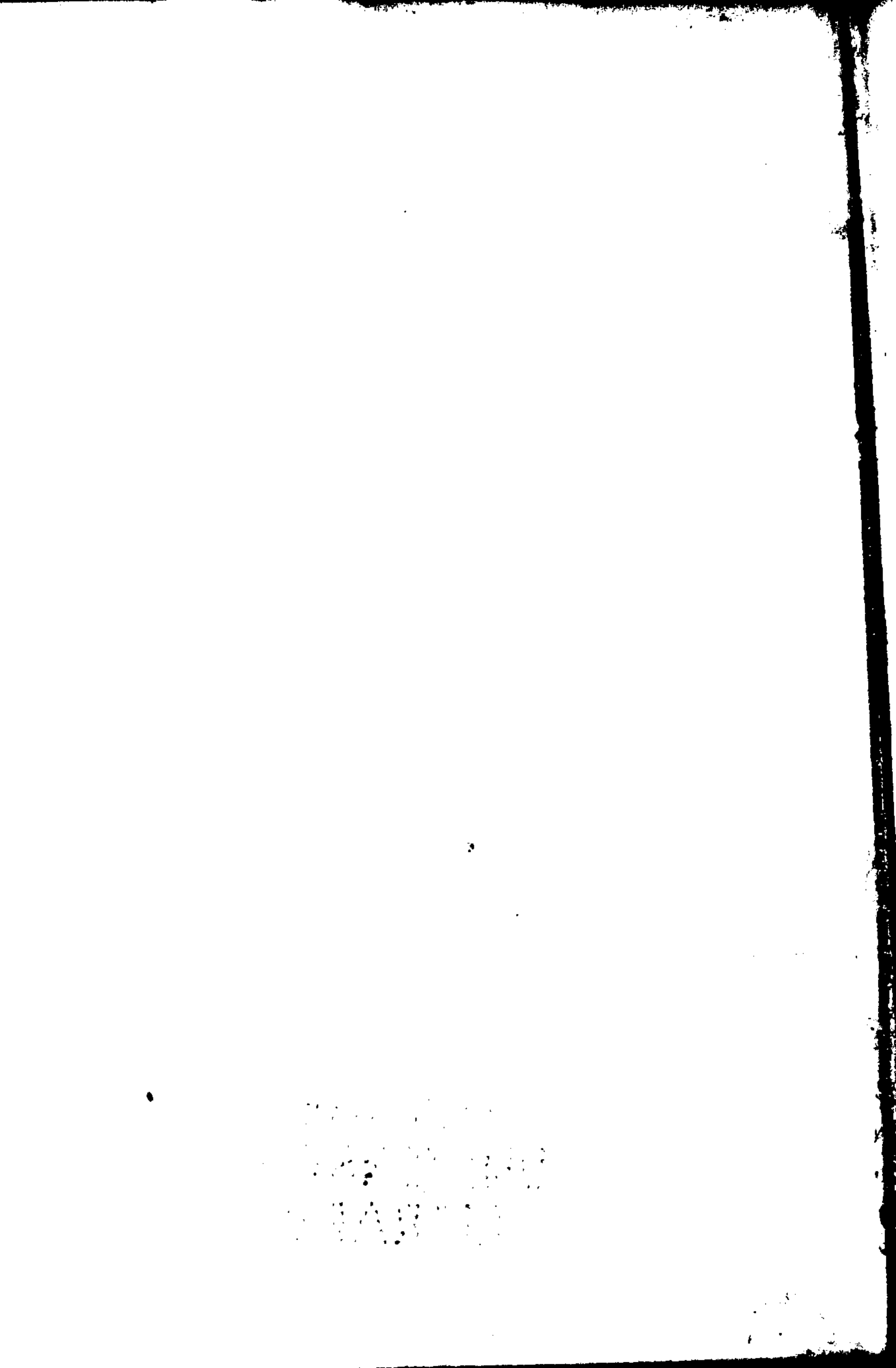


# THE SPIRIT OF ISLAM

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

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## 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-

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\*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

**P**ERHAPS 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, unbampered 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 divine 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.*

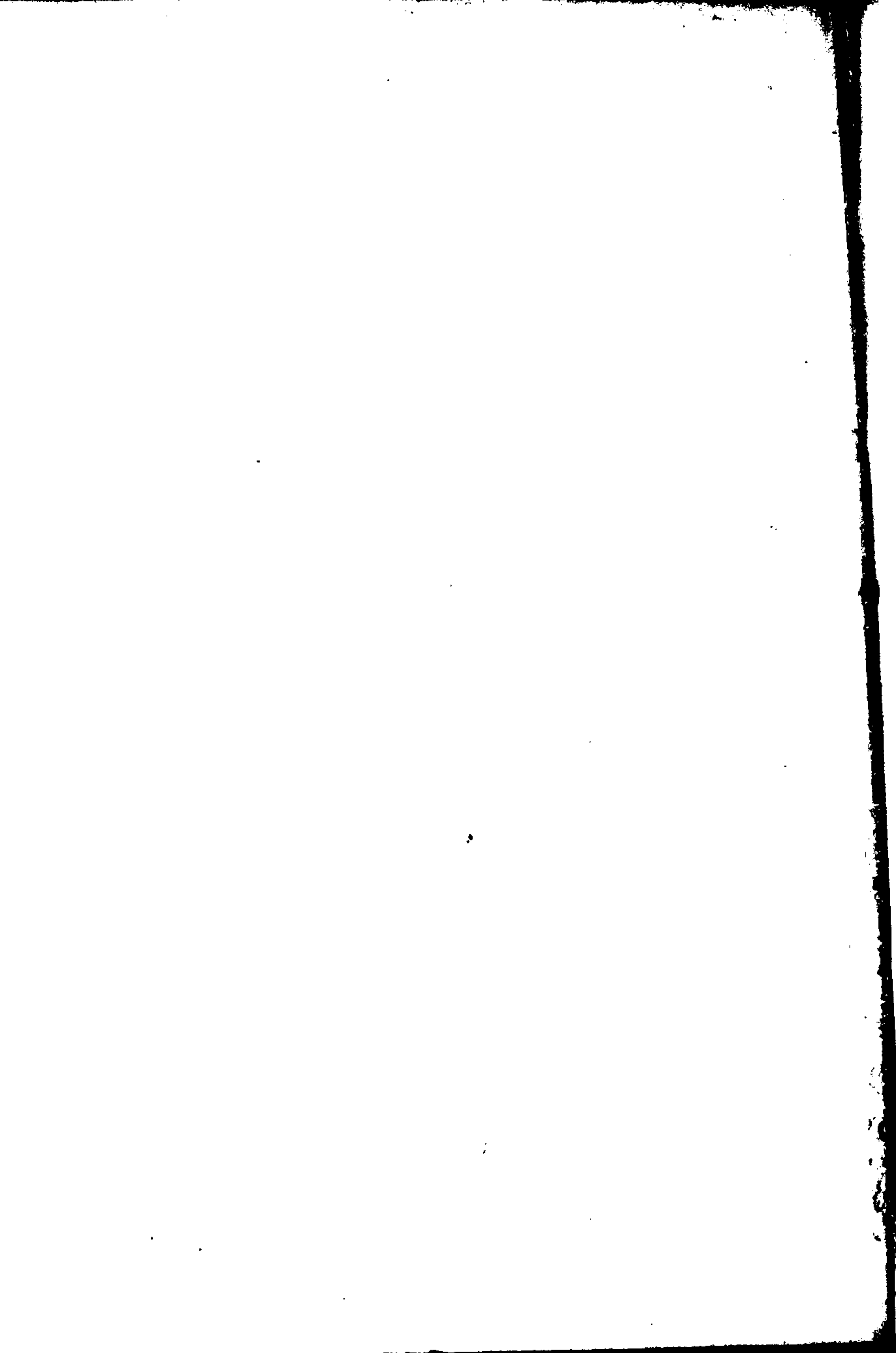
*Thee (alone) do we worship, and Thee (alone) do we ask for  
help.*

*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).<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>
- (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*

**L**IKE *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 is 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)<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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

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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.<sup>5</sup> *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-

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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











































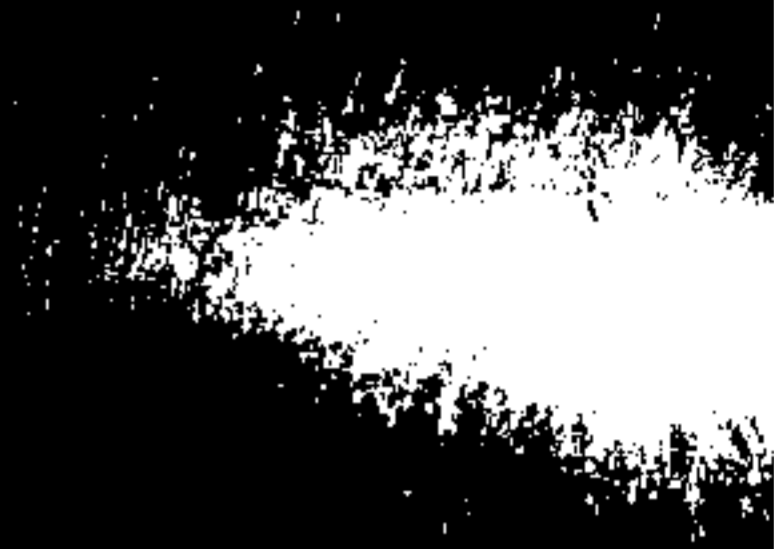


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