

As for "every atom of intelligence in me forcing me to accept the evidence which the new spotlight of scientific theories casts on the many inexplicable human problems", that is as it should be. That is an injunction so oft repeated in the Quran; over and over again man is urged to reflect, to know and to understand. Only on the basis of knowledge and understanding of himself and his environment can man find the "straight path of rectitude" and attain a full and good life, materially and spiritually. As a further guide to him, the Quran gives to man a code of social

Cherisher and Sustainer

and moral conduct so as to help him to live as a good member of the community and a good man, to recognise and live according to that "world of human values, as including facts rather than as opposed to them". That is the divine "order and design".—*A.H.*

Ar-Rahman-ir-Raheem

The Merciful, the Compassionate

THE TWO words *rahman* and *raheem* are akin, alike in their root and in their meaning, but they are not the same. The root word is *rahm*, and the Arabic word *rahmat* means mercy but in a comprehensive sense which includes the sentiments of kindness, compassion, love, bounty and favour. It is in this sense that both words mean "merciful". The difference between them can be fully appreciated by only those who are conversant with the Arabic language. These are two forms of the same adjective, one which indicates a passing quality and the other which denotes that the quality is a permanent distinguishing mark of the person to whom the adjective refers.⁵ *Rahman* means "merciful" in the former sense and *raheem* in the latter sense. Both the words are together used here in order to emphasise this divine attribute from which, in a sense, flow the other attributes and without which the world could not exist. "My mercy embraceth all things" (VII: 156).

When we look at the universe around us, the first thing that strikes us is the functioning of some force organised for the sustenance of all beings. Reflection leads us to another stage of knowledge, and we see that there is a force even greater than that of sustenance, that of improvement.

This whole set-up of life and motion would not have come into existence if it did not carry within it the quality of correction and improvement. But why is it that nature is essentially

constructive not destructive, bringing about order not disorder and making for improvement and progress not deterioration and retrogression? Human knowledge and reason have not been able to answer this question; they can only say that this constant constructiveness and improvement are due to the adjustment of the primeval elements and to an inherent balance and proportion in matter. To the further question, however, as to why there should be this balance and proportion in nature, why matter should have these characteristics or why the elements should come together in the right proportion and a balanced order, man's knowledge and intellect have no answer to give, except to say lamely that the "law of necessity" demands that nature should be both constructive and selective, that not only should there be construction but good construction. There is no answer at all to the further obvious question as to why there should be such a law, why everything should be according to "need" and why the "need" should be construction and good order and form, not destruction and disorder. Philosophy can take us no further, but the Quran offers guidance and says that nature is merciful and it is the quality of mercy always to better not to worsen.

We see from each and every thing around us that all acts of nature have separately the characteristic of being systematically and uniformly useful, and together they make it appear that the entire universe is organised for our benefit, to fulfil our needs. "Allah is He Who has created the heavens and the earth and causes water to descend from the sky, thereby producing fruits for your food. And He has made the ships subject to you, that they may traverse the oceans by His command. And He has subjected to your service the rivers and also the sun and the moon, constantly pursuing their courses, and the night and the day. He has granted you all that you require and if you would count His gifts you could not reckon (His bounty)" (XIV: 32-34). "We have placed you upon earth, with power to make use of it, and have provided for you there (all) the requisites of life. Little do you render thanks (for these gift)" (VII: 10). "Verily, man is given to injustice and ingratitude" (XIV: 34).

No matter how restricted and uncivilised the life of a man may be, he cannot be ignorant of the fact that he derives all

kinds of benefit from his environment. A woodcutter in his forest hut, as he looks around, cannot but be aware of how that forest ministers to all his needs. When he is ill, the forest provides him with health-giving herbs; when the sun is hot, the trees offer him shade; when he has leisure, he can refresh himself with the soothing scenery of the forest and the pleasing colours of flowers; the trees, which provide him with fruit while they are young, supply him with planks of wood when they are mature and with fuel when they are old.

Nature's bounty is also universal; it ministers to the needs of every creature at the same time. If a rich man in his proud palace can feel that the world is for his benefit, an ant in its humble hole can make the same boast. Is not the sun there to provide warmth for the ant, rain to provide moisture, wind to carry the smell of food to it and the earth to furnish it with abode in every difficult climate and circumstance? Who dare deny it, and who can reject a similar boast by any other creature, for nature tends to all equally and "God's mercy embraces all things"?

It is true that the world is also a place of strife and disturbance. There is, along with construction, destruction and, along with consolidation, disorder. This apparent destruction, however, is only a step towards construction and improvement, just as a sculptor breaks and mutilates a stone in order to produce a beautiful figure. No building can be constructed without first "destroying" or "spoiling" many things, such as stone, earth, steel and wood. The comfort and peace of a home are obtained only after a great deal of hard labour and the discomforts of dirt, noise, etc. So it is with nature. Oceans in storm, rivers in flood and volcanoes in eruption, the snows of winter, the scorching winds of summer and the dark clouds and the inconvenient and even destructive rains of the monsoon are, all of them, uncomfortable and unwelcome, and yet they are all necessary for the continuance and betterment of life; without them there would be no new life and the old life would wither away.

Perhaps the greatest gift of nature's bounty is its all-permeating beauty. Nature not only creates and gives form; there is also beauty in everything it creates and shapes, whether one looks at creation as a whole or at its several aspects indivi-

dually. The twinkling stars and the brilliant sun, the ethereal moon and the vast sky, the kaleidoscopic clouds and the refreshing rain, the rolling oceans and the running rivers, the high mountains and the deep valleys, the scented gardens and the singing birds, the smiling dawn and the shy evening, they all bear witness to nature's desire to create and spread beauty, to make every corner of the world a delight for the eye, a joy for the ear and a very heaven of peace and content for the soul. There are no doubt manifestations of nature in which one fails readily to observe beauty. One finds, for instance, beauty in the song of a nightingale but not in the crowing of a raven. One forgets, however, that music cannot be made with a single note, high or low. "There is not a thing (in the universe) which does not (in its own way) hymn His praise, but you do not understand their (several) hymns" (XVII: 44).

Human knowledge and intellect have failed to answer the question why there should be not only construction but beauty in the world. The Quran answers that it is because God is *rahman* and *raheem*, that He is merciful and His mercy is ever active. We are so engrossed in the artificial comforts of life that we overlook the far greater comforts provided by nature. So it is with the all-pervading beauty of nature. We ignore it, but life would be intolerable if it was devoid of beauty or if we were without a sense of beauty.

It is a universal failing in man that he does not value a thing until he has been deprived of it. Water is not valued on the banks of the Ganga but man would soon realise its value if he had to do without it even for a day. Similarly, we do not care to leave our bed in the morning to witness the miracle of dawn, because morning comes every day in all its glory. We do not appreciate the moonlight and its transcendental beauty, because it has become a part of routine, and we stay in closed rooms, but we would be in a desperate state if the moonlight were to disappear from our life. Only those in a cloud-laden cold region can realise what a great boon the rays of the sun are. Only a bed-ridden sick man can appreciate fully how much the sight of a clear blue sky means in life.

It seems inconceivable that anyone should consider himself poor and deprived who has the supreme gifts of light and colour, fragrance and music. The gifts of nature are indeed so

sentiment, ensuring not only the continuity of mankind but also its progress through consciousness of community and co-operative endeavour.

Nor is it only kinship which gives life its interesting and attractive character. Differences make a contribution no less important. Man's nature is such that it soon tires of sameness or even similar things and seeks variety. This variety is to be found in all the creatures and phenomena of nature, in time and season, day and night, summer and winter, land and water, hills and plains, green forests and arid deserts and their analogues within each kind. Every animal is different from another in shape and form and in all other respects. Every plant differs from another in size and shape, in colour and smell, in taste and in all its other properties. So it is also with minerals and all material objects.

Another aspect of this natural law of difference, which may be called the law of pairs, is that everything is in pairs, there is nothing odd. For every night there is a day, for every winter there is a morning, for every masculine being there is a feminine match. It is this law of nature which has divided man into two sexes and filled them with such instincts of sympathy and interaction, sensation and emotion, that there is a natural and irresistible attraction between the sexes, a mutual attraction which leads to the perpetuation of life. This is so, says the Qur'an, "And We created man in pairs, love and contentment, that you may dwell with them in peace, and may render the labour of you more pleasant." "He created for you, from himself, mates, that you may dwell with them in peace, and may render the labour of you more pleasant." "He created for you, from himself, mates, that you may dwell with them in peace, and may render the labour of you more pleasant." "He created for you, from himself, mates, that you may dwell with them in peace, and may render the labour of you more pleasant."

The Merciful, the Compassionate

variety but also goad man to fresh activities and enterprises and thus not only turn the rigours of his labours into pleasures of effort and joys of fulfilment but also ensure human progress. In accordance with His wise and beneficent plan, God "has made you successors on the earth (of those who went before you) and has exalted some of you in rank above others, that He may try you by (the test of) that which He has given. He is indeed swift in punishing (misdeeds), but verily He is also forgiving and merciful" (VI: 165).

Just as the Quran argues from the facts which clearly reveal the existence of a Nourisher and Preserver, so it also repeatedly argues from the equally clear manifestations of Divine Mercy. Since in everything we see not only an organisation and order but also signs of grace and mercy, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that there must be a gracious and merciful intention and force behind it all. "Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, in the difference between night and day, in the ships which run upon the sea for the profit of mankind, the rain which God sends down from the sky, thereby giving life to an earth that is dead, in the beasts that He disperses upon the earth, and in the ordinance of the winds and the clouds which trail obediently between the sky and the earth—(in all these) are signs for those who understand" (II: 164).

Divine Mercy manifests itself further in the beauty and perfection of all creation. The appropriateness and right proportion of everything around us call for reflection and it is impossible to resist the conclusion that it has not all happened haphazardly but that there is a purposeful force behind all creation and that that force is a merciful one. He "hath created the seven heavens in harmony, one above another. No want or proportion will thou see in the creation of the Beneficent, Most Gracious. Look again. Canst thou see any flaw? Then look again and yet again. The night will return discom-
forted, and thou shalt be able to detect any rift or

the need for divine revelation. The Quran asks how it is possible to imagine that the Mercy and Grace which pervade themselves in every nook and corner of the universe and which have provided everything necessary for the physical well-being of man have nothing to offer for his inner guidance and eternal benefit. So it is that revelation, the gift of the Book and the assignation of prophets are referred to over and over again from God. "This (the Quran) is the light of clear reason and a guidance and mercy for those who believe" (XLV: 20). "And to mankind, there has come to you an exhortation and a guidance from your Lord, a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts, a guidance and a mercy for believers" (X: 57). "And before (the Quran), (there was) the Book of Moses, a guidance and a mercy" (XI: 17). "And we sent thee (Mohammed) as a mercy for the entire universe" (XXI: 107).

In the material world we see the constant operation of the natural law of selection. What is it? It is a process of God's mercy, which preserves what is beneficial and eliminates what is harmful, such as scum and froth. The Quran explains this connection, the terms "true" and "false" and says that the true remains and the false is eliminated. This law applies not only to material things but also to human beings. "We will hurl the true against the false, and the false will be destroyed. Lo! it (the false) does perish" (XXI: 105). This is a natural law of nature, and it is a mercy of God, which is revealed because of our shortsightedness.

The effect inevitably of this law is that the true is preserved and the false is sometimes so great that it is almost impossible to see. The heat is applied to the false and the true is revealed. The effect of this law is that the true is preserved and the false is eliminated. This is a natural law of nature, and it is a mercy of God, which is revealed because of our shortsightedness.

deed and desert, is but the leniency of Divine Mercy. Another way of stating the same truth would be to say that man is given the opportunity to derive the fullest benefit from this life and to enrich it by his conduct.

So it is that the code of religious belief and conduct which the Quran presents to man is based entirely on mercy and love, for man's spiritual life is not separate from but an integral part of the natural order and the entire basis of that order is Divine Mercy. There are over three hundred places in the Quran dealing with mercy, and if we take into account the passages dealing with the other related attributes it can be said that the Quran is, from the beginning to the end, nothing but a message of Divine Mercy.⁶

This emphasis on the quality of mercy is a pointed message of God to man, for man is, in a manner of speaking, God's "viceregent" or "shadow" on earth. His very nature and existence demand that he should cultivate divine qualities and practise them in his relations with fellowmen, and the most fundamental divine qualities are those of justice and mercy. The Quran does not enjoin on us to love our enemies, for that would be unrealistic and contrary to human nature, unacceptable to the instinct of self-preservation and also inconsistent with the conception and requirements of justice. It does, however, repeatedly and pointedly, urge us to temper justice with mercy, for that would be an act both of grace and spiritual advancement and of enlightened self-interest and it would also be the surest way to reform the wayward offender. "If you punish, then the punishment must be exactly similar and in proportion to the injury done to you; but if you can restrain yourself and be patient, it is best for you" (XVI: 126). "Whoever forgives and (thus) mends matters shall receive his reward from God" (XLII: 40). "Good and evil cannot be equal. If you return good for evil, you will see that your enemy will become your heart-friend; but only those of you can attain this height who have been given grace, self-restraint and patience" (XL: 34-36). "If you do not pardon the fault of those who have committed it, they will be the losers" (XXIV: 22). "If you do not pardon the fault of those who have committed it, they will be the losers" (XXIV: 22).

NOTES

5. Illustrations of the first form are atashan (thirsty), bakan (weary, tired) and sakaran (intoxicated) and of the second azem (wise), hakim (a person of knowledge) and hakeem (wise).

6. Indeed mercy is an essential attribute of divinity; "He hath ordained mercy unto Himself" (VI: 12). So that even when man has earned punishment with his evil deeds Divine Mercy is ever present to offer him refuge and solace; "O my worshippers who have transgressed against your own souls, despair not of God's mercy. Verily God pardons all sins; He is indeed the Forgiving, the Merciful" (XXXIX: 53) — A. Yusuf.

7. At this point the author has taken occasion to deal at length with the misconception that the teaching of Christ was contrary to the nature and inconsistent with the Quran. For the sake of brevity, I am refraining from summarising it. The burden of the argument, however, is that the misconception has arisen from giving the following interpretation to an injunction stated in a beautiful and arresting form: "Do not imagine that any precept of his is contrary to human nature, nor that it is of being practised by men generally. It is also a denial of the distinction taken by the Quran that it is nothing but a revelation of the same Message which was given to mankind by an unaltered succession of prophets, including Jesus Christ. "Nothing is said to contradict what was said but what was said to the apostles before them" (XXXIII: 45). It is to be remembered that over and over again the Quran has warned against the tendency to discriminate among Prophets, "There is no superiority of one over another. "Say: We believe in that which was revealed unto us and in that which was revealed unto your fathers" (II: 175). "We believe in that which was revealed unto Jacob and the Tribes and in that which was revealed unto Moses" (II: 253). "(all the) Prophets have been sent in the same way: We have revealed unto him and another among them" (XXI: 107).

Malik-i-Yaum-id-Deen

Lord of the Day of Judgment

THE NEXT attribute of God which is referred to is that of justice, and He is addressed as the Lord of the Day of Judgment.

The current religious beliefs had invested God with the characteristics of an absolute and moody monarch who, when he was pleased, showered gifts all around him or, when he was displeased, inflicted dire punishment. Thus arose the custom of offering sacrifices to appease God's wrath and win His favour. The Quran's conception of God, however, is not that of an arbitrary ruler who governs according to his moods and whims. On the contrary, the law of divine reward and retribution is a natural law and merely another form of the law of cause and effect which has universal application. We see its operation in the physical world around us all the time and should therefore have no difficulty in understanding its operation in relation to our spiritual conduct. If we understand that the quality of fire is to burn, that of water to cool and that of poison to kill, and if when we sow wheat we are certain that what we shall reap will be nothing but wheat, how is it possible to believe that God will punish or reward us arbitrarily? It is a natural law which will be applied to all alike.

he has earned, and he shall have to answer for only what he has earned" (II: 286). This message is frequently reiterated and it is made clear that if man is asked to do good and avoid evil, the object is not to appease a wrathful God but only to avoid self-injury and self-destruction and to attain grace and salvation. "Whoever does good it is for his own benefit; whoever does evil it is against his own soul. Thy Lord is not a tyrant to His servants" (XLI: 46). Man's limited intelligence has often failed to understand natural "calamities" and attributed them to the wrath of a terrible God, and thus fear and terror wrongly came to be associated with the conception of God. These "terrible" manifestations of nature are in reality a manifestation of Divine Mercy, for if nature did not provide such correctives, justice would be disturbed and the entire existence would be disorganised. It is not an arbitrary rule that makes everything in some measure and form, an essential prerequisite for human construction. So, just as man needs the protection of the Divine Preserver and the grace and bounty of God to flourish, he cannot do without the divine quality of justice, which is essential for organised good life and elimination, or at least control, of the elements of harm and mischief.

What is justice? It is the equilibrium of the forces of nature, to be neither too much nor too little. It is the balance of the scales, the emblem of justice. What is equilibrium? It is the balance of the forces of certain elements in a system, whether it be a human body or a social body, but physical equilibrium, which is the basis of health, depends upon moderation. It is not too hot, not too cold, not too dry, not too wet, not too high, not too low, not too fast, not too slow, not too much, not too little. It is the balance of the forces of nature, the equilibrium of the forces of nature, the emblem of justice.

be that human thought and action are outside that law. "Do they seek any other than the religion of God, while all creatures in the heavens and on the earth submit to His will, willingly or unwillingly?" (III: 83). Contrariwise, the Quran refers to every misconduct and evil as a departure from justice or balance or proportion.

This attribute of justice completes the Quranic conception of God, and if it is mentioned after His attributes as the Preserver and the Merciful, it is to indicate the natural stages in the development of man's thought and his search for truth and reality. It is a Preserver that man's existence needs most visibly and immediately and to whom his thought turns first. Once this need is fulfilled and the conception of a Preserver firmly fixed, human thought moves forward and perceives the mercifulness of the Preserver. With the recognition of the Preserver Who is also Merciful, man moves on to the last stage in his search and realises that there is an all-pervading Justice, without which indeed both Preservation and Mercy would be incomplete and defective.

Iyyaka Naabudo wa Iyyaka Nasta'een

Thee (alone) do we worship, and Thee (alone) do we ask for help.

WITH THIS verse starts the second part of the prayer. The preceding verses were an invocation, calling to the worshiping oneself to God by some of His most distinguished names. And now starts the prayer, but the prayer begins with a statement of the place of God in one's spiritual life and one's own position in relation to God.

This verse is perhaps the core of the prayer, and it is the teaching of Islam. If one has any doubts about the teaching upon the teaching implied in the verse, he should consult a Muslim in the fullest sense of the word.

The basic conception of God in Islam is that of a personal God, a God who is the creator of the universe, the sustainer of life, the provider of food, the giver of life, and the taker of life.

forbade its practice in relation to anyone else. That those who call themselves Muslims do prostrate themselves today at the tombs of saints all over the world is merely a sad commentary on how far we have strayed from the teaching of the Quran and what a sorry and distorted picture of Islam we present to the world.

The conception of Unity to be found in different religions of the world can be classified into three kinds :

- (1) "Unity of Being". God is one and unique.
- (2) "Unity of Worship". God is entitled to worship and we must all bow before Him.
- (3) "Unity of Attributes". Not only is God one and entitled to worship, but all the attributes through which God manifests Himself belong to Him alone and none else shares those divine attributes. To make anyone else share any of those attributes with God is to give God partners and to destroy His unity.

Unity of the first two kinds was found in all the older religions, but the third kind was peculiar to Islam. By emphasising the unity of Attributes, the Quran perfected the conception of Unity. Many gods were worshipped but there was also allegiance to a Supreme God. It did not occur to one to ask how it was possible to worship more than one God because the Unity of Attributes did not form part of the conception of Unity. This was the case with Arabs also before Islam was revealed to them. If they were asked who created the world and the heavens they had no hesitation in replying that it was Allah. Nevertheless they also worshipped not only numerous gods but also men in high-spiritual authority, not because the latter were gods but because they were the "go-betweens" through whom one could reach God. Just as one could not approach God directly but had to go through several other

ing the Unity of Attributes, swept aside all these doctrines and proclaimed that man needed no sponsors or intercessors to reach his God; He answers all who call upon Him with a true and faithful heart.

It is therefore not only unnecessary but a denial of the Unity of God and of Divine Mercy and Guidance to beg for any spiritual help except from God. There often comes a time in one's life when one has exhausted all avenues of material assistance and feels helpless. It is at such times that man instinctively calls upon gods, angels and saints for help and comfort. The Quran says that such assistance must be asked for from God and from no one else, for to do so would be to make others share the attributes of God and to lose the basic concept of the Unity of God.

Whatever may be the degenerate practices in the Muslim world today, the Quran strictly forbids such practices. It is claimed over and over again that he was but an ordinary mortal being, like everyone else ("like you" in the words of the Quran) and no more than a messenger of God, as there were innumerable messengers before him. The Quran has also uttered a severe warning against worshipping anything but God. A reminder of this was given during the time of the Prophet Muhammad Bakr, who became the head of the tribe of the Quraish, who were mad. Even then, when all the people were worshipping their long established idols, he was the only one who stood up with great and noble courage to tell them that they were worshipping but he also told them that they were worshipping themselves. He said:

on a quasi-divine pedestal when the Quran warns us over and over again against regarding Mohammad as any thing other than an ordinary human being, like us, who was, however, inspired, as so many other prophets before him, with God's message for mankind. Besides the verse already cited, "Say: I am (only) a man like you" (XLI : 6), there are literally scores of verses warning and emphasising that Mohammad, whose hold over his people was so great that he would have been invested with divinity if he had permitted it, was but an ordinary human being who was only a bearer of good tidings and a warner to mankind (XIII : 7, XLI : 9, VIII : 188, XXVII : 92, XXXIV : 28, XXXVIII : 65 etc.), who had the honour of being God's messenger, as there had been countless before him, for God's mercy and grace were not confined to any one people; for every people there has been a guide (IX : 113, IV : 163-164, VII : 188, XIII : 7, XVII : 93, XVIII : 110, XXII : 49, XXXIV : 28, XXVI : 3, XLI : 6, XLVI : 9, X : 47, XVI : 36, XXX : 47 etc.)

That indeed was Mohammad's real glory that, claiming to be no more than an ordinary human being, he rose to such heights of human perfection. Having grown up in a community steeped in ignorance, superstition and corruption, he not only reformed that society out of all recognition but came to be acknowledged as one of the very greatest moral and spiritual leaders of mankind; being illiterate, he gave to the world one of its greatest systems of philosophy; with no experience except of the darkness of that dark age he built up a well organised state and an enlightened society, a modern society in the best sense of the term. How modern and enlightened that society was can be judged from a perusal only of the instrument of instructions which Mohammad's cousin, disciple and son-in-law, Ali, as the head of the state, issued to Malik bin Haris Ashtar in 38 A. H. (c. 660) when appointing him as Governor of Egypt (*Nahjul Balagha*, epistle 53). Perhaps Ali intended those instructions not specifically for Malik, who was too well acquainted with the dictates of Allah and wishes of Ali to need a reminder—"Malik was in my estimation what I was in that of the Prophet",—but for all those entrusted with the administration of Muslim societies. There is no aspect of government or administration which has not been dealt with in that letter. It contains moral precepts particularly important for one entrusted with the authority and responsibilities of government. It deals with how to conduct oneself towards and concerning the people ruled, emphasising the rights of the people and the need for such being able to voice their complaints and demands fearlessly; it deals with the conduct of the affairs of state, the duties and responsibilities of the army, the executive and the judiciary, the manner in which the army is to be organised by the best men available and the manner in which the treasury is to be managed, the manner in which

And after the passage of more than thirteen hundred years, the principles of government and administration enunciated by Muhammad's disciple remain the high water mark of enlightened government and statesmanlike wisdom. One cannot but wonder, as did an eminent scholar of the West, how this guide for the ruler/statesman could be created by a man thirteen hundred years ago. If such was the disciple, what was of the master?

If I may venture to add a word, I should like to state my own understanding of this verse, which I regard as the most complete summary of the Quran's spiritual teaching. It is pregnant with meaning and an eternal beacon for human conduct. It is a constant guide to man's everyday life, a constant reminder not only of man's duty to God but also of his duty to himself; the two duties are really complementary and inseparable, for they emanate from the same fundamental position of life. While it teaches us complete submission to and dependence upon God, it also forbids submission to and dependence upon anyone else. "We instal not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God" (III : 64). "If God is your helper, none can overcome you; and if He withdraws His help from you, who is there, after that, who will help you? In God (alone), therefore, let believers put their trust" (III : 159).

This does not mean that one must not submit to or obey properly constituted authority—that would be indisciplinarian, which is not only of progress but also of self-development—or that one should not seek any help from others, for without mutual help and co-operation "no society can exist. What I understand the verse to mean is that while submitting to properly constituted authority and its discipline, one must not bow before other powers, whether of men or of the world, for any ulterior motive; one should not worship anything but God. It is necessary to add that one's submission to authority and discipline must always be subject to the condition that it does not lead to disobedience to God. Secondly, while one should not bow before other powers, one should be by way of help to others, for God loves the person who also gives; one should not be a mere taker. Thirdly, one should not expect one's submission to authority and discipline to be a means of

Ihdinas-Siratal-Mustaqueem

Guide us on the straight path

THE TERM "straight path" is self-explanatory; it means the path that is straight and orderly, not crooked and/or wayward. It must also be the right path, a path that leads to good and salvation, not evil and damnation. That is why the Quran helps us to identify the straight path by adding "the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy grace, not (of) those upon whom is Thy wrath or who have gone astray". Who are those upon whom God has bestowed His grace? "Whoever obeys Allah and His Prophet he is of those upon whom He hast bestowed His grace, the prophets, the men of truth, the witnesses (to Truth) and the righteous. The first category of prophets (*nabiyeen*) includes all bearers of God's message who came, anywhere at any time, to guide mankind. The second category of men of truth (*siddiqueen*) comprises all men who are so imbued with truth that nothing opposed to truth can enter their mind or heart. The third category of witnesses (*shuhada*) comprises those who uphold truth with their word and deed in all circumstances, at any cost, that is why those who lay down their lives for the sake of truth are called witnesses.

The fourth category of (*swaleheen*) comprises those who quickly and readily adhere to good conduct and shun evil. And none of these categories admits any distinction of race, colour or country. Thus *siratal mustaqueem* is the right path of all mankind, not the path of any particular people. Similarly the terms *maghzoobe alaihim* and *zal-leen* also mean all those, regardless of their associations and professions, who have been brought upon themselves God's wrath and those who have gone astray. *Maghzoobe alaihim* are those who found the right path and its blessings but turned away from it and went to the path of evil, while *zal-leen* are those who go astray through ignorance. And so the Quran starts by teaching us to pray for guidance on the path of *sublyan*, *shuhada* and *swaleheen* and to avoid that of *maghzoobe* and *zal-leen*.

It has already been indicated that the divine light which the Preserver carries with it also shines upon the world. This Guidance, for without the guidance of nature, man cannot sustain itself. This guidance is the light of nature which enables every creature to get on its feet. "The Most Gracious, Who has created and then bestowed on whomsoever He pleases His guidance" (LXXXVII 2-3).

There are three stages of guidance. The first stage is the instinct, which is present even in the lowest of animals. It is there as he is born than he begins to move. This guidance is not the result of any external instruction, but is an inherent faculty of nature itself. The second stage is the guidance of nature, which is the faculty of nature which enables the creature to get on its feet through the instinct. The third stage is the guidance of the Preserver, which is the faculty of nature which enables the creature to get on its feet through the instinct.

The Straight Path

take us thus far and no further. The eye, for instance, sees but only under certain conditions ; if there is no light or the distance is too great, we cannot see any object even though it is there to see. Our knowledge, therefore, remains imperfect, and there is need for deducing knowledge through reasoning from cause and effect and framing rules and principles of universal application. That is the function of intellect, but intellect too can guide us only up to a point, and beyond that there is need for further guidance. Just as the world of senses is strictly limited, so also are there definite restrictions which intellect cannot break through. Intellect is confined to the limits imposed by the senses, for it can function only within the limits of such knowledge as we can reach through the five senses. What is there beyond the world of senses ? Intellect is itself lost in wonder and can guide us no further.

Moreover, intellect is hardly an adequate or effective guide in practical life. Man is so pressed by desires and emotions that when there is conflict between reason and emotion the victory is very often with the latter. How often are we warned by reason to refrain from an act that is harmful or even fatal and yet are unable to resist the emotions which persuade us to that act ! That most powerful arguments of reason cannot keep us from losing control of ourselves when in anger or from eating something harmful when compelled by hunger. If, therefore, He Who sustains and tends us has equipped us with senses, so that we may guard against instinct leading us astray and endowed us with intellect to correct the errors of the senses does it not follow that He must have provided us with something else also to afford us guidance when intellect is exhausted and helpless ? The Quran answers in the affirmative and says that this fourth stage of guidance is that of revelation or divine inspiration. "Verily, it is for Us (to give) the guidance" (XII: 12).

The word for divine guidance is *Al-Huda* (The Guidance)

and the word for universal guidance is *Al-Huday* (The Guidance)

and the word for individual guidance is *Al-Huday* (The Guidance)

and the word for individual guidance is *Al-Huday* (The Guidance)

and the word for individual guidance is *Al-Huday* (The Guidance)

and the word for individual guidance is *Al-Huday* (The Guidance)

and the word for individual guidance is *Al-Huday* (The Guidance)

and the word for individual guidance is *Al-Huday* (The Guidance)

and the word for individual guidance is *Al-Huday* (The Guidance)

different groups is false. There is but one true path, a universal path for all mankind and the Quran calls for it, i.e. unqualified and complete submission to God, which is the cardinal principle on which the entire teaching of the Quran is based.

“(To begin with), mankind was but a single community but then differences arose” (X: 19). Originally man lived in a natural life and there was no difference or clash with fellowmen. Gradually, however, mankind multiplied and his needs grew, giving rise to differences, clashes of interest, then open struggle, exploitation and oppression. The peaceful life of harmony and content gave way under the pressure of stresses and strains; men came even to hate each other and the strong oppressed the weak. When this happened, it became necessary to provide right guidance for mankind and to be sure that justice and truth should prevail. So, at intervals there was a succession of Divine Messengers who came and affirmed the message of God. “And so God sent messengers (one after another) as bearers of good tidings (to those who did good deeds) and as warners (to those who turned away), and He sent with them the Book with which He may set at rest the differences which are between the men” (II: 213). This guidance was not for any particular race, community, time or place, but for all the people (in the world) without exception. “We have revealed the Book to you in Arabic, that you may understand them” (XXXV: 24).

It is sad to reflect that the message of the Quran is being preached in different places, by different people, in different languages, and in the privilege of different religions. This is a sad state of affairs, and it is a pity that the message of the Quran is being preached in different places, by different people, in different languages, and in the privilege of different religions.

The law of nature is throughout the same, in every corner of existence, and so is divine guidance the same for mankind throughout the ages and in every corner of the earth. That universal path is submission (Islam) to the One Lord of the Universe and living a life of right action. Every religious leader always invited men to follow the one common religion and to avoid differences and factions.

God created all men alike as human beings but they divided themselves into groups and factions on the basis of race, colour, language, nationality etc. Mankind was thus divided and subdivided by innumerable artificial differences. There remained but one single relationship, one sacred bond which still held mankind together and which could unite them again in spite of all differences; this, as every Prophet or Messenger of God pointed out, was the common worship of the One God. No matter how we may differ from each other, our God cannot be different; no matter what our race, colour, country or nationality, when we bow in submission before the same God, all our earthly differences disappear and we feel as if the whole world is our home and the entire mankind our family; we are all children of the same Divine Father. Hence it was that the teachings of all Messengers of God were basically the same, confirming each other, and the Quran professed to do no more than confirm and reiterate the teachings of all the Prophets gone by. "(O Mohammad), to thee We have sent the Book with the truth, confirming the (message contained in the) Books sent down before it" (V: 48).

It may be asked why, if the founders of the various religions all taught the same basic principles, differences grew up between religions. The Quran explains that these differences are of two kinds, those which the followers of various religions have themselves created, through having turned or strayed away from the real teachings of those religions, and those genuine differences which are contained in the canons and practices of those religions, and which are in the form of worship. These latter differences are the distinguishing characteristics of a religion, and

The object of religion is reform and welfare of the community. This object can be fulfilled only in the context of the prevailing conditions and circumstances, which differ from time to time and from place to place. It is necessary, therefore, that the code of conduct must be such as to suit the circumstances of the time and place and the social fabric and intellectual maturity of the people for whom the code is evolved. This is, however, no more important than the physical and social differences which distinguish one people from another and has no bearing on the essence of religion. It is a sign of a people moving away from true religion when they begin to attach primary importance to such differences of form and practice. The Quran has repeatedly warned against this and instructed every man clearly what constitutes true religion. "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces (when worshipping) to the east or to the west; but righteous is he who believes in the Last Day and God's angels and the Book and the Prophet, who shares his wealth, for the love of Him, with his kinsmen, the needy, the wayfarer and those who are in bondage, and who sets free those in bondage and is steadfast to his promise, aside the prescribed portion of his wealth, who is true to his word and remains firm and constant in adversity and in times of fear and poverty, who are true and God-fearing." (2:177) This is the essence of true religion and the person who fulfills these conditions is called a Muslim or by another name, a person who is permanently or forever obedient to God.

When the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) came to this world, he was identified as a Muslim and he was called a Muslim.

When the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) came to this world, he was identified as a Muslim and he was called a Muslim.

to surpass each other through year good deeds" (V: 48).

It follows, therefore, that one's attitude towards followers of other religions must be one of broadminded and understanding tolerance. It is a frailty of human nature that every group regards its own ways as the best and cannot look at them through the eyes of its critics. The only right course for man, therefore, is one of patience and tolerance.

"(O Mohammad), if the Lord had so willed, all men on earth would have joined the faith (but, in His wisdom, He left them free to choose their path according to their own understanding). Wouldst thou then compel people to accept the faith?" (X: 99). "And do not revile those to whom they pray besides God, lest they, in their ignorance, revile God out of spite. (Remember) We have made each people's ways and doings appear alluring to them. In the end they will all return to their Lord, and We shall then tell them the truth about their ways and deeds" (VI: 108).

It was this division of mankind into so many exclusive and mutually antagonistic groups which made the message of the Quran necessary. There should otherwise have been no need for the revelation of the Quran, since the object of all religions was the same and they were all founded on truth. While, however, all religions were true, their followers had strayed from truth and it was, therefore, necessary for a fresh divine call, which was the Quran, to bring all mankind together again to the eternal but long lost truth.

The Quran enumerates, repeatedly and at some length, the errors into which followers of the various religions had fallen. One of the greatest errors was forming separate groups and developing a spirit of narrowminded clannishness and faction. The evil grew to such proportions that every religious group forgot the object of religion, ignored the fundamental teachings of religion, disregarded faith and conduct and considered only whether someone affirmed allegiance to that group or to some other group. In the name of faith and deeds, a breach was exposed between the various religions. The Quran, therefore, and the straight path which it laid down, was a call to unity and to the truth.

destroyed because they were identified with a group other than their own or one's own.

The Quran, therefore, recalled men to true religion and reminded them that

- (a) man's salvation depends not on his belonging to a particular group but on his own right belief and right action;
- (b) God's religion is the same for all mankind, and to forget this unity and universality of religion and to form mutually antagonistic groups is to stray from the right path altogether; and
- (c) the essence of all religions is to worship One God, the Lord of the Universe. This is what is taught by every founder of a religion. "Whoever believes (in the Quran) or does good (for himself) Jews, Christians or Sabians, whoever believes in God and the Last Day and whose good deeds have not become void, we shall receive his reward from the Lord and he shall not be afraid nor grieve" (2:62).

So it was that the Quran explicitly reminded men that it did not invite them to form sects. It instead called upon them to stand united against the forces of evil and factions and to strive for the good which was intended them to be. The Quran is not a new religion but a message which has come to men in different ages and in different lands. It is a message which is meant to be a guide for all men in all times and in all places.

phets. It is not possible to accept one or some of them and to reject the others, for they all brought the same Message. To differentiate between the various Prophets is to lose the right path. "Those who deny God and His Prophets, who seek to make distinction between God and His Prophets and say: "We believe in some of them and do not believe in others" and who wish to adopt a separate path in between (faith and unfaith); such are the people who are in truth unbelievers" (IV: 150).

The Quran did not, therefore, ask men to accept a new religion but instead called upon them to act honestly in accordance with the true teaching of their own religion. "O people of the Book! You shall have naught (of religion) until you observe truly the teachings of the Torah, the Gospel and all that has been revealed to you from your Lord" (V: 68).

The basic teachings of all the religions were the same and the Quran merely reiterates them; it enjoins those actions which are universally acknowledged as right and forbids those actions which are universally considered wrong. It is this universally recognised path of rectitude which the Quran calls upon man to follow, and all other paths and diversions which lead to differences and divisions he is to avoid. This true path, this common religion of all the Prophets, is referred to in the Quran as Islam, because it holds that the essence of religion is submission (*Islam*) to God and the law He has made for man's conduct in the same way as there are laws of nature for every other being in existence. "In the eyes of God there is but one religion, and that is Islam (submission to His Will and Guidance). If then they dispute with thee (O Mohammad) in this matter, say: 'My way and that of my followers is to submit to God and we have bowed in submission to Him'. And say to those who have been given the Book and those who are unlearned: 'Do you (too) submit yourselves (to God)?' If they do, they have found guidance (and there is no further cause for dispute). If they turn away, thy duty is only to convey the Message, and to explain the Quran, and to give evidence regarding His

religion was regarded no more than as a basis of social organisation in the same way as social groups were formed on the basis of race, clan or family. Every religious group considered truth to be its exclusive preserve; everyone within the group was assured of salvation and everyone outside was doomed to perdition.

(2) In every religious group, religion had come to be identified with outward practices and rituals, such as form of worship, sacrificial customs, eating or abstaining from certain kinds of food etc. Salvation depended upon the observance of these practices and customs.

(3) Since these practices and customs varied from group to group, to religion, every group considered the religion of another group as devoid of truth.

(4) Since every religious group not only believed its own religion to be true but also considered other religions to be false, it necessarily led to bigotry, hatred and intolerance.

(5) The Quran, therefore, placed before mankind the principle of the universality of true religion.

- (a) It declared that all religions were true and that religion was a common gift of God to mankind and not the monopoly of any one group.
- (b) It proclaimed that, the ultimate aim of religion was man's spiritual fulfilment and that the greatest sin was to divide themselves into sects and to divide themselves against themselves.
- (c) It explained that the only way to achieve the unity of mankind was to accept the religion of God.

(f) Finally, it proclaimed in unequivocal terms that its message was no more than that all religions were true but that their followers had turned away from their true teachings. The common true core of all religions is referred to by the Quran as *Deen* (the religion) or *Islam* (submission to God).

(6) Man has shattered all bonds that could unite mankind into a single community or brotherhood. There was but one race, but it has been split into thousands of races; there was but one nation, but it has been divided into innumerable nations; all men were of one status, but there are now countless classes of rich and poor, high and low. There is but one single bond which can again gather together the scattered and divided family of man, and that is common worship of the One God. The realisation that we are all creatures of the same Lord, that our Cherisher and Sustainer is the same, can reawaken that sentiment of relationship and unity which will conquer and transcend all man-made differences.

Conclusion

LET US now, by way of summing up, consider the chapter of the Quran, *Al Fataha*, as a spiritual lesson or guidance. It contains four verses of prayer which is offered several times daily. What is likely to produce on the emotional, intellectual and spiritual development of a man who repeats it so often, not only with his lips but from his heart?

Such a man loses himself in adoration of the God of this or that race, nation, or religion, the Lord of the entire universe, the Creator of all, Whose mercy, strength and power are infinite. This not only makes him a more devoted worshipper, but also gives him a more comprehensive view of the world. It is the prayer of a man who is not only a worshipper of God, but also a worshipper of His creation.

Conclusion

of a saintly man or to be the keeper of a shrine or the trustee of a seat of pilgrimage carries far greater prestige and influence than is possible for the best of the faithful, the most righteous among men. No one will care to look at a Muslim true in faith and action, but thousands will rush to kiss the hands of a wicked keeper or trustee of a shrine who transgresses all laws of Islam". We judge a man by his appearance and professions not by his deeds. Hence the emphasis on exhibitionism and hypocritical loud professions about Islam, with never a care for being, leave alone persuading others to become, a true Muslim.

This is the regretful reply to my kind non-Muslim reader's question.

Appendix Islamic Order

Ali's instructions to the Governor-designate of Egypt

After the foregoing brief statement of the spiriqual message of the Quran it may not be inappropriate to see how it was translated into practical terms, what the Islamic Society was to be, how an Islamic State was to be administered.

تاریخ

موضوع

محل وقوع

Author's Note on Translation

THE ISLAMIC upsurge is a recent worldwide phenomenon of increasing dimensions. There is an urgent demand in almost every country with a Muslim majority for replacing the present social and political system with the Islamic system. Regrettably, however, ideas about what is the Islamic order are not very clear even among the protagonists, much less among the critics and opponents. It may thus perhaps be of some help to look at an early "blueprint" of an Islamic state drawn in fairly comprehensive outline by Ali, the cousin-protege and disciple of Mohammad.

The Islamic order does not depend upon the promulgation of certain formal laws; it means the transformation of the society in accordance with the principles of justice, good conduct and welfare of the people which Islam set out to establish. That is the work not only of the legislator but of each and all members of the community and specially of those in positions of authority whose duty it is to give the lead and set an example to the community. It is from this point of view that the instrument of instructions which Ali, as the head of the Islamic State, issued to Malik ibn Haris-el-Ash'ari when the latter was the Governor of Egypt assumes even greater impor-

dictates of Allah and the wishes of Ali. And I venture to add that while these instructions were addressed to the governor of a Muslim state their relevance and import are universal. They were intended for all rulers and administrators who have the authority and responsibility for building up a truly Islamic society or, for that matter, any enlightened and humane society. These were instructions, in their comprehensiveness, balance and wisdom, have not been surpassed or perhaps even equalled in all these more than thirteen hundred years, and it is a marvel that they could have been composed by a man living in a country only just emerging from a long dark age of ignorance, superstition and cruelty.

This translation is being offered in the hope that those in authority not only in Muslim countries but indeed in any country aspiring to be a modern enlightened society may read this document again and again to check their conduct and performance against it. In any case it may perhaps be of some help to those sincerely seeking either to understand what it stands for or what an enlightened society should be.

Instructions to Malik-e-Ashtar On his Appointment as Governor of Egypt

by

Ali Head of the Islamic State (35-40 AH = c. 656-661 AD)

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL. These instructions are given by Ali, Slave of God and Commander of the Faithful, to Malik, son of Haris-el-Ashtar, while appointing him Governor of Egypt to collect the revenues of that country, to fight its enemies, to tend to the welfare of its people and to settle its land.

Duty to God

He is ordered, above all, to fear and obey God and to follow the commandments and counsel contained in His Book. In following them lies man's true weal and salvation, and rejecting or ignoring them spells for him woe and damnation. He should be ever active in the service of God, through speech and action, with all his heart and mind. For God has undertaken to help those who assist and serve Him (by endeavouring to further His purpose and dispensation).

Self-Discipline

And he is ordered to suppress his self when he is moved by lust and unjust desires and to keep it in check when it is inclined to excess. For the self is man's self which can be controlled by the will and the intellect and the heart.

mercy intervenes.

And know, O Malik, that I am sending you to a land that has been through many regimes in the past, both just and unjust. People will look at your administration with the same critical eye with which you have looked upon previous administrations and will speak of you in the same way as you have spoken of those other rulers before you.

And remember that righteous men are recognized by what God utters about them through the voice of His messenger. Therefore let your most cherished treasure be your acquisition of good deeds, and this treasure can be collected through keeping your desires under control; abstain from what is not permitted to you, no matter how ardently you may desire it. Such abstinence is most just and beneficial to you, whether it finds it agreeable or disagreeable.

Treatment of Subject People

And for those placed under your rule exercise kindness and love; do not become a predatory beast that devour them and regarding that as your sport.

Among them there will be two categories: those who are your brethren in faith and those who are faithless God's creatures, like you. Treat the latter as you liberate as well as oppress them, with justice and forgiveness as you have been commanded.

Remember that, as you are the ruler of the state, it is God who has appointed you to this position and He has made you responsible for the people of the state. Remember that, as you are the ruler of the state, it is God who has appointed you to this position and He has made you responsible for the people of the state.

disorder and destruction:

And if authority and power breed in you pride and arrogance, call to mind the might and majesty of God above you Who has control over you such as you yourself do not possess. Thus will your arrogance be curbed and your wayward senses recover the right path. Beware! Do not challenge the might of God and do not ever doubt His sovereignty, for He humbles the proud and humiliates the arrogant.

When dealing with matters concerning yourself or your close relatives or those among your subjects for whom you have a liking, remember to observe justice with God and with mankind. Otherwise you will tend to tyranny and oppression.

And if anyone oppresses God's creatures, God Himself takes up cudgels against him on behalf of those oppressed. And he who makes God his enemy can have no plea to advance until he desists and repents, for he is guilty of taking up arms against God. Nothing turns away God's blessings and attracts His vengeance more surely than tyranny and oppression. God listens to the call of the oppressed and waylays the oppressor.

Satisfaction of Common People Preferred to that of the Privileged

You should always prefer the path of rectitude and moderation, the path of all embracing justice, the path that will best win the willing consent of the people.

Remember that the contentment of the common people washes away the displeasure of the highly placed, while the latter is easy to suffer if the common people are contented.

Remember that it is persons of position, status and privilege who are the greatest burden for the ruler in times of affluence, who are the least helpful in adversity, who are resentful of justice, who are ever importunate in their demands, who are the most grateful for favours granted to them, who are utterly ungrateful when rebuffed in their demands.

Remember that the ruler who is just and equitable when he is in power will be loved and respected by his subjects, and his rule will be long and prosperous.

maintain close contact.

People to Avoid

Keep furthest away from yourself and regard with the greatest disapproval the fault-finder. Everyone has failings, and it behooves the ruler to cover them. Do not pry into people's weakness which are not apparent; try to correct the faults which come to light and leave the people's secret faults to God's judgment. As far as it lies in your power, keep covered the hidden failings of the people and God will cover your failings which you wish to conceal from the people. Leave alone the cause that makes for mutual ill-will and hatred among the people; remove every cause for mutual calumny and enmity. Do not be hasty in lending your ear to the back-biter, the flatterer and deceitful, though he comes in the garb of a friend.

Do not take counsel with the miserly, for they will turn you from benefaction and make you dread the poor; do not take counsel with the cowardly, for they will weaken your courage; do not take counsel at critical times, or with the greedy, for they will make you amass wealth through exploitation and oppression. Cowardice and greed are different passions, but both are based on a lack of faith and trust in God.

The worst of counsellors is the flatterer, who is the favourite of oppressive rulers and a scourge to the people. Avoid such men as ministers, secretaries, and courtiers, who are tyrants.

Do not take counsel with the miserly, for they will turn you from benefaction and make you dread the poor.

Do not take counsel with the cowardly, for they will weaken your courage.

Do not take counsel at critical times, or with the greedy, for they will make you amass wealth through exploitation and oppression.

Take for your companions God fearing and truthful persons and train them not to flatter you or ascribe to you any good for which credit is not due to you. Excessive praise tends to make one vain and arrogant.

Do not treat good and bad men alike, for that will discourage the good and encourage the bad. Give every man the position that his deeds and conduct merit.

And remember that good-will can be engendered among the subjects only if the ruler treats them kindly and graciously, removes their genuine difficulties and makes no demands upon them which it is not possible for them to fulfil. So cultivate the goodwill of the people; that will save you from much difficulty and anxiety.

Your trust and confidence should be given only to those whom you have tested and found reliable, and distrust those whom you have tested and found wanting.

Maintenance of Good Traditions

Do not abandon the good practices established by the former leaders of the community which have brought about unity and harmony and led to a betterment of the people, and do not introduce new ways which violate or weaken those good traditions. For then the reward for those good ways will be for those who established them, while yours will be the punishment for destroying them. Always consult the learned and the wise with a view to following a constructive and progressive policy and maintaining and strengthening the good traditions of your predecessors.

Interdependence in Society

The people are composed of several classes and sections and their interests and welfare are bound up with those of each other. Therefore, the ruler should be just to all and should not favour any one class or section over the others.

taxes and *zimmis* (non-Muslims) who pay a tribute for their taxes. There are traders and craftsmen, and there is a depressed class of the poor and indigent. God has specified the rights and duties of each group in His Book or through the words of His Prophet—peace be upon him, and his family preserved with us.

The army, by the grace of God, is as a fortress for the people; it gives dignity to the ruler and strength to the people; it is the guarantee of peace. The people cannot exist without the army, and the army cannot exist without its God-given share of the public taxes from which it finds sustenance to fight against the enemy and with which it improves the land.

These two groups, however, the army and the people who pay taxes, cannot live without the judiciary, the executive establishment which looks after the financial and administrative affairs of the state. It is these groups which ensure the peace and tranquillity in everyday life as well as on special occasions.

And all these groups depend upon traders and craftsmen who supply their needs; they maintain shops and markets for the people what they require, relieve their distress and exert themselves to seek the necessities.

Then there is the class of the poor and indigent whose maintenance is an obligation upon the community.

There is provision for all, and the welfare of the community has a claim on the wealth of the ruler and the welfare. This obligation is upon the ruler and he must exert himself to it, while the people must be satisfied that he may be able to do it, and that he may be able to do it that path, right path, the path of justice.

make downhearted. To find such persons, establish contacts with good families with an unblemished past, with traditions of piety and nobility, bravery and courage, generosity and benevolence. It is among them that you will be most likely to find good and strong qualities.

And look after the army as parents care for their children. Do every thing you can to improve their lot, and do not think too highly of what you do. On the other hand, do not consider as too insignificant whatever little you can do for them, for even your small favours will tend to win their loyalty and goodwill. Do not therefore neglect their small wants because you are ministering to their more vital needs; even small acts of consideration mean a great deal to them, while they naturally continue to look to you for their greater needs.

Among officers of the army those should have your highest approbation who show the greatest consideration for the men under them and who help them even from their own personal resources so that they are free from want and from anxiety for their families whom they leave behind and thus can wholeheartedly give themselves to fighting the enemy. Such consideration for the soldiers will make them more firmly attached to you.

Justice

The greatest joy of a ruler lies in his maintaining justice and in the manifestation of his people's love for him. If their love is to reveal itself as coming from sincere hearts, they must not feel that the rule over them is a burden which they are anxious to be rid of. Try to keep them happy and contented, and give them ample scope for hope. Be generous with praise for the good among them; this will encourage them to greater bravery and valour and embolden the timid. Give due recognition to the good that is accomplished, and do not ascribe to one the credit of what is done by another, do not overestimate the achievements of any one, and do not be over-strict in your demands.

Guidance in Difficulties

When you come up against any problem which your knowledge and intelligence cannot help you to solve, turn to God and His Prophet—peace be upon him, for God guides those He wishes to guide aright: “O men of faith! Turn to His Prophet and those among you who have authority over you. And if there is any difference among you, turn to the Prophet”. To turn to God is to act according to His will, to turn to the Prophet—peace be upon him—is to follow the practices and precepts which are generally accepted, well recorded and about which there is no doubt.

Judiciary

For the administration of justice, select the wisest and most upright persons. They should be those who are not overburdened or intimidated by the abundance or complexity of the cases, who are not provoked by the quarrelsome conduct of the litigants, who do not cling to their mistakes, who do not persist in their errors after seeing the truth, who are not inclined to take sides, who are not content with a superficial examination of the facts, who do not decide without fully considering it, who do not give up their opinions on doubts that arise, who are fully patient, who do not hurry to find out the truth, who are completely free from all considerations of fear and favour once they have taken up a case, who do not let praise do not make them over-zealous, who do not let blame make them over-cautious. Persons are judged by their conduct in the administration of justice.

—Facing a difficult case, do not let your mind be overburdened, do not let your heart be over-intimidated, do not let your temper be provoked, do not let your pride be hurt, do not let your patience be exhausted, do not let your courage be shaken, do not let your wisdom be over-whelmed, do not let your justice be over-ruled, do not let your integrity be over-ruled, do not let your honesty be over-ruled, do not let your fairness be over-ruled, do not let your impartiality be over-ruled, do not let your objectivity be over-ruled, do not let your reasonableness be over-ruled, do not let your common sense be over-ruled, do not let your common sense be over-ruled, do not let your common sense be over-ruled.

careful scrutiny and trial, never on the basis of personal consideration or influence which are the source of corruption and dishonesty. Appoint experienced and honourable persons who belong to good families and have a record of service to Islam. Such men will be possessed of a high character, will not be swayed by avarice and will not lose sight of the end.

Pay them also well so that they may not be in want and may not be tempted to help themselves to public funds which they hold in trust. If even then they disobey you or misappropriate public funds they will have no excuse.

You must also carefully superintend their work and appoint trustworthy persons to keep a watch over their activities. If they know that a secret watch is kept over them they will be more assiduous in discharging their duties honestly and treating people with consideration. If, after all these measures, you find one of them corrupt and the charge is borne out unanimously by different intelligence agents treat that as sufficient evidence. Award him corporal punishment, make him surrender what he has misappropriated and subject him to full public humiliation.

Revenues and Taxes

Give full attention to the collection of revenues and taxes, for it is upon them that the welfare of the people depends; they are the means for developing the state and improving the lot of the people. But, even more than to collection of revenues and taxes, pay attention to the land which yields the revenues and to the people who pay the taxes, for the income of a state rests on prosperity. The ruler who concentrates on collection of revenues without helping to make the land productive is making for the ruin of the state and of God's creatures, and his rule cannot last long.

Do not let the people complain of hardship because of unduly heavy taxes. If the people are afflicted by calamity such as flood

prosperity of the land and the enhanced prestige of the ruler. It will further bring you the happiness of the people, their affection and the satisfaction of being just to them, and you will also be able to rely on them more confidently in times of difficulties. Their appreciation of and gratitude for your kindness, consideration and justice will be a dependable resource sure that you can always draw upon. Should a situation arise in which you need to rely upon them they will cheerfully shoulder any burden you may find it necessary to place upon them.

If a country is prosperous and happy, it can easily be ruined. A country is ruined only when its people are in straitened circumstances, and this straitened condition usually results from the greed of the ruler and his agents who are anxious to lose their position and privileges and, heedless of the lessons of history, are anxious to amass quickly as much wealth as they can.

Offices of Trust

You must also keep a watchful eye over your appointments. Such appointments should go to the best qualified persons. Do not entrust your confidential correspondence to persons who are of a particularly high character. A person in a high position does not make good use of his position if he is openly impertinent with his superiors, if he delays submitting to them reports and if he is negligent and careless in his duties. Do not put your confidence into an unscrupulous person. Do not give your secrets into the hands of a person who is not trustworthy. Do not give your secrets into the hands of a person who is not trustworthy.

Every department should have a chief who is not overawed by the biggest problems or thrown into a frenzy by excess of work. Remember that if there is any defect in your secretariat which you overlook the responsibility will rest upon you.

Traders

You are also instructed to pay attention to the welfare of merchants and craftsmen and to treat them well, and you should instruct your subordinates accordingly. Whether they are shopkeepers or itinerant vendors or craftsmen or labourers, they are the source of wealth and it is through them that necessities are provided. They bring those necessities from across land and water, from plains and mountains and from inaccessible places where normally people would not venture to go. They are peace loving and there is no fear of any disturbance or agitation from them. Look after them wherever they are, whether before your eyes or spread out through the land.

At the same time remember that among them there are also extremely shallow-minded and grasping persons who, for the sake of greater profit, hold back goods and demand higher prices. This is injurious to the people and it gives a bad name to the rulers.

Do not permit hoarding which was prohibited by the Prophet—peace be upon him.

Trade should be carried on with correct weights and measures and at reasonable prices, so that neither the buyer nor the seller should suffer loss.

If, notwithstanding just and sympathetic treatment, a trader is guilty of hoarding, punish him according to the gravity of his crime.

Poor and Needy

Remember that in respect of the backward and depressed classes of the population, there are the poor, the indigent, the orphan, the widow, the aged, the disabled, the sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, the leprosy-stricken, the victims of natural calamities, and the victims of man-made disasters.

the public treasury and also a share of the spoils of the lands conquered under Islam, for in this respect they have the same rights as those living nearby. You have been appointed guardian of the rights of all, and the extent of your power should not make you neglect them. That you have discharged many important duties will be no excuse for neglecting small ones. Do not therefore overlook the poor and run away from them in pride and arrogance. Be specially attentive of those who are unable to reach you, who are in your sight and whom others dismiss with disdain. Honour the poor men who fear God and are humble and kind. Be their guardian, watch over them and keep you informed of their needs. Treat them in such a way that you will be satisfied with them before God on the Day of Judgment. Remember that they are they who stand in the greatest need of justice and that you, though you have of course to discharge your duties towards all the others also.

And look after orphans and the aged, who are in need of support and who do not beg.

Rulers are apt to find these small obligations unimportant, but they should remember that all things are equal in the sight of God except that God makes it light and heavy as He will. They should seek the hereafter and approach the Day of Judgment with a firm and willing heart, relying on the promise which God has made to those who do good.

Public Address

On the subject of

the rights of the

poor and the

rights of the

poor and the

rights of the

poor and the

rights of the

poor and the

rights of the

poor and the

rights of the

poor and the

rights of the

poor and the

rights of the

poor and the

rights of the

vanity and arrogance. Whatever you grant do so with a cheerful countenance, and if you are unable to accede to a request excuse yourself gracefully. God will reward you for this obedience to His commands and cover you with His mercy.

Personal Attention to Public Affairs

There are some affairs which you must attend to personally. Among them are replies to communications from your agents which your secretaries cannot deal with and those complaints or requests from the public which your subordinates appear reluctant to attend to.

Finish every day the work of that day; each day is for its own special work.

Worship

Set aside your best time for communion with God, though all that you do is for God if your motive is pure and it makes for the welfare of the people. Among those religious duties which you sincerely perform in the name of God must be the performance of the imperative duties (daily prayers) specially associated with Him. Set aside for God during the day and night some of your time and energy. Your worship of God should be undisturbed and unblemished, whatever physical hardship it may entail.

When you lead a congregational prayer do not make it so long as to tire the people out or so short as to render it worthless. There are in a congregation people who are sick and also those who have to attend to urgent affairs. When the Prophet—peace be upon him and his descendants—sent me to Yaman, I asked him how I should lead the prayers and he replied, "Lead at the least fit and strong in the congregation, and be considerate to the faithful."

that they will be liable to confuse the big things with the small, the good with the bad and the truth with falsehood. A ruler himself is after all only a human being who will naturally be ignorant of what is concealed from him. Truth does not have any visible mark which can enable one to distinguish between different kinds of truth and falsehood. Moreover, you can be one of two kinds of persons. If you are inclined to ask why avoid performing your duties and doing good? On the other hand, you are a person from whom people, who are one-handed, they will soon despair and will themselves turn away from you.

Remember also that often the demands of the people are not such as to be a burden on your pocket; they may be the result of some oppression or ask for justice in some matter.

Avoidance of Partiality and Favouritism

Rulers are surrounded by persons who are often selfish, grasping and dishonest. It is your duty to care to avoid the very causes which lead to such behaviour. For instance, never make grants of land to your relatives. They must not expect to receive any land which may be taken away from them around that land, as they are not to bear the burden of irrigation. They may no doubt desire to be irrigated, but if you will earn a profit, they will not.

Enforce the law equally on all. You or others may be afraid of you, but you must not be afraid of them.

Dealings with the Enemy

If the enemy invites you to a peace which will be acceptable to God do not spurn the offer, for peace will bring rest and comfort to your army, relieve you of worry and anxiety and promote tranquillity and prosperity in the country. You must, however, remain alert and vigilant because the enemy often approaches you with friendliness only to catch you unawares. Be careful and do not be too trusting.

Nevertheless, if you enter into an agreement with an enemy or have offered him protection, carry out the agreement and honour your word with your very life. Of all the obligations placed upon man by God there is none which the entire world is so unanimously agreed upon, in spite of differences in thought and outlook, as the fulfilment of one's word. Not only Muslims but even those who associate others with God have observed agreements among themselves because they realised the dire consequences of breaking covenants. Never, therefore, be guilty of treachery and do not go back on your word, and do not take up the offensive against your enemy without previous warning. Only a wicked barbarian would dare act against God, and God has decreed observance of covenants as the path of peace for all His creatures through His mercy. Everyone seeks that haven of refuge. Let not therefore any fraud or deception pollute it.

Do not enter into any covenants which give rise to differences in interpretation, but once an agreement has been confirmed do not try to take advantage of any ambiguous word in it. Do not let any difficulty arising out of an agreement tempt you to find an excuse for denouncing that agreement. It is better to suffer such difficulties for the sake of God's grace than to commit a breach of a covenant which may lead to ruin in this world and in the Hereafter.

shed each other's blood. Do not therefore seek to establish your power through bloodshed; this will not only weaken and destroy your power but will so shake its foundation that it will pass to other hands. If you are guilty of deliberate murder no excuse will avail with God or with me; retribution must follow.

If you commit manslaughter by mistake through an excessive use of your sword, whip or hand—for sometimes even a far blow or lighter hurt can result in death—do not let your sense of false prestige or power deter you from offering due compensation to the heirs of the deceased.

Vanity and Display

Avoid vanity, do not pride yourself on what you believe your fine qualities and do not let flattery and admiration please you, for it is in this way that Satan tempts you to out- naught the good deeds of the virtuous.

Do not make a show of any good that you do to other people, nor ever think that what you have done is good, nor go back on the promises you make to God and man.

To refer to the good one does is to show its true value, to overestimate the good one does is to show the truth, and a breach of promise is to show the truth of a man. The High and Mighty is greatly displeased with a man who does not do

are manifest, for it is your responsibility to see that rights are respected, and a time will soon come when all affairs will come to light and you will be called upon to answer for the oppression of the weak.

Anger and Violence

Always avoid the heat of anger, the violence of hands and the harshness of tongue. The way to do that is not to be hasty but to defer a punishment till your temper has cooled down and you have regained self-control. And this you cannot attain unless you constantly bear in mind that you have to return to God.

Final Guidance

Finally, you must bear in mind what has gone in the past, whether it be the principles, ways and actions of a just government or the precepts and example of the Prophet—peace be upon him—or the commandments contained in the Book of God, and follow the principles you have seen me act upon.

Endeavour your utmost to abide by the instructions I have given you through this instrument, by which I have discharged my duty by you. If you still allow your selfish desires to lead you astray you will have no excuse.

Concluding Prayer



And I beseech God, in the name of His vast mercy and His supreme might, that He may grant you and me the grace to do His pleasure, that we may acquit ourselves honourably of the duties which He has entrusted to us, and that we may be able to do His will in all things.