

TRIUMPH
OF
ISLAM

www.aail.org

HAZRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD

TRIUMPH OF ISLAM

Translation :

MIRZA MA'SUM BEG

Preface :

MUMTAZ AHMAD FARUQI

AHMADIYYAH ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM — LAHORE

www.aail.org

Members of the *Aḥmadiyyah Anjuman Ishā'at Islām* (Lahore — West Pakistan) believe that:

— After the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), God has barred the appearance of any prophet, new or old.

— Angel Gabriel cannot bring 'prophetic revelation' to any person as this would contradict the two complementary verses: "This day have I perfected for you your religion" (5 : 3), "Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh and the Seal of the prophets" (33: 40). It would otherwise violate the sanctity of finality of prophethood in Islam.

— All the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (*aṣḥāb*) and all the spiritual leaders (*imāms*) are venerable.

— It is incumbent to believe in the missions of all reformers (*mujaddid*).

— He who believes that "there is no god but Allāh and Muḥammad is His Prophet" (*kalimah*) cannot be regarded an unbeliever or infidel (*kāfir*).

— No verse of the Holy Quran has been, or shall ever be, abrogated.

First Edition 1968

**Printed at the Raheel Art Press, Lahore and published by the
Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore (W. Pakistan)**

CONTENTS

“(O man), follow not that of which thou hast no knowledge” — 17:36.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	9
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	13
PREFACE	19
INTRODUCTION	23
1 THE PROPHET OF ARABIA	31
Pre-Islamic period — Advent of Muḥammad — Sublime morals — Great contributions — Unlet- tered — Main teaching — Affliction — Holy wars — Faith in God — True prophet — Prophecies fulfilled.	
2 THE GLORY OF THE QURAN	67
External & internal evidence — Divine challenge — Quranic diction — Vehicle of expression — Literary expression — Experimental experience — General law of nature — Profound principles — Way to knowledge.	

- 3 THE EXISTENCE OF GOD 105
Salvation — Atheism — Firm conviction — Divine
revelation — Recipient of revelation — Human
intellect — Rational faculty — Human reason —
Eternal Hereafter — Atonement.
- 4 THE CHIEF ATTRIBUTES OF GOD 163
First grace — Second grace — Third grace — Fourth
grace — Worship — Right path — Favours — In
the name of God — Divine power.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“ O People of the Book, come to an equitable word between us and you, that we shall serve none but Allāh and that we shall not associate aught with Him, and that some of us shall not take others for lords beside Allāh . . . ! — 3 : 63.

This book, rendered into English by Mirzā Ma'sūm Beg, was written in four volumes by Ḥadrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad under the title of *Barāhīn-i-Aḥmadiyya*. It was first published in 1880 — at a time when the Muslim world was in the midst of an all-enveloping gloom and the well-wishers of Islam were in the grip of a conflict with Western civilization, and when our opponents were vilifying Islam and its Prophét. It discusses the existing and divergent thoughts on religion, all arguments and evidences being based on original sources.

While publishing the present abridged edition, we have omitted repetitions which could not otherwise be avoided in the original Urdu manuscript. We have included footnotes into the subject

matter and have also re-arranged the first chapter by adding, wherever necessary, a few sentences and verses in order to give a sketch of the great contributions made by the Prophet of Arabia to human civilization.

We are grateful to Shaikh Faḍl al-Raḥmān (Multan) for having borne the cost of printing and publication of this edition. Our thanks are also due to Mumtāz Aḥmad Farūqī for prefacing the book; to Shaikh Dāwūd ‘Abd al-Rasūl and Shāhid Sharīf who, without being members of the Aḥmadiyya Anjuman Ishā‘at-i Islām (Lahore), have been kind enough to revise and chapterize it; and to Nāsir Aḥmad for having adapted and written a short biography of the founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement in Islām.

PUBLISHER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

“Whoever submits himself entirely to Allāh and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve” — 2 : 112.

It was in the year 1835 that Ḥaḍrat Mirzā



Ghulām Aḥmad, son of Mirzā Ghulām Murtaḍā, was born at Qadian, a village in the north of Punjab. He belonged to a respectable Mughal family, which traces its migration into India to the time of Emperor Bābar, during the sixteenth century.

He received his primary education in his village.

In his youth, though he loved solitude and hated

worldly pursuits, he was occupied, under instructions of his father, in the management of family lands. Again, to fulfil his father's wishes in 1864, he joined government service at Sialkot. It was here that the Mirzā first came into contact with Christian missionaries.

In 1868, his father allowed him to give up service and to return to Qadian. For some years he was called upon to manage his family lands and to pursue law suits connected with them. He had to pay frequent visits to the town of Batala, which at that time was an important Christian district. He soon made up his mind to grapple with the unpleasant propaganda carried on by Christian missionaries against Islam.

After the death of his father in 1876, he devoted himself completely to the study of the *Quran*, the Traditions and the Commentaries and the tenets of other religions. About that time, while he was refuting the Christian arguments against the Islamic doctrines, the *Ārya Samāj* Movement had started among the Hindus. In his controversies with its leaders, his scholarship and his enthusiasm to defend Islam came into display.

In 1880, appeared his famous book *Barāhīn-i Ahmadiyya*, which created a deep impression on Muslims in particular. In this first volume, he adduced a large number of arguments based on original texts, establishing the claims of Islam as

the best religion for mankind. He emphasized the necessity of Divine inspiration and argued that God spoke to His chosen ones even today as He did in the past. In this connection, he referred to his own visions and inspirations and mentioned the fulfilment of some of these. In fact, it was while writing this book that it was revealed to him that he had been appointed the Reformer (*mujaddid*) of the fourteenth century of Hijra for defending the cause of Islam

In 1891, he announced that it had been revealed to him that Jesus Christ was not alive, but had died like other prophets. He declared that the Messiah, whose advent had been promised to the Muslims, was to be a Reformer of the nation and that the prophecies had been fulfilled in his own person. He further made it known that the reports relating to the appearance of the Mahdi also referred to the coming of the Messiah, who was to spread Islam in the world not by sword, but by argument and reasoning.

This statement raised against him a storm of opposition from Christians, Hindus as well as Muslims. However, in the midst of all trials and afflictions, with even the Government keeping strict watch over him owing to his claim to be the Mahdi, he continued propagating Islam with rare energy and sincerity. The burning passion of his heart was to carry the Message of Islam to the whole

world, particularly to Europe, where only a dark picture of Islam had been drawn. His aspirations materialized to some extent in 1901, when he started an English monthly, *The Review of Religions*, from Qadian, to present a true picture of Islam and its Prophet to the English-knowing world. The plan was further developed after his death when at first, in 1912, the Working Muslim Mission was established in England and later, in 1922, the German Muslim Mission at Berlin (West Germany). Thenceforward the task of propagating the teachings of Islam was carried from one country to another. Doubtless, the passion at the back of all this enterprise originated in the heart of that pious figure of Qadian, author of more than sixty books on Islam, who breathed his last on the 26th May, 1908.

NASIR AHMAD

PREFACE

“Allāh has created everything, and
He is the Knower of all things . . .
So serve Him” — 6 : 102, 103.

During the nineteenth century, when materialism, scepticism and agnosticism were the rule of the day, Haḍrat Mīrzā Ghulām Aḥmad gave serious thought to the effects of Western civilization with its new theories of physical and natural sciences on the human mind. His emphasis on the Islamic teaching that “a living faith in the Supreme Being is essential in this world and in the life hereafter”, shows that he understood fully the repercussions of the mechanistic and materialistic age vis-a-vis the spiritual life of man.

In his present treatise, the author discusses the truthfulness of the divine mission of Muḥammad (peace be upon him) — the first citizen of the Muslim nation — and demonstrates

that the right path is the one that was blazed by the Prophet of Arabia. He deals at length with the revelation of the Quran — the eternal message which teaches mankind to live in peace and harmony. He establishes through a philosophical reasoning that “the teachings of a revealed book should not conflict with any law of physical nature.” Likewise, he underlines the fact of the existence of God by stressing that there is a constant urge in man to have communion with his Lord, Who listens to his prayers, and responds to them. Finally, he gives a detailed account of the four attributive names of God enunciated in the Opening chapter of the Quran.

The present volume is not meant to give a comprehensive treatment of the Islamic doctrines but, within the narrow compass of the topics discussed, the reader will find a useful opportunity to acquaint himself with the knowledge and truth contained in the Quran, the source of the soul-stirring light of Islam — the monotheistic religion that seeks to unite all men in brotherhood.

M. A. FARUQUI

INTRODUCTION

“In the name of Allāh, the
Beneficent, the Merciful ” — 1 : 1.

This book advances arguments to the fact that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was a true Messenger of God with a great mission to mankind. It also proves that the Holy Quran — the principles and doctrines of which are in perfect harmony with the truth and human nature — is the Word of God.

It may be pointed out that there are people who do not believe in the prophets of God, whom they consider impostors. It is a sacrilege to speak ill of those chosen by God to be the spiritual Teachers of mankind ; whom He caused to rise as lustrous luminaries in the firmament of this planet to give out, through them, the light of Divine Unity and Godliness ; by whose powerful teachings the

tree of the worship of the One True God, which had dried up, became fresh and green again; whom He took under His special care and protection, and helped in such a way that they feared not even when millions of foes stood against them; they did not deplore, nor were they distressed; nor fatigued until they established the Truth upon this earth. If those people were not holy on whom descended the Word of God, then who is there in mankind we can call 'good'?

It is imperative to accept the righteousness of the prophets, so that the Books revealed to them should also be treated as holy. Otherwise, the question would be quite proper that in case those people to whom were revealed these Books were evil, how can these Scriptures themselves be taken as pure? If Moses had not been pure he would not have been regarded fit for being a prophet.

A man must be judged by the nature and the extent of the accomplishment of his mission. Muḥammad remedied and cured the worst corruption and vitiation in the affairs of mankind, re-established the conception of the Unity of God that had completely disappeared and, with logical reasoning and arguments, vanquished falsehood, removed all kinds of doubts from the hearts of the people who had gone astray; taught man the correct and valid principles; re-opened the right way to salvation.

As for the Quran, it is pure, and teaches the unity, majesty and excellences of the Divine Being. Its distinctive characteristic is that it ascribes no abject and mean motive to the Almighty; nor does it impose any doctrine, but whatever it teaches, it establishes the truth by incontrovertible arguments, and leads to the point of complete certainty and perfect faith. It purifies all the corruption and depravity which have tainted the belief, words and deeds of the people by clear arguments; it teaches all the modes of moral conduct and behaviour, the knowing of which is essential for man to be man; it dispels every evil with the same power and force with which it is prevailing today. Its teaching is very simple and straight; it is, as it were, a mirror, a reflection of the laws of nature, and a bright sun for man's internal light.

All arguments and evidences adduced in the present book on the excellences of the Quran and the truthfulness of Prophet Muḥammad's divine mission, or any other claim which has been asserted, have all been gathered from the Holy Quran itself.

That a revealed Book should itself set down rational arguments in support of the truth of its principles is also essential because the function

and purpose of a sacred Scripture is not that a man should learn by heart some vague formulae, and should then proceed to assume that he had found the way to salvation. The real purpose of a revealed Book is that it should take man to the stage of an abiding conviction of the mind, which no doubt or misgiving should be able to shake. For, as long as man lies in his life consigned to the hell of ignorance, and possesses only a formal faith, with no kind of real conviction even in that faith, and a passion for material things, without rational vision, he is exposed, in this state of mind, to serious danger in that sphere of life which pertains to the soul. The following verse would apply to him: "Whoever is blind in this (world) he will be blind in the Hereafter, and further away from the (right) path." ¹

Therefore, a Scripture which fails to establish its own validity, and the truth of its principles, cannot open the door to a virtuous and prosperous life. In fact, it functions as an obstacle in the way of human progress. Following such Scriptures would involve no proper use of one's vision and imagination, nor the rational faculty with which all human beings are endowed. He never penetrates into the inner reality of things, leaving his intellect

1. The Quran, 17: 72. We are here told that those who remain blind to truth in this life remain blind in the life after death, which shows that it is here that a hellish life begins with spiritual blindness, and that the hell of the next life is also a blindness.

and the powers of his mind inactive. With his own hands, he thus destroys these previous capabilities, and falls to a very low level of life. He loses the power which enables man to distinguish between good and evil, and the description, in the following words of the Almighty, becomes fully applicable to him: "They have hearts wherewith they understand not, and they have eyes wherewith they see not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not. They are as cattle; nay, they are more astray."¹

In short, of the word of God, this is the excellent purpose that it should emphasize the importance of a proper use of the powers and capacities which, in divine wisdom, have been made inherent in man; and it should teach that in their exercise, one should carefully avoid either extreme. Among these powers and capacities, one is the rational capacity, common sense and intellect; and the superiority of man lies, over the lower forms of life, in his making proper use of this faculty, and in the extent to which he may be able to cultivate it to a point of perfection. Only a proper use of this faculty can turn him into a human being, and enable him to realize the higher purpose of his life. Evidently, if the Scripture he follows does not enable him to take proper care of this instrument, and to cultivate it, it would tend, instead, to suspend

1. The Quran, 7 : 179.

it, and turn it into an obstacle in his path. Instead of helping him in the attainment of the superior aims of his life, this very faculty would snatch away from him the qualities which put a human being above the rest of the creation of the Lord.

THE PROPHET OF ARABIA

“And We have not sent Muḥammad but as a mercy to the nations” — 21 : 107.

Before dealing with this first chapter, it may not be out of place to review briefly the conditions of people before the advent of the Prophet of Islam.

Pre-Islamic period

Before the birth of Islam, many people had strayed from the right path, and had fallen into many kinds of innovations and evil practices. Various cults of worship of different objects of nature had spread all over the world.

In addition to idol-worship, cults of the worship of many objects had spread all over the place, the original beliefs and principles having been contaminated both internally and externally. A beautiful green tree; a flame of fire rising from

the earth; in fact, every object that excited astonishment was worshipped : the sun, the moon, fire, water and wind ; stones and trees ; birds and beasts ; anything was exalted to divine honours.

In India, the poor people were oppressed. If a Sudra over-heard a Brahmin reciting the Vedas, he was to be punished by having molten lead poured into his ears.

Polygamy was practised to an unlimited extent. A woman was debarred from studying the Vedas ; her religion was to serve her husband, and her eternal happiness depended on the performance of this duty.

Fire worship held sway over Persia. The kings were gods ; they were absolute masters over the person and property of their subjects who possessed no rights.

Never was the condition of woman so bad than under the Mago-Zoroastrians. The Persian recognized no law but that of his own will. He could marry his nearest kindred, and divorce his wives at will.

The house of Israel was a wreck. Jesus had come and gone without producing any effect upon the Jews. Many a doubt had arisen in them. Not being content with the One True God, they had taken for themselves hundreds of different lords, and the worship of objects was rampant and rife amongst them to the utmost degree. Moreover, a

great number of the Jews had fallen into the baneful belief, like the nature-worshippers, that the world was working in accordance with the firmly-fixed and set rules, and that God was unable to interfere in this law authoritatively, and this universe, ever since He had finished with its creation according to a certain measure, had been functioning automatically on the strength and fitness of its own parts, and the Lord of the worlds had no hand in the working of this machine, or could not introduce any change according to His own will and pleasure.

Believing God to be physical and corporeal, the Jews looked upon Him as a part and parcel of this material world, and ascribed to Him many things which are permissible only in the case of created objects. They did not consider Him as absolutely infallible and wholly above error. Some of them had relapsed into the doctrine of the transmigration of souls; some denied the Day of Judgment altogether; some misunderstood metaphorical statements; some denied Resurrection; some said that matter and soul were co-eternal with the Lord; some regarded soul to be perishable; and some believed that God was neither Master of the day of Requital, the Lord of the worlds, nor the All-Wise, All-Knowing Being.

The Christians, in a short space of time, had rendered their condition worse by falling from the practice of the teaching of the Gospel, and "this

was the reason — adds a Christian missionary — why God did not check Islam in its rise to power, since He desired at the time that they should be punished, because they had forsaken the teachings of the New Testament.”¹

In Arabia, utter darkness and barbarism prevailed. No social laws were observed, and the most despicable deeds were openly committed. An unlimited number of wives was taken and all prohibited things were made lawful. Rapine and incest raged unchecked; a widow (other than the mother) was considered an integral part of her deceased husband’s patrimony and passed into the use of the son. There was no vice which was not freely practised by the Arabs. To the outward eye, they had the form of man, but they were totally devoid of rationality, modesty and other human qualities. Their thirst for wine was excessive, and fornication was committed unscrupulously.

Advent of Muḥammad

The advent of Prophet Muḥammad, therefore, took place at a time when conditions prevailing over the world called for the appearance of a great Teacher. Divine Guidance at the time was a great need for mankind. Appearing at this juncture of human history, the Prophet of Arabia lit up a world with the philosophy of the Unity of God,

1. Rev. Fr. Fender, *Mizan al-Haq*.

with right conduct, and with a dire destruction of idolatry and all forms of the worship of nature. The truth of his claim is already proved because in view of the general falling off from the right path, which prevailed at the time, the laws of nature demanded the advent of a divine guide, and the way divine attributes worked in this world also called for the appearance of a Reformer. When an intensity and hardness of any kind reaches the extreme limit, it has always been the changeless law of God from the ancient ages that His grace addresses itself to the task of eliminating it.

When a prolonged drought leads to a severe famine, and people begin to perish, God sends rain;¹ when thousands of people begin to die of some epidemic, something happens at last to clear the air of that contamination, or some medicine is discovered which works as a cure against the prevailing disease. Or, when oppression at the hands of some heartless tyrant becomes unbearable, a just leader is thrown up by events who redresses the prevailing wrongs.² Similarly, when people lose sight of the way which leads to the Lord, when they forsake the Unity of God, He endows someone with true insight and vision and confers on him the honour of inspiration and revelation in order to cure the ill humanity

1. The Quran, 7 : 57-58 ; 30 : 48-50:

2. *Ibid.*, 5 : 19 ; 28 : 47.

may happen to be suffering from, and to guide people on the right path.

Sublime morals

Muhammad¹ was born in the year 571 of the Christian era (12th of the lunar month Rabi' I). Orphan from his birth, he lost even his mother when six years old. He came of the noblest family of the Quraish, yet, like the rest of his countrymen, he was not taught reading and writing. He tended sheep for some time, but in his youth he was chiefly occupied in trade. It was, however, his high morals that distinguished him from all his compatriots. The Quran, which contains the most trustworthy account of Prophet Muhammad's life, testifies to the fact that he was "the possessor of sublime morals."²

The Prophet's morals found full display on many occasions, and were put to test so that their truthfulness and veracity shone forth like the sun. The sublime qualities relating to munificence and generosity, self-sacrifice and chivalry, patience and piety, all beamed in his person with a dazzling light. God opened unto him the doors of innumerable treasures, all of which he spent devotedly in His way. The Prophet of Arabia lived all his life

1. The Prophet's best-known name is Muhammad, which means "the praised one". Another name by which he was known is Ahmad, meaning "the praising one".

2. The Quran, 68 : 4.

in a humble hovel which was no better than a poor man's hut. He requitted evil with good, and alleviated the distress and suffering of his persecutors. He slept mostly on the floor, often going without food, eating plain barley bread. Abundance of wealth and riches of the world lay at his feet, but he besmeared not his holy hands therewith, and preferred the life of poverty and humbleness with contentment to the life of affluence and plenty. The furniture of his house was composed of a coarse matting of palm leaves for his bed, and an earthen jug for water. For days no fire would be lighted in his house to prepare food, the whole family living on mere dates. There was no lack of means to live a life of ease and comfort. The public treasury was at his disposal. The well-to-do among his followers, who did not shrink from sacrificing their lives for his sake, would have been only too glad to provide him with every comfort of life, should he choose to avail himself of it. But worldly things carried no weight in his estimation. From the first day of his life unto the day he breathed his last, he cared for none other than his Lord.

His opponents were challenged to point out a single black spot on his character during the forty years that he had spent among them before he received the divine Call.¹ It was in his youth that,

1. The Quran, 10 : 16.

on account of his pure and absolved character and his love for truth and honesty, he won from his compatriots the title of "the Faithful" (al-Amīn).

Above all, his earlier life was marked by that rare characteristic, rarest of all in Arabia at the time, the love of the poor, the orphan, the widow, the weak, the helpless and the slave. Before he had affluence of means, he was one of the members who, taking an oath to stand by the oppressed, formed themselves into a league as champions of the injured. When at twenty-five he married a wealthy widow, Khadija — who was fifteen years his senior, he spent freely for the help of the poor. No slave came into the household but was set free by him.

To these great qualities was added his anxiety for a fallen humanity. The Word of God refers to it repeatedly.¹ As years went on, the gross idolatry of the Arabs and their evil ways pressed the more heavily on his heart, and he spent hours in solitude in the neighbouring mountains. Still later, he repaired for days to a cave at the foot of Mount Hira, and it was here that the divine Light shone on him in its full splendence.

Living in a country in which polygamy was the rule, Muḥammad had no liking for polygamy. He passed the prime of his life, up to fifty-four years of age, as the husband of a single wife, thus

1. The Quran, 9 : 128 ; 18 : 6 ; 26 : 3 ; 35 : 8.

showing that the union of one man and one woman was the rule under normal conditions. But when abnormal situations arose, he did not, like a sentimentalist, shirk his duty. He saw that the chastity of a woman was at stake if polygamy was not allowed and, for the sake of a higher interest, he permitted polygamy as an exception to meet exceptional circumstances. Exactly thus he had to resort to war, though by disposition he was averse to it. Full forty years before the Call he had been living in a land where the sword was wielded as freely as a stick elsewhere, where fighting and feuds were the order of the day, where men would fly at each other's throats like animals, where there was no chance of survival for one who could not use the sword, yet not once during these forty years did he deal a blow at an enemy.

In the administration of justice, the Prophet was scrupulously even-handed. Muslim and non-Muslim, friend and foe, were all alike in his eyes. Even before the Call his impartiality, his honesty and integrity were of household fame, and people would bring their disputes to him to settle. At Medina, the Jews and the idolaters both accepted him as the arbitrator in all their disputes.

The Prophet's integrity and sincerity were of universal fame throughout Arabia. His worst foes had often to confess that he had never told a lie. When he once pledged his word, he kept it under

the most trying conditions and even at a heavy cost. Despair and despondency were unknown to him. Hemmed in as he was on all sides by a gloomy prospect and severe opposition, his faith in the ultimate triumph of the Truth was never for one moment shaken.

Great contributions

The idea of the oneness of humanity is Muḥammad's greatest contribution to human civilization, and it came as a natural sequel to that foundation-stone of his teachings, the Unity of God. A perusal of world history shows the idea of the whole of humanity being a single nation as first dawning upon the Prophet's mind. It was a revelation from on High in the truest sense of the word. No country was more unsuited than Arabia, either to give birth to such an idea or to see its accomplishment. The whole country was rent into innumerable petty states, each clan forming a separate and independent political unit. Each tribe had its own chief who would lead it in battle against a hostile tribe. The whole people were on the verge of a fiery abyss.¹

Here dawned the idea for the first time in human history, not that the Arabs were one nation, but that the whole of humanity was a single nation: "Mankind is a single nation. So

1. The Quran, 3 : 102.

Allāh raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth.”¹

Another great contribution made by the Prophet of Islam to human civilization was the idea of human dignity. This, too, was a natural sequel to the idea of the oneness of God, on which he laid so much stress. Man was the noblest of the Creator’s creation, and it was degrading for him to worship things or to bow before things which he really excelled: “Shall I seek for you a god other than Allāh, while He has made you excel (all) created things?”²

The association of anything with God made a man fall from the high position which nature had given him: “Shun the filth of the idols and shun false words, being upright for Allāh, not associating aught with Him. And whoever associates (aught) with Allāh, it is as if he had fallen from on high, then the birds had snatched him away, or the wind had carried him off to a distant place.”³

According to him, man’s position in nature was that of a conqueror; he had been created to control all the forces of nature and to rule in the earth, not to bow before them: “When thy

1. The Quran, 2 : 213. Note that as all people are a single nation, God, too, has been revealing Himself to all.

2. *Ibid.*, 7 : 140.

3. *Ibid.*, 22 : 30-31.

Lord said to the angels, I am going to place a ruler in the earth . . .”¹

From the slave of nature’s forces which man was generally at that stage of human civilization, Muḥammad thus raised him to the dignity of the master and the ruler, and it was due to this realization of man’s position in the universe that the Muslims in their very early history took vigorous strides towards the expansion of knowledge and the advancement of the sciences. Reading and writing was within a few years spread throughout the whole of Arabia and other countries which came under the influence of Islam, and the Muslim State so encouraged the pursuit of study and scientific research that centres of learning sprang up throughout the empire of Islam.

Another remarkable service which Muḥammad rendered to humanity was to give an impetus to work and to dignify labour. The principle was laid down at the very start in the most unequivocal terms that no one who does no work should hope to reap any fruit and that the worker should have his full reward : “That man can have nothing but what he strives for : And that his striving will soon be seen. Then he will be rewarded for it with the fullest reward.”²

1. The Quran, 2 : 30. This shows the high place that man was destined to hold in the whole of creation.

2. *Ibid.*, 53 : 39-41.

The Prophet himself was an indefatigable worker. While he passed half the night, and even two-thirds of it, praying to God, he was doing every kind of work in the day-time. No work was too low for him. He would milk his own goats, patch his own clothes and mend his own shoes. In person he would dust his house ; he would tie his camel and look after it personally. He would assist his wife in her household duties. In person he would do shopping, not only for his own household but also for his neighbours and friends. He worked like a labourer in the construction of the mosque. Again, when a ditch was being dug round Medina to fortify it against a heavy attack, he was seen at work among the rank and file. He never despised any work, however humble, notwithstanding the dignity of his position as prophet. He thus demonstrated, through his personal example, that every kind of work dignified man, and that a man's calling, whether high or low, did not constitute the criterion of his status. A roadside labourer, a hewer of wood and a drawer of water were as respectable members of the social order founded by the Prophet Muḥammad as a big merchant or a high dignitary.

Unlettered

Notwithstanding the fact that the transcendental truths and fine principles and infallible arguments on religion and divine knowledge, and other

subtle secrets incorporated in the Quran, are generally of a nature that no human power or wisdom and philosophy has ever been able to make them, as is also borne out by history, yet God's sublime knowledge was conferred upon and granted to an unlettered (*ummī*), who had never attended a school, nor ever sat in the company of learned people, but lived all his life among the savages of the desert. This fact is not unknown to any student and scholar of Islamic history. The Quran says that "He it is Who raised among the illiterates a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His messages and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom — although they were before certainly in manifest error."¹ And, addressing Muḥammad, God says: "Thus did We reveal to thee an inspired Book by Our command. Thou knewest not what the Book was, nor (what) Faith (was), but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants. And surely thou guidest to the right path."²

From these verses, the fact of Muḥammad being an unlettered is proved conclusively. The claim had not been made in a country the people whereof were ignorant of his life-history. They were, on the other hand, a people among whom he had been brought up right from his childhood. If

1. The Quran, 62 : 2.

2. *Ibid.*, 42 : 52. See also 7 : 156-158 ; 29 : 48-49.

he had not been an unlettered, he could not possibly have made that claim in the face of the people, from whose penetrating eyes none of his affairs had been hidden and concealed.

For every objection which the opponents raised against Muḥammad, they were given a satisfactory reply. For instance, when some ignorant people of Mecca objected to the Divine Unity preached by the Quran proclaimed that they could accept only such a book as sanctioned the worship of their idols, or that the present Quran might be amended accordingly, the Almighty revealed the following reply to His Messenger as was based finally on his life-history : "When Our clear messages are recited to them, those who have no hope of meeting with Us say : Bring a Quran other than this or change it. Say : It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I follow naught but what is revealed to me. Indeed I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the chastisement of a grievous day. Say : If Allāh had desired, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you. I have lived among you a lifetime before it. Do you not then understand ?"¹

In short, the fact of the Prophet's being an unlettered was so well-known to the Arabs and the Jews and the Christians that they dared not

1. The Quran, 10 : 15-16.

question it. They would, on the other hand, interrogate him, by way of test, in reference to certain texts of the Torah. And when they got correct replies, the learned amongst them would bow before him and believe in him: "Thou wilt find the nearest in friendship to the believers to be those who say, We are Christians. That is because there are priests and monks among them and because they are not proud. And when they hear that which has been revealed to the Messenger thou seest their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth they recognize. They say: Our Lord, we believe, so write us down with the witnesses."¹

Such was the condition of those among the Jews and the Christians, who had been endowed with knowledge and fair-mindedness. On the one hand, they believed that Muḥammad was an unlettered, who had not learnt a single word of knowledge, had not attended any literary meeting, nor ever lived among a civilized people. On the other, they found in the Quran not only narratives of the previous Scriptures but also hundreds of such sublime and transcendental truths as either existed not in the previous Books, or existed in an obscure and hazy condition. When they saw the dreadful darkness and iniquity of the age prevailing on one side, and exalted knowledge and wisdom and supreme spiritual light on the

1. The Quran, 5 : 82-83. See also 17 : 107-109.

Prophet's side, they became completely convinced of his divine mission.

If these Christian scholars had not been overpowered by their own judgment, how could it have been possible for them to give up their own religion, which had the great Roman Empire on its back, and had spread far and wide in the vast continent of Asia as well as in the Western world?

It is thus clear that the only reason which diverted and drew their mind towards Islam was that they found Muḥammad a mere unlettered, but endowed with inspiration from God, and the Quran as far above the power and capacity of human beings. They had also read the prophecies in the ancient Scriptures about the advent of the Last Prophet. So, the Almighty opened their hearts for the reception of Truth, to which they turned out to be so faithful that they hesitated not to lay down their lives in His way.

Again, from a consideration of those among the Arabs, the Jews and the Christians, who were mischievous, it appears that they believed the Prophet to be an unlettered and it was for this reason that when they got silencing replies about certain texts of the Bible, on which they interrogated him by way of test, they had not the courage to say that he was a literate person. But, like the man who, despite being vanquished, would still argue, they offered the most puerile excuses, saying :

“This is nothing but a lie, which he has forged, and other people have helped him at it.”¹ And the following reply came from God: “Say: If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others.”²

Whatever the case may be, if the unbelievers had not been fully convinced that the Prophet was an unlettered, they would have left no stone unturned to prove that he had received his education in such and such an institution.

Main teaching

Living in a country in which idol-worship was the basis of the everyday life of the community, Muḥammad, like most of the ancient teachers, hated idolatry from his childhood, and the Quran is again our authority for the statement that “he never bent his forehead before an idol.”³ On the contrary, by preaching the Unity and Oneness of God, he antagonized all the religious sects and all the nations of the world sunk in polytheism. His own kith and kin whom he tried to dissuade from the worship of idols were the first to take up cudgels against him. Relations became strained with the

1. The Quran, 25 : 4.

2. *Ibid.*, 17 : 88.

3. *Ibid.*, 109 : 4.

Jews whom he tried to wean off from the worship of the created beings and other evil practices. And when he admonished them to desist from denouncing and defaming Prophet Jesus, they became his bitterest enemies and conspired against his life.

The Christians, likewise, became offended and annoyed when Muḥammad taught, contrary to their belief, that Jesus Christ was neither God, nor the Redeemer who atoned for the sins of other people by killing himself on the cross. The worshippers of fire and heavenly bodies, too, were nettled and enraged when they were discouraged from bowing their heads before those inanimate objects, and the criterion of deliverance was said to be the worship and adoration of the One True God only, the Creator of the Universe.

Was it the way of winning the world that the followers of every faith should be told things which provoked and aroused them to stand against him? Without gaining any following or power to be able to repulse an attack, the Prophet opposed all the peoples to such an extent that they became his mortal enemies. It would have been in keeping with political skill and ingenuity that if he had censured some people to be in error in the matter of their religious beliefs, he should have assured others that they were on the "right path", so that if the former would turn against him, the latter might come to his help. And had he told the Arabs

that their idols were “true gods”, they would have fallen at his feet, ready to yield obedience to him. Then, what worldly expediency could it be that he antagonized all — kinsmen, friends and others — and held fast to the doctrine of Divine Unity which was, in those days, the most dreaded and repulsive idea? What personal interest could possibly be served by this doctrine, a mere mention of which drew a veritable hell upon the new converts to Islam? Could it be a plan for any worldly gain that everyone was turned into a mortal enemy by flinging in his face the bitter word which was disagreeable and repugnant to his own mind?

Affliction

There are some people who argue that if the divine power, which is said to be a sure sign of the revealed news, had been with the Prophet of Islam, he would not have suffered so much persecution.

It must be noted here that the authoritative announcement of the revealed news is quite different from Muḥammad’s persecution, which has a lot of providential wisdom behind it. In fact, the tortures suffered by all prophets and reformers are not troubles, but blessings granted to such persons who are favoured with divine grace; these blessings in disguise bestow a number of benefits on the prophets as well as on the whole world. The exis-

tence of prophets and apostles is meant for the purpose that people may follow their example in moral actions, and seekers-after-truth may walk after them on the true path of righteousness and rectitude, revealed unto them by God. It is but obvious that a man's moral actions get to the degree of excellence and approval only when they are displayed at the proper time. It is only then that they produce their effect on human souls.

The divine will, with regard to prophets and reformers, is that every trait of their high moral character should be put into action and displayed. That is how God divided Prophet Muḥammad's life into two distinct periods: the period of sufferings and persecutions, and the period of triumph and prosperity.

The thirteen years at Mecca represent the time of suffering, and a study of his life during that time clearly shows that there is not a single moral quality which could be manifested in suffering by the righteous that was not displayed by the Prophet. His complete trust in God, his refraining from showing the slightest impatience, his calm and serenity, his noble and dignified manner, his unshaken activity and zeal in the performance of the duties entrusted to him, his perseverance, his fearless courage, and numerous other moral qualities so deeply impressed that even the unbelievers bore testimony to the great miracle of his perseverance

under the hardest trials and sufferings, and were ultimately convinced that all this was because of his perfect trust in God.

Then followed the life of Muḥammad at Medina, a period of triumph and prosperity, suited for the display of another division of moral qualities. His forgiveness, charity, sympathy, courage, were so well displayed during this period that a large number of the unbelievers embraced Islam. He freely forgave those who had persecuted him, extended shelter to those who had expelled him from Mecca and showed kindness to his bitterest foes when their lives were completely at his mercy. Their inveterate hatred was, by these noble morals, at once converted into fast friendship.

Holy wars

It has been supposed that Islam was propagated by the sword. As we have seen, temperamentally, Muḥammad was not inclined to war; he had not once handled the sword in actual fighting up to the fifty-fifth year of his age, and this in a country where, owing to constant internecine warfare, fighting had become a vocation for the people. The religion which he preached, Islam,¹ was a religion of peace, laying stress on prayer to God and the service of humanity, and he was required to preach this religion; to deliver the

1. *Islam*, literally means "peace" or "submission".

message, not to enforce it on others: "There is no compulsion in religion."¹

Again: "The Truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve."² And again: "We have truly shown him (man) the way; he may be thankful or unthankful."³

But war was being forced on Muḥammad, and it was his duty, he was told, to defend his oppressed community who had twice fled their homes from the persecutions of a cruel enemy to a distant place: "Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed. And surely Allāh is able to assist them."⁴

Why were they expelled from their homes? Why was war made on them? What was their offence? The Quran replies in the following words: "Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allāh."⁵

To worship Allāh, to say that He is our Lord, was an offence in this land, the punishment for which was that the men who worshipped God, and the places where He was worshipped, should be destroyed. So the Muslims were required to defend

1. The Quran, 2 : 256.

2. *Ibid.*, 18 : 29.

3. *Ibid.*, 76 : 3.

4. *Ibid.*, 22 : 39.

5. *Ibid.*, 22 : 40.

all houses of worship, whether they belonged to the Jews or the Christians or their own community : “If Allāh did not repel some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allāh’s name is much remembered, would have been pulled down.”¹

There was no question of converting any one to Islam by force ; it was the enemy that wanted to turn back the Muslims by force from Islam : “They will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can.”²

Therefore, the object of the wars undertaken at the bidding of the Prophet of Arabia was not to cause bloodshed. The Muslims had been expelled from their homes to seek shelter elsewhere and many innocent among them, men and women, had been murdered in cold blood. But their relentless persecutors would not stop there. In obedience to the divine commandment of self defence, the sword was allowed to be taken up against those who had first drawn the sword. The object of these wars was, therefore, to remedy an evil by abating the bloodshed caused by the

1. The Quran, 22 : 40. The religious freedom which was established by Islam thirteen hundred years ago has not yet been surpassed by the most civilized and tolerant of nations. It deserves to be noted that the lives of Muslims are to be sacrificed not only to stop their own persecution by their opponents and to save their own mosques, but, to save churches, synagogues and cloisters as well.

2. *Ibid.*, 2 : 217.

persecutors of the believers. Had the Muslims not defended themselves under these circumstances against the outrages of their persecutors, the result would have been the slaughter of more innocent lives, including women and children, and Islam would have been nipped in the bud.

Faith in God

Is it not wonderful that a poor, destitute, helpless, unlettered orphan should bring the brilliant teaching of the Unity of God in an age wherein every nation of the world was fully equipped with wealth, knowledge and military strength? Besides, in spite of his poverty and helplessness, he displayed such a high degree of power that he overturned kings from their imperial thrones, and installed the poor thereon. Who was with Muḥammad when, in the beginning, he proclaimed himself as the Prophet of God to the people of Mecca? Which large army had he collected under him that he felt safe and secure from the attacks of all the rulers? It is well known that the Prophet of Islam, at that time, was all alone, friendless and helpless. What was then the secret of the success of 'the most successful of all the religious personalities of the world'?

Casting a glance on the events of the Prophet's life, one can unhesitatingly conclude that he was honest and sincere, and his heart crystal-clear, without any trace of dissimulation or double-

dealing. He was devoted to the Almighty to the perfect degree and was totally heedless of the hope and fear of this world. He reposed all his confidence in God and, losing his own self in the will and pleasure of the Supreme Being, harboured not the smallest care and anxiety in his mind as to what a hell of distress and calamity would be let loose upon him on account of his preaching the Unity of God, and what a terrible misery he would have to suffer at the hands of his enemies. He endured all the afflictive persecutions, and carried out the commandments of his Lord, fulfilling the conditions of strenuous struggle and effort in preaching.

We may state here that no other instance can be cited of reposing such a complete faith in God in the presence of most dangerous difficulties and of continuing to preach openly against polytheism, and of showing such a high degree of firmness and fortitude in the face of so many foes. It should be appreciated how all these facts prove the internal purity and truthfulness of Muḥammad. Besides, if people reflect over the conditions prevailing at the time of his appearance — that it was an age which required urgently the direction and guidance of a divine Teacher, and that the teaching imparted by him was true and comprehensive enough to meet the needs of the age, producing such a marvellous effect as to draw thousands of people

towards Truth and Righteousness and imprint indelibly on their souls the stamp of "there is no god but Allāh" — they will arrive at the conclusion that he was, forsooth, a true Spiritual Guide sent by the Lord.

Therefore, the secret of the Prophet's success — a success admittedly unparalleled to this day — lay in his strong faith in God. He had a deep conviction that the Almighty had a plan for the uplift of man, to bring to perfection not one nation or one people but the whole universe, and that no power in the world could frustrate the divine purpose. His firm conviction in his final triumph at the time of the severest opposition, when there was not a ray of hope otherwise, may be read through almost every page of the Quran. To Muḥammad the holy Book was the great spiritual force bound to influence the whole world: "If there could be a Quran with which the mountains were made to pass away, or the earth were cloven asunder, or the dead were made to speak — nay, the commandment is wholly Allāh's."¹

The Prophet was sure that all opposition to his mission would fail and that he would succeed in bringing about the reformation with which he was charged. The stronger the opposition grew the deeper became his faith in his ultimate success and in the failure of opposition. In another early reve-

1. The Quran, 13 : 31. See also 59 : 21.

lation, it is said, after speaking of Pharaoh and other opponents of the Truth : "We overtook them with the seizing of the Mighty, the Powerful. Are your disbelievers better than these, or have you an immunity in the scriptures? Or say they : We are a host allied together to help each other? Soon shall the hosts be routed and they will show (their) backs. Nay, the Hour is their promised time, and the Hour is most grievous and bitter."¹

The man who has faith in God is like a live wire, and those who come in contact with him imbibe faith from him. Full of faith as the Prophet's own heart was, full to overflowing, it had a magic effect on those who came in contact with him, and their hearts were filled with the same strong faith.

True Prophet

It is established on the basis of historical evidence, conceded even by the unbelievers that at the time of Muḥammad's advent the calamity which prevailed was that the people of all nations had abandoned the right path of the Unity of God, of sincerity, and of devotion to justice. It is also a well known fact that the Teacher, who rectified the situation of this wide-spread disorder and decadence and brought mankind back to the right path, was Muḥammad. The valid conclusion which flows from these facts is that he is the true messen-

1. The Quran, 54 : 42-46.

ger of God, as stated in the Quran itself: "We certainly sent (messengers) to the nations before thee, but the devil made their deeds fair-seeming to them. So he is their patron to-day, and for them is a painful chastisement. And We have not revealed to thee the Book except that thou mayest make clear to them that wherein they differ, and (as) a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. And Allāh sends down water from above, and therewith gives life to the earth after its death. Surely there is a sign in this for a people who listen."¹

The firmness and fortitude with which Muḥammad stuck to his claim from the beginning to the end, in spite of many dangers and implacable enemies who had stood against him, is worth consideration. For years, he suffered such terrible tyranny and torture at the hands of his opponents that the possibility of success seemed to have been precluded altogether. With the ever-increasing opposition, on the one hand, and his patience and forbearance, on the other, the achievement of any worldly purpose could not even be thought of. By one word claiming prophethood, he lost even his previous position and social status, and thrust his head into the nest of thousands of deadly hornets.

1. The Quran, 16 : 63-65. The water from heaven is the Divine revelation, the death of the earth is its corruption, and the giving of life signifies its spiritual awakening, marvellous signs of which had already appeared in Arabia.

He was driven into exile, and pursued to be put to death. Poison was administered to him many a time. Those who had been well-wishers turned into evil-minded malevolents ; friends became foes. For a considerably long time, he had to suffer a persistent persecution which certainly could not be forborne so steadily by an impostor.

When Islam predominated in the long last, and the era of power and prosperity ushered in, the Prophet treasured no gold for himself, built no palace, no audience hall, nor other things of kingly pleasure and comfort. Rather, whatever he had, he spent on the orphans and the widows, the poor and the needy, and for the relief of those held in debt, and himself had not even one square meal at a time.

Just as from these premises flows the undeniable proof of the truth of Muḥammad's prophethood, similarly, his greatness stands proved. For, he had to contend against the forces of evil which held the whole world in their grip, the mission and the task entrusted to him having been so vast and so difficult that it called for the endeavour of a great prophet. And since it was the divine purpose that all humanity should be brought together as one nation, God sent down the final guidance as the common inheritance of all mankind.

It may be added that the endeavour of the earlier prophets was limited since their missions were

to some nations or groups of mankind, while the mission entrusted to the Prophet of Islam was universal. Besides, it is a self-evident fact that refutation of idolatry, and the establishment of the grandeur of the Lord, and of the philosophy of life based on belief in the Unity of God is the highest kind of virtue. Apart from the Quran, what law is there down here that has kept millions of people firm on the fundamental principle of the Unity of God? When at the tenth year of the Hijra, Muḥammad set out to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, there was not a single idolater in the huge concourse of 124,000 pilgrims assembled at Mecca from all corners of the country. The very spot where he was only twenty years ago a rejected person, to whose word no one was willing to lend his ear, was now the scene of marvellous devotion to him. To whichever side he turned his eye, he saw hosts of devoted friends who recognized him both as their temporal and their spiritual leader — an inspiring manifestation of divine power to him as well as to those who had assembled there.

It was here on the ninth day of Dhul Hijja, the day of the assembling of the pilgrims at Mount Arafāt, that he received a revelation¹ from on High which sent a thrill of joy through the vast gathering: "This day have I perfected for you your

1. This revelation is a clear testimony to the perfection of religion in Islam, no such claim being made by any other book or religion.

religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion.”¹

Obviously Muḥammad perceived that the message of the perfection of religion meant his approaching end. Here he delivered the following sermon to the whole of Arabia through representatives of tribes coming from every quarter : “O people ! Lend an attentive ear to my words, for I know not whether I shall ever hereafter have the opportunity to meet you here . . . I apprise you that your lives, your properties and your honour must be as sacred to one another as this sacred day in this sacred month in this sacred town. Let those present take this message to those absent. You are about to meet your Lord Who will call you to account for your deeds . . . “O people ! This day Satan has despaired of re-establishing his power in this land of yours. But should you obey him even in what may seem to you a trifling matter, it will be a source of pleasure for him. So you must beware of him in the matter of your faith.

“ O my people ! You have certain rights over your wives and so have your wives over you . . . They are the trust of Allāh in your hands. So you must treat them with all kindness . . . And as regards your slaves, see that you give them to eat of what you yourselves eat and clothe them with what you clothe yourselves.

1. The Quran, 5 : 3.

“O people! Listen to what I say and take it to heart. You must know that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. You are all equal, and members of one brotherhood. It is forbidden to any of you to take from his brother save what he should willingly give. Do not do injustice to your people.”¹

After delivering this sermon, the Prophet of Arabia cried at the top of his voice: “O Allāh! I have delivered Thy message,” and the valley resounded with the words: “Aye! That thou hast.”

This is known as the Prophet’s Farewell pilgrimage. A little while after his return to Medina, he fell ill. After about twelve days’ illness, on the 12th of Rabi‘ I, on a Monday in the 11th year of the Flight, (8th June, 632 A.C.) at the age of sixty-three, he commended his soul to his Maker, his last words being: “Blessed companionship on High.”

Prophecies fulfilled

The promises of triumph and glory held out by the All-powerful to a powerless, penniless, and unlettered man — as against all the world at large, all the opponents of Truth, disbelievers, kings, philosophers, wealthy, and the systems of religion — are remarkable. It was that solitary man who uttered the prophecy of the spread and ascendancy

1. Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of knowledge : 62.

of Islam at a time when he had nothing with him except a few destitutes who could easily be wiped out of existence by the people of the desert. He had to stand against such people who were rulers of the land. He also had to confront those nations that were, in spite of their huge numbers, unanimously determined to annihilate the Muslims. Today, those few and humble people have grown into millions all over the world.

THE GLORY OF THE QURAN

“(The Quran is) a Book that We have revealed to Muḥammad abounding in good, that they may ponder over its verses, and that the men of understanding may mind” — 38 : 29.

Before entering upon a discussion on the truth and authenticity of the Quran, it seems necessary that a mention be made of certain principles which are of fundamental importance, and which will be found useful in appreciating the arguments offered in the following pages.

External and internal evidence

External evidence is the testimony derived from sources which are independent of the thing discussed. In relation to a book, it signifies those phenomenal events which come to pass in such a way as to prove its supernatural source, or serve to establish the paramount necessity of its having been divinely inspired. Internal evidence stands

for those intrinsic values, which lead us to the inevitable conclusion that it is the infallible Word of God which is far above the power and possibility of mortal man.

The arguments constituting external evidence on the truth of the Holy Book may be divided into four sections :

— Arguments based on facts which require to be rectified and reformed, as are found in the previous practices of unbelief and heresy, depraved deeds and dishonest dealings which man has adopted instead of the right beliefs and righteous actions and which, having spread all over the world, vitiating its atmosphere, deserve richly to be set right and amended by the grace of the Almighty.

— Arguments deduced from teachings found in the revealed Books in imperfect form, the deficiency of which becomes all the more glaring when examined in the light of Prophet Muḥammad's teachings. It is also for this reason that these Scriptures can be considered to be at the mercy of an original revealed Book which may lift them up to the level of perfect excellence.

— Arguments derived from the Book of Nature which may be further subdivided into two kinds : external evidence, consisting of such facts as are brought into existence by God directly, without the intervention of human strategem, and as bestowed upon every particle. Internal evidence, implying

those inner excellences of the Book, the grandeur of its phrase and the greatness of its teaching, which no amount of human power can compete and which, in point of fact being nonpareil, become a sign of the Supreme Being.

— Arguments relating to the secrets of the Unseen (*umūr-i ghaibiyya*), that is, facts falling from the lips of a man of whom it cannot be accepted that he was capable of making those statements. It should be clear, from a consideration of the secrets disclosed and the conditions of the man, that it could not be possible for him to have a previous knowledge of those facts, neither through sensible experience nor by means of contemplative thought, nor will it stand to reason to suppose that he became aware of them through the agency of a confidant, although the very same facts may not be without the ambit of another man.

Arguing adversely, it may be objected that it is quite possible to re-state the simple facts incorporated in the Scriptures by taking to the method of hearsay. For this purpose, a man need not be well-read; he can easily reproduce a fact which he has heard from a learned man. The facts of the religion of these people, too, are not so hard and abstruse as not to be understood without the help of high learning and erudition. If the Scriptures were not to contain such problems as cannot be solved except by scholars of high degree, it would

have to be admitted that they constitute no high and distinctive mark of learning. For, a book commands but scant respect in the eyes of the learned if it should fail to rise above the crude intelligence of the common folk and fall far below the level of sublime truths. If a person should cherish that the teaching of his Scriptures is devoid of all the exalted truths, he is guilty of a contempt of his own Books. Nor will his feeling of pride be able to hold its own for the simple reason that he will be counted among the mass and, his knowledge and wisdom being in no way superior to theirs, cannot fall within the domain of the secrets of the Unseen, provided their teaching should be so widespread and well known that there may be good reasons to believe that every illiterate person can be aware of it, if he should devote even his small attention to the matter. On the other hand, if their contents are not generally known, nor universally prevalent — in that case, however crude those facts may be, a disclosure of them will be regarded as the disclosure of the secrets of the Unseen in reference to the man who is absolutely ignorant of the language in which those facts have been written.

Therefore, the knowledge of the Unseen falls beyond the ken of mortal man; and whatever is beyond the power and possibility of man is evidently caused by God. So, the secrets of the

Unseen are caused into existence directly by the Divine Being, without the least intervention of human element.

A thing which is brought into existence by the power of the Almighty, be it a living being or a sacred Scripture, should be beyond the possibility of man to produce a like of it. This principle, which is of a general nature, may be proved in two ways: Firstly, by constructive imagination, according to which it is necessary that God should be One and without an associate in His person, attributes and deeds. For, if the association of a created being were possible in any of His creations, words and deeds, it could also be possible in all His works and attributes, in which case the possibility of the creation of another God would also become conceivable. And if a thing were to possess some of the divine attributes, it should have to be regarded as an associate with the Supreme Being, which is quite inconsistent with the plain dictates of common sense and reason. Secondly by judgment of all those things which have been created exclusively by the power and command of God, from the smallest atom to the most gigantic orb of the heaven. It is an established fact that even from among the merest trifles, for instance, a fly, a gnat or a spider, not one thing is there which lies within the possibility of man to create. On the other hand, the composition of their tiny bodies

is so wonderful that it constitutes a strong argument for the existence of the Creator of the world.

Divine challenge

When it has been firmly established that all things created by God are unequalled in their excellence, and, conversely, things which have no parallel are essentially of super-natural source, the puerile proposition, which asserts that it is not necessary that the Word of God should be unique or that its being unequalled does not necessarily prove that it is from the Almighty, becomes baseless.

However, it is alleged that there exist in the universe many a word of man, the like of which has not so far been produced, and yet these have not been accepted as divine word. This erroneous conception has arisen from want of thought and deliberation; otherwise, of human word, howsoever precious it may be, it can never be claimed justly that it is beyond the power and possibility of human mind, and that the author of it has done a deed which may well be called God-like. A man can do what another man has done. When a word is called the word of man, the conclusion that it is, therefore, not beyond the power of another person, is indisputable and the possibility of its being unparalleled is also precluded.

There has never been a man who ever claimed that his words and deeds can be compared with

those of the Divine Being. And, if there had been such an impudent person with such an arrogant claim, many would have challenged him. It should be known that it is exclusively the privilege and glory of God to have challenged all the nations of the world to produce, if they could, word like unto His Word, and to have roused them to summon all their resources for this contest. And when hundreds of reputed poets have laid down their lives without being able to produce even one small chapter like that of the Quran, it will indeed be the limit of ignorance to call their writings as unsurpassable, and to associate them with the Almighty in this attribute of His. The Quran says that "if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call on your helpers besides Allāh if you are truthful. But if you do (it) not — and you can never do (it) — then be on your guard against the fire whose fuel is men and stones; it is prepared for the disbelievers."¹ And again the challenge is thrown that "if men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others. And certainly We have made clear for men in this Quran

1. The Quran, 2 : 23-24. A similar challenge is contained in 10 : 38, 11 : 13 and 17 : 88. Note that 'stones' in the above verse are generally understood to be the idols which the Arabs worshipped.

every kind of description, but most men consent to naught save denying.”¹

It is thus clear that the distinctive quality of being unparalleled and unapproachable in excellence belongs exclusively to the Divine Word and Deed. It is this very argument which helps to induce belief in the existence of the Creator, and without which the way to reach Him through the gateway of reason would have been closed. The fact of the existence of God, it cannot be gainsaid, is so closely connected with this great principle that it will be nothing short of cutting at the very root of Reason and Faith if we should dare admit mortal men into its purview, and ascribe to them the divine attribute.

If a person should refuse to accept this general principle, established after a careful observation of the laws of nature, he should not, thereafter, refer to Reason nor speak of the Laws that govern this universe, and should discard all books on logic and philosophy. How will he feel when he asserts that a bee, so perfect in its make, has undoubtedly been created by God, but His Word, with all the grandeur of its phrase and greatness of its teaching cannot be so perfect as to evince its super-natural source? Is it not a matter of regret that, whereas in the case of a bee, he professes that its physical

1. The Quran, 17 : 88-89. See also 10 : 37-38 ; 11 : 13-14.

structure is such that it lies beyond the power of man to produce a like thereof, but in regard to the Divine Word he avers that its like can be produced ?

Such a person contemplates that man cannot create honey, but he has all the power to produce word like unto the Word of God. Does he not feel that if there should be, in the Divine Word, not even as much excellence as in the make-up of an insect, the objection thereof would have to be laid at the door of the Almighty, Who has exalted the inferior creation over and above the superior and higher in excellence, and has endowed the former with such arguments, pertaining to his own person, as have not been conferred on the superior one ?

These truths are so evident and clear that even he who has not entered the fold of Islam can understand that it is necessary for the Word of God to be unequalled and unsurpassable in excellence. Every sensible man who reflects on the working of the laws of nature, realizes that every thing created by God, however trifling it may be, is so full of marvel and wisdom that it is far beyond the power and capacity of human being to produce ; nor will he ever be able to accept the possibility of association of a created being in the person, attributes and deeds of the Creator.

For a man of intelligence and understanding, there are, besides what has been stated in the

foregoing pages, many more arguments which establish the fact of the incomparability of the Divine Word in a very clear and lucid manner. Suppose, for instance, some men of letters enter into a contest for the production of a composition which should be pure and full of knowledge, wisdom and learning. It needs no saying that the palm, in this contest, will be borne only by that writer who will have a vast knowledge and a profound practice in the art of writing. No other person, deficient in learning and intelligence, comprehensiveness and capability, will be able to reach the former's elegance and grandeur in writing, and become his equal.

We may here take another example of a physician, who is not only an expert in the art of diagnosis and healing, but is also an adept in the art of speaking and writing. The perfect and precise manner in which he will dilate upon and discuss the causes, symptoms and treatment of a disease, will not be equalled by another man who is not endowed with the gift of the gab. The speech of an illiterate cannot, therefore, be at par with that of a scholar.

Now that it has been established that the disparity, which exists in the literary and intellectual power of a human being, finds its expression correspondingly in his speech, it becomes necessary that the word, which is claimed to be that of God

should, in regard to internal as well as external excellences be unapproachable by human word for the reason that the knowledge of no other being can be equal to that of the Divine Being.

When human beings, notwithstanding the fact that they belong to the same species, have different powers of expression on account of the disparity in their knowledge and wisdom, experience and practice, so that a man of small understanding and knowledge cannot attain to the higher level of a scholar's speech-excellence, how could it be possible for a created being, whose knowledge is insignificant, to be an equal of the Creator? The fact that all the internal and external grandeur of a word is solely dependent on the literary capability and practical experience of a person now stands proved.

Quranic diction

Some controverts argue that it may be acceptable in theory that the Word of God should be unequalled and unique, but such a word is yet to be found, the matchlessness of which has been proved by some strong argument. If this claim be urged on behalf of the Quran, it shall have to be established, they contend, by means of an indisputable argument, for, the incomparability of the Quranic diction and idiom may be an argument for a man whose mother-tongue is Arabic, but it

cannot carry any conviction for others who cannot also derive any benefit from it.

It is true that some knowledge of Arabic is necessary for the proper appreciation of certain points regarding the matchlessness of the Quran. But it is a mistake to think that all the arguments on its grandeur rely for their support on a knowledge of the Arabic language, and that its marvels can be appreciated by the Arabs only. This is certainly not the case. It is well known to any learned person that many of these arguments are so simple and easy that no proficiency in Arabic is required to understand them; even an ordinary sense suffices for their understanding. It should be noted that the Quran is so short and succinct in volume that it can be scribed with a medium pen in four or five parts only; it contains all the religious doctrines and principles ever taught. Another marvel of the Book is that howsoever many truths of religious learning a man may discover through deep deliberation and hard work, or expound with his own intelligence or argument on any religious topic, or demand to be shown from it, the remedial treatment of any of the moral and spiritual maladies that human beings have been suffering from, he will find the replies in its chapters.¹ Yet another easily comprehensible proof of its matchlessness

1. The Quran, 10 : 57. The Quran is a healing and a guidance for all people. See also 29 : 51.

consists in the fact that the dignity of its diction, and the perfect choice of its words is so great that no human effort can ever approach it. This claim as stated above, was put to test at the time of its revelation, and found true, and has since come down through the ages as an established reality.

In short, the Quran, like a sure circle, encompasses within its fold all religious truths and wisdom. All those principles which had been taught wrongly by people, on account of their imperfect knowledge, will be found rectified, and brought to perfection in it. There will also be found in this revealed Scripture such truths, the exposition of which never fell to the lot of any human teacher. The niceties with regard to the divine knowledge which, though put in writing in volumes, but was yet in an incomplete form, have been fully explained in it. The Almighty proclaims that "with truth have We revealed it (the Quran), and with truth did it come."¹ "We have not neglected anything in the Book."²

Again, addressing the Prophet, God says that "We have not revealed to thee the Book except that thou mayest make clear to them that wherein they differ, and (as) a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe."³

1. The Quran, 17 : 105.

2. *Ibid.*, 6 : 38.

3. *Ibid.*, 16 : 64.

And the assurance is also given to God's statement that "surely We have revealed the Reminder, and surely We are its Guardian."¹

The Quran is admittedly a small volume. It was revealed to Prophet Muhammad piecemeal during a period of twenty-three years. It is divided into 114 chapters. Each consists of a number of verses. But all the diverse doctrines of religion, and all the great and subtle truths about the Divine Being, and the essence of all the thought-product of the ancient and modern teachers have been so miraculously condensed in it that not a single truth, or true principle, can be pointed out which has remained outside its sphere, thereby, proving indubitably that it is not the work of man.

Vehicle of expression

Some people are of the opinion that language has been created by man and it is, therefore, not impossible for him to acquire perfect excellence in the use of its phrase and idiom. It will be irrational to think, they argue, that man is unable to make progress in the matter of his own invention. And they conclude that, since it is not impossible to achieve perfection in the use of language, it will not also be impossible to produce a likeness of the Holy Quran equally excellent in phrase and dignified in diction.

1. The Quran, 15 : 9. See also 8 : 7-8 ; 10 : 1-2 ; 41 : 41-42 . . .

It is unwarranted to suppose that human power, in the matter of knowledge and wisdom, can be at par with the Divine Power. It is, therefore, necessary that the disparity which exists between these high and low, strong and weak powers, should find a corresponding repercussion in their words. The word proceeding from a higher power will evidently be superior to that which has its source in the inferior, much in the same way as a weak person cannot take his stand against a stronger one, although all men belong to the same human species.

It is not correct to say that every language and dialect has been invented by man. It has been proved conclusively that the Supreme Being Himself, having created man, endowed him with language also that he may be able to express himself. If language had been created by man, there would have been no need for educating a child who, when grown up, would have invented a language for himself. But a child will remain speechless and destitute of oral expression if he is not instructed in any language, no matter whether he is brought up in Asia, or is kept in a forest in Europe, or is taken to some spot below the equator.

An argument is sometimes adduced to the fact that hundreds of different changes have been taking place in languages, indicating human intervention

and influence over them. This is another misconception. These changes are not caused by human will and power, nor has any law been discovered so far to determine the periods of time during which human nature acts for the introduction of these changes. A deeper reflection, however, will show that these changes in languages are also brought about by the Divine Being, much in the same way as all other changes, celestial and terrestrial, are made by His will. It can never be proved that human beings ever invented all those languages and dialects, which are spoken in the world.

It is urged that just as changes have been introduced in languages by God as a natural phenomenon, why should it not be possible that, in the beginning, too, languages came to be created likewise, and no special revelation had been vouchsafed from on High?

The reply to this objection is that it is a general law of nature that, in the first instance, the Almighty created everything exclusively by His power of origination. A little pondering over the creation of the heaven and the earth, the sun and the moon, and the human nature itself, will show that the time of the first creation was the time for display of the divine power of origination, which had nothing to do with the other laws of cause and effect.

When every form of creation, in the beginning, was brought into existence merely by His will and command, it would be unreasonable to suppose that the Almighty, Who has the power to create man, besides other things, even without the agency of both father and mother, should be so weak and destitute of power in the creation of languages. Every sensible man will have to accept that the law of origination was in operation in the beginning of the world. It will, therefore, be unfair to throw the creation of the languages outside the sphere of this law.

The fact of phenomenal changes coming over the languages is different from that of bringing a language into actual existence from a state of nothingness. And, besides all these things, when God, even now, reveals His will to His people in different languages, some of which are entirely unknown to them, which they had neither learnt from their parents nor from their teachers, will it not be unreasonable to say that the same All-Knowing God had not the power to create language and teach it to human beings in the beginning of the world, which was just the time of man's want and destitution? Will such a belief leave behind any regard and reverence for the Divine Power? Can any fair-minded man ever harbour such a false notion that the Lord failed to display, in the beginning of the world, certain powers, the mani-

festation of which was necessary and essential for the good of man who knew it not? Is it thinkable at all that the Creator, who brought man into existence with a firm and set purpose and made him the best of creation, should have left him defective and unfinished in his make, which deficiency was, later on, made up by man himself through an accident? Will it be correct to suppose that the Almighty, Who had a perfect knowledge of all the languages from the very beginning, should have held back that knowledge deliberately from man, even though He had seen him wallowing and weltering in speechlessness?

It is sometimes objected that if language was taught to man by divine instruction, why should the savage tribes be suffered to live in a state of speechlessness in the jungle, to express themselves by mere signs and signals of the hand? Why should not a language be conferred upon them by God and, why should not a new-born baby, if kept in the jungle, be blessed with such a divine revelation?

This objection comes from a wrong conception of the divine attributes. The Word of God is not cast upon anyone. The recipient of the divine communication should possess the requisite excellence and merit. The other condition for the bestowal of the the divine revelation is that there should exist a true, genuine need for it. In the

beginning of creation, when man was brought into existence, both these conditions, necessary for the teaching of language to man by divine instruction, existed. Man had already been endowed with capability for the reception of divine communion. The condition of a true, genuine need was also fulfilled. For, there was, at the time, no kind and compassionate friend, except the Almighty, Who could teach him how to speak and thereby raise him from the primitive state to the higher and nobler stage of civilization and culture.

Later on, when the children of Adam, the human race, spread over the world, and the knowledge imparted to Adam from on High was diffused thoroughly among his progeny, some people then became the teachers and preceptors of others. It was not so in the case of Adam. There was no other being, no teacher, preceptor or parent, except God Who could teach him language and educate him in human dignity and decency. In short, it was absolutely necessary that Adam should have been brought up and educated by the Almighty Himself whereas, in the case of his children, this necessity does not arise for the simple reason that hundreds of millions of human beings now speak many different dialects and also teach the same to their children.

The personal capability and excellence of an individual form an essential condition for his

becoming the recipient of divine communication. And should a person be found, even now, imbued with noble qualities, he can receive guidance from God. The eye of the Supreme Being penetrates into the depths of man's capability and the comprehensiveness of his mind. The Lord will never deprive him of the opportunity of displaying his mental powers. It can never happen that a person, who is imbued with the faculty of imbibing divine inspiration and knowledge, should yield up his life and depart from this world without having been raised, in consequence of certain physical causes or, for instance, birth in a jungle, to that high office of dignity and distinction for which he had been ordained. On the contrary, only that man rolls in an abject state of speechlessness and savage disposition who is, by nature, defective and deficient. Moreover, by the conferment of so many different dialects upon hundreds of millions of people, the door for the general instruction of others has been widely opened. Under these conditions, no necessity whatsoever is left for the teaching of language by divine revelation, except in some special case in which a sign is intended to be shown.

Literary expression

Some people hold that the alphabet and separate individual words are common between

the human language and the Word of God, so that, in this respect, man stands at the same footing as does the Almighty. But, the fact is that He Himself taught man the vehicle of expression. Therefore, the alphabet and the separate individual words also have come to man as a blessing from Him.

Man can only know how to express what is in his mind, in a given situation, by preparing a construction of words, placing one sentence in one way, and another in a different way. This placing of words and phrases in a particular order is called literary composition to give expression to a particular thought or emotion. In this literary art, we claim that no man can manage to equal God. Nor can it be held permissible that a human being should be able to rise to a position of equality with Him in this respect. In that case, the implication would be that the creation of God can rise to a position of equality with the Creator, which, of course, should be an impossibility for mortal beings. That man should be making use of the same sounds, the same alphabet, and the same words, which also occur in the Divine Word, does not place him in a position of equality with the Lord. Clay is a creation of God. But a potter treats it in a particular manner, and then shapes pottery from it, which has variety of forms and sizes. When the potter is seen at work, it is not concluded that he has acquired a position of equality with the Creator of the world. Equality

with God would be taken to have come about only if a man could shape various forms of animate and inanimate objects.

It is, of course, true that a measure of invention and literary construction has also fallen to the share of man, which God operates in His wisdom within the lines and confines of the various laws of nature. But, how can the human invention and literary composition rise to the same heights of excellence and beauty as do the powers of the Almighty? In efforts to put himself in a position of equality with God, if a man were to confine himself to the task of re-assembling the various parts of an animal's body that had come to be cut off and dismembered, and to re-infuse the breath of life in the parts he had brought together, he would never be successful. How can a weak and frail human being then dare set himself up as the equal of the Lord? He cannot, with any justice, equal an animal in many respects — in fact not even the small insects, since many of them are far better builders and creators than human beings: some create beautiful and delicate silk, others sweet and health-giving honey, etc.

It should consequently be remembered that, just as the various elements of the human body are from God, similarly, the component parts of the human speech are also from Him. Therefore, a genuine seeker-after-truth should not allow himself

to be misled by the thought that the alphabet, words and expressions, which comprise a language, are common between human speech and Divine Word. He should not forget that these elements of human speech have been given to man by the All-Powerful, Who also uses them in His Word, as does man when he desires to express himself to another human being.

In literary expression, man cannot by any possible means rise to the position which belongs in this field, as in others, only to God. This is why the unbelievers of Mecca, many of them poets of the highest repute for the grandeur and the force of their literary compositions, could do nothing at all when they had to face the challenge of the Quran to produce a piece to match it.

Experimental experience

The peculiar quality of the incomparability of the Quran, based on the excellence of its phraseology and the majesty of its diction, can be appreciated only through experimental experience, much in the same way as the distinctive characteristics of other things are put to test and examined. For this purpose, the Divine Providence has prescribed but one course: in case of a doubt, the experiment should be repeated over and over again until it is completely removed, and the mind is fully satisfied in regard to that particular quality.

To illustrate this, let us suppose a man, after a long series of experiments, has arrived at the irresistible conclusion that arsenic is a violent poison. If he should, thereafter, deny this deadly quality of arsenic for the reason that it is not known to him why it should be so destructive, then such a man will be considered unsound and deranged. But, the biggest of follies to deny the exclusive and unique qualities of the Almighty — of His being nonpareil and without any sort of association of partnership in His attributes and deeds, and of His being fully perfect and complete in His power and glory. This fact has been established not only by practical experience, but metaphysical reasoning and argument also prove it to be important in the highest degree, and connect the fact of His divineness with these super-human attributes.

The arguments which God has adduced on the inevitable need and super-natural source of the Quran may briefly be summarised as follows: the Book came at the most critical time when the adepts of all faiths had forsaken the true principles and fallen away from godliness, piety and chaste action. Human minds had been obsessed with the love of this world to such an extent that all their efforts and actions were inspired by one single motive: the attainment of worldly pleasure, honour and happiness.

So, in pursuance of His eternal law—that He turns mercifully towards His creatures whenever they are stricken down with affliction, just as He sends down life-giving rain when the death-dealing drought smites them—God liked not that His created beings should continue in that state of spiritual darkness and distress, which would ultimately land them in eternal damnation and destruction. So, He revealed the Quran to call them back to rectitude from moral wandering and transgression. Without the advent of a prophet who brought with him such a mighty Book—which is pure and free from every kind of fault, flaw or failing that impairs excellence—it would not have been possible to bring back to the right path those who had renounced the true faith. The proof of this argument rests upon the fact that it is the immutable and eternal law of God that He confers His help at the time of physical and spiritual needs—in the form of rain from heaven when physical distress afflicts the world, and in the shape of His word of wisdom and healing when the spiritual calamity torments.

This proposition is so clear and self-evident that it produces conviction on its bare presentation. No man will ever deny the fact that both the physical and the spiritual systems have been coming down the ages, uninjured and unimpaired, for the one reason that the Lord has been protecting them against all the forces of desolation and des-

truction. For instance, if He had not vouchsafed His protection to the physical world, by sending down rain from the heaven when deadly drought and frightful famine prevailed, the inescapable result would have been that people, having consumed the yield of their first crops would have, thereafter, starved to death and mankind would have ultimately been annihilated. Or, if He had not ordained the sun and the moon, the day and the night, the wind and the cloud to function with perfect precision, the whole system of this universe would have broken down and disintegrated. And we know that "God it is Who sends down the rain after people have despaired, and He unfolds His mercy. And He is the Friend, the Praised One."¹

General law of nature

If we cast a glance on the creation of God, and ponder over the peculiar qualities which the Creator has reposed in them, we come upon and discern clearly the principle that all these qualities may be divided into two kinds : Firstly, those that can be easily appreciated. For instance, everybody knows that man has two eyes, two ears, etc. These are facts which can be appreciated and recognized by a mere glance. Secondly, those that are hard and subtle. For example, the strange construction of the eye, by means of which both

1. The Quran, 42 : 28.

the eyes function unitedly as one, beholding alike all things great and small ; or the making of the ears which enable them to hear various sounds, etc. These facts are such as cannot be appreciated by a simple observation which necessitates many years of research of great scholars and specialists in sciences. There are yet hundreds of hidden marvels in the construction of the human body which no one may have so far been able to reach.

It cannot be doubted that the higher purpose behind these wonders of the human body is that man should realize and appreciate the perfection of the Divine Power and Wisdom, which has accomplished these marvellous deeds in his creation. But the following objection may, however, be urged for want of knowledge and discernment: Why should God have made this matter, which was intended to induce divine knowledge, so subtle and abstruse that a whole age of thinking and deliberation is required to understand and appreciate it, and yet with the uncertainty as to whether all the hidden realities will be unravelled and disclosed ; and that, on account of this, man has not so far been able to get even one single drop out of the vast ocean of that knowledge ; and that these marvels should have been so manifest and clear as to fulfil that great purpose easily ?

The reply would be that the Creator, in regard to all His creations, is He Who is not

contented with the display of some manifest marvels only, but has also concealed in everything profound and abstract wonders. To call and condemn this noble work of the Supreme Being as worthless and useless will be the height of ignorance. It should be understood that He has not created man, like other inferior animals, with such a narrow nature that his knowledge might have remained confined to a few tangible and readily perceptible facts. On the other hand, man has been invested with the power to make unlimited progress in the vast field of knowledge and learning through keen observation and deep thought.

If all these divine marvels had been made manifest and clear, so that there would have been left no need for the exercise of observation and thought on the part of man, what things would have been there whereto he would have devoted and directed his intellectual powers, the cultivation of which is imperatively necessary for the perfect development of man? And if he had not been vouchsafed the opportunity to comprehend and infer, how could it have been possible for him to raise himself to the intended stage of perfection? Since humanhood is so closely connected with the use of man's mental powers, the Creator has concealed many wonders in His creation in such a way that unless man puts into action with full

force the powers and faculties bestowed upon him, these marvels cannot possibly be comprehended.

In short, all the works of the Almighty finish not merely on rough and crude constructions, but the deeper one digs into them, the finer the marvels one will find. The general law, which has been proved beyond doubt in regard to all things coming from God, states that they are all full of deep secrets and abstruse subtleties. Every sensible man, therefore, will have to admit, in accordance with this law of nature, that Divine Word also should not be devoid of profound delicacies.

People argue that since the sacred Scriptures have been revealed for the good and guidance of the ignorant and Bedouins of the desert, the teaching contained therein should, therefore, be within the ken of their meagre needs.

This is another misconception which has arisen out of ignorance. If we were to study the Quran seriously, and reflect over its excellences, our false notion would be dissipated like the dispersion of darkness when the sun rises.

It has clearly been stated by God that the Quran has been revealed for the reformation of the whole world and for the reclamation of all kinds of human temperaments. In it, the followers of all the faiths — the Jews and the Christians, the Polytheists and the Magians, the Atheists and the Agnostics — have been addressed much in the same

way as the ignorants of the desert have been accustomed : "Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allāh and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve."¹

When it has been proved manifestly that the Quran had to deal with all sorts of human temperaments, was it not necessary that it should have impressed its truth and glory on each one of them, and banished all kinds of doubts and misgivings? Moreover, if the ignorant have also been addressed in this sacred Book, it does not follow that God wished to keep them as such, wallowing in ignorance and lack of knowledge. On the other hand, He wanted that the human powers and wisdom, which lay dormant in their nature, should quicken up and come into action. What possibly is the use of knowledge if the ignorant are for ever to be kept in ignorance?

It need not be said that mere conjecture or surmise is unable to hold its stand against a fact. When some peculiarity of a thing has been discovered after a long experience, it would be unwise to denounce it on the basis of some proofless presumption. It sounds as if a man were to deny the peculiar qualities of plants for the reason that if the Creator had reposed these qualities into

1. The Quran, 2 : 62.

them for the good and benefit of man, why should He have concealed them from the eye of human beings who, merely for want of a knowledge of them, continued to die without treatment for a long time? Should a man cast a glance around him, he will find that Divine Law is not confined to one or two things only, nor is it hidden to an extent which makes it difficult to understand.

Profound principles

It is to be understood that God has made no secret of, nor concealed any of the essentials of religion. The profound principles comprise those facts only which are beside and above these elementary fundamentals of faith, and are meant for such persons who have been endowed with the capability of acquiring higher excellences. By means of these subtle and finer truths those people rest not contented with those principles only, but make progress in divine knowledge and wisdom and get to the lofty tower of firm faith and certainty which is, indeed, a sublime point for human power and progress to reach.

If all the secrets and subtleties of divine knowledge had also been made manifest and easy to understand, there would have been left no difference between a wise and an ignorant person. All knowledge, in that case, would have been destroyed and test for the measurement of human capability, which increases man's observational power and

makes him perfect would have vanished away. Man, without this important means, would have been rendered incapable of exercising his observation and thought, with the result that he would have stopped and stagnated at a certain point and lost all power for making unlimited progress and achieving that blessing.

God has endowed man with the power to observe and think, and soar upwards. How can it, then, be possible to allege against Him that He has sent down His Book to hinder man from rising to perfection? Is it not true that He has revealed His Word for the purpose of getting man out of darkness into light? Will not then the divine claim that His Book only can accomplish this object be reduced into a mere empty boast, if it were contended that the books of Aristotle and Plato alone could pull man out of the depths of darkness? Providence Divine has not involved man into a handicap or thrown him into a difficulty. He has bestowed upon him, in the first instance, the power to observe and reflect; and then He has provided materials for the exercise of this power. These are indeed the divine blessings which have enhanced the grandeur and glory of man over other animals.

Way to knowledge

The Almighty has Himself directed and pointed out the way to knowledge and wisdom: "We have sent among you a Messenger from among you,

who recites to you Our messages and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the Wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know.”¹

Again, we are told in the Quran that “the Supreme Being grants wisdom to whom He pleases. And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good.”²

In short, God has expounded in His Book the principles of salvation and success so explicitly that no difficulty or doubt can arise in understanding them. The educated and the uneducated are both on the same footing in this respect, yet it has been His will that in the matter of divine knowledge and sublime principles, man should struggle and strive after them, so that this effort and exertion may prove to be the cause of his perfection. All human powers and faculties depend, for their existence, on exercise and use. If a man should keep his eyes closed for ever, and use them not for the purpose of seeing, he will soon, as proved by medical experiments, become blind. Likewise, his hands and feet will become defunct, if he should not make use of them. His memory, too, as well as his power of thinking, will waste away and become atrophied, if he should cease to work them.

It is thus His kindness and grace that He has guided man into the way whereon depend the

1. The Quran, 2 : 151.

2. *Ibid.*, 2 : 269. See also 1 : 5-6 ; 35 : 28.

perfect development of his power of observation and thinking. And if He had emancipated man altogether from the shackles of struggle and strife, it would not have been proper and just to send His Last Book, meant for the guidance of all the nations of the world, speaking different dialects, in one single language which they knew not. It would not have been possible for them to make out and decipher a strange language without exertion, however small and meagre it might have been.

God declares in the Holy Book that, before Muḥammad, He sent apostles among the different nations of the world. But, those people were taken in and led into error by the deceitful devil, and their evil deeds seemed fair and pleasing to them. So, He sent down the Quran so that their differences may be expunged and the teaching, which existed in an incomplete form in the earlier Scriptures, may be perfected for the guidance of the believers : “We certainly sent (messengers) to nations before thee (Muḥammad), but the devil made their deeds fair-seeming to them. So he is their patron today, and for them is a painful chastisement. And We have not revealed to thee the Book except that thou mayest make clear to them that wherein they differ and (as) a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. And Allāh sends down water from above, and therewith gives life to the earth

after its death. Surely there is a sign in this for a people who listen.”¹

It has been the law of nature, from time immemorial, that the Almighty causes the winds to blow before His mercy sends down rain. These winds, which carry rain-bearing clouds on their wings, are driven to a dead land which has been sapped of life by a dreadful and devouring drought. He then sends down water and causes many a kind of luscious fruits to grow. In the same way, He pulls the spiritually dead from their depths: “He it is Who sends forth the winds bearing good news before His mercy; till, when they bear a laden cloud, We drive it to a dead land, then We send down water on it, then bring forth thereby fruits of all kinds. Thus do We bring forth the dead that you may be mindful. And the good land — its vegetation comes forth (abundantly) by the permission of its Lord. And that which is inferior — (its herbage) comes forth but scantily. Thus do We repeat the messages for a people who give thanks.”²

The Prophet of Arabia appeared at a time when corruption prevailed over sea and land, and the world was tainted with depravity and debasement. People had strayed away and swerved from the right path. The cause of all this corruption

1. The Quran, 16 : 63-65.

2. *Ibid.*, 7 : 57-58. See also 30 : 4-50.

was that righteousness had departed from the human minds, and all their actions were impelled by selfish, sordid motives and not by any sense of obedience to the Supreme Being. They had, as a matter of fact, become entirely earth-bound and perverted, in consequence whereof they had been deprived of divine favour and grace. But, before chastising them, God sent to them his Messenger that they might be given a chance to repent and recoil from their evil course: "Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of that which man's hands have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return. Say: Travel in the land, then see what was the end of those before! Most of them were polytheists." ¹

1. The Quran, 30 : 41-42.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

“And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And those who are with Him are not too proud to serve Him, nor are they weary” — 21 : 19.

So far we have been discussing the necessity for the Divine Word to be matchless in the light of the laws of nature. But the same proposition can be looked at from another angle as well in order to enable us to arrive at the same conclusion.

Salvation

It is true that for a human being to reach the end of his life in circumstances which should make him feel sure of the salvation of his soul, it depends on whether or not he has attained to the stage of an absolute conviction in regard to the existence of God as well as His pledge that human actions have to face a day of Judgment in a life in the Hereafter.

This indispensable degree of conviction is not attainable merely on the basis of having seen the wide range of things created by the Almighty. To take a man to the required degree of conviction, what is needed is a revealed Scripture, the like of which should be impossible for the genius to produce, no matter how capable and wise he might be in other respects. To make this point adequately clear, it is essential that two things should be brought out : Firstly, why is the desirable hope of salvation dependant on the kind of conviction mentioned above? Secondly, why the required degree of conviction cannot be attained on the basis of an observation and experience in regard to the actual existence, in fact, of the material world, and the innumerable and infinite range of its far-flung manifestations? In this connection, it is important to grasp the point that the perfect conviction under reference means that degree of an absolute certainty which leaves no room for the slightest shade of doubt, which confers the fullest possible satisfaction and peace on the mind. No belief, or principle, that fails to produce this kind of satisfaction and peace of mind, can really deserve to be taken as having risen to the required height, since it cannot be said to form more than a likelihood, and a more or less wistful piece of thought, and an optimistic flight of imagination.

The perfect hope of a sure salvation depends on an absolute conviction of the mind, because man should be able to keep the love of God in his heart, supreme over all his material desires and wishes, all his aims and ambitions in the pursuit of material goals, supreme over all kinds of ties and relationships of the flesh. But the difficulty is that, instead of modelling his life on this basis, man suffers his heart to get attached to things which tend powerfully to pull him in the opposite direction. In fact, he gets entangled in these things to such an extent that, almost unconsciously, he begins to believe that all his comfort, all his peace of mind, all his enjoyment, depend on the maintenance of these ties with the material objects and relationships. Further, in the impaired range of his perceptions, not only does it appear to him that his happiness and peace lie in these pursuits and these ties, but he also perceives, on the basis of his material and physical sense, that this is a tangible reality in regard to which there is no possibility of doubt. The Quran says: "Do they not look at the sky above them? — how We have made it and adorned it and it has no gaps. And the earth, We have spread it out, and cast therein mountains, and We have made to grow therein of every beautiful kind — to give sight and as a reminder to every servant who turns (to Allāh). And We send down from the clouds

water abounding in good, then We cause to grow thereby gardens and the grain that is reaped, and the tall palm-trees having flower spikes piled one above another — a sustenance for the servants, and We give life thereby to a dead land. Thus is the rising.”¹ Again, it is asked: “What is the matter with you that you hope not for greatness from Allāh? And indeed He has created you by various stages. See you not how Allāh has created the seven heavens alike, and made the moon therein a light, and made the sun a lamp? And Allāh has caused you to grow out of the earth as a growth, then He returns you to it, then will He bring you forth a (new) bringing forth. And Allāh has made the earth a wide expanse for you, that you may go along therein in spacious paths.”²

Such are the arguments drawn from the material universe that it must have a Creator. Another class of arguments regarding the existence of God relates to the human soul in which is implanted the consciousness of divine existence. An appeal is repeatedly made to man’s inner self: “Were they created without a (creative) agency? Or are they the creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth?”³

1. The Quran, 50 : 6-11. Note that the “rising” includes both the spiritual resurrection and the greater Resurrection in a life after death.

2. *Ibid.*, 71 : 13-20. See also 2 : 164 ; 67 : 2-4.

3. *Ibid.*, 52 : 35-36.

God-consciousness is thus shown to be part and parcel of human nature. Sometimes, this statement is mentioned in terms of the unimaginable nearness of the Divine Spirit to the human spirit : "Certainly We created man, and We know what his mind suggests to him — and We are nearer to him than his life-vein." ¹

It is, therefore, clear that unless a man comes to have the same degree of conviction and absolute certainty in regard to the existence of God ; in regard to the supreme joy of communion with Him ; in regard to the inevitability of the Day of Judgment ; in regard to the wide range of the blessings from Him ; in regard to the value of his estates and prosperous fields ; in regard to the satisfaction of material desires which fall to his lot ; and in the worldly life he lives from day to day, he is not in a position to turn to God with any deep, abiding, and compelling impulse of his mind and being. For, a weak idea cannot overcome a dominating experience which daily comes to a man in the spheres of his material life. On the very face of it, it is true that, at the moment when such a man is about to leave this life — if he feels a fuller degree of conviction in his mind in regard to the existence of the material objects than he does in regard to the Hereafter — the angel of darkness, appearing suddenly before him, threatens

1. The Quran, 50 : 16. See also 56 : 85.

to remove him from the joys he has known in this life, from the friends and relations he has had, from the fields and estates he has controlled and ruled over, it is not possible for such a man in those last and supreme moments of his life to give as much thought to the intangible and shadowy possibility of the existence of God, as he naturally would to the agony of having to part from the material and precious objects he had valued so much, and to the joys from which he had derived such an excessive measure of pleasure. He can be expected to think of the Lord only if his conviction in regard to the existence of God, the inexpressible joy of communion with Him, and in regard to the reward and punishment in the Hereafter for deeds done in this life is quite as firm and deep. If, in those last moments, his faith and conviction in these things are not strong enough to drive out of his mind thoughts of the material world, his end is likely to be a bad one.

As for the contention that the required degree of the firmness of faith in the metaphysical realities is not attainable on the basis of observation and experience of material phenomena alone, it stands proved. Because the material creation does not comprise, for instance, a book, on the pages of which one could read inscribed that this world had actually been created by God; that the Supreme Being existed indeed; that the joy of

communion with Him was the only real peace for the human soul ; that he would portion out in the Hereafter a due reward and punishment for human actions. The utmost one can say, on the basis of an observation and experience of the material world, is that there ought to be, there must be a Master Creative Mind behind the inimitable beauty, and the marvellous arrangement and order. But this thought cannot become anything more than a kind of imaginative speculation, which is a far cry from the firmness of faith and absolute certainty and conviction.

Evidently, 'there ought to be' is vastly different — in fact, it is nothing as compared to the value of 'there is'. The former lacks the certainty which belongs to the latter, since a certain measure of doubt remains clinging to it. Where in regard to a thing a man says, as an imaginary possibility visualized by him, that it 'ought to be' in a certain manner, it only means that as far as the speaker in question could see, the matter should be as expected or described or visualized by him ; for he would not at all be in a position to say positively that in fact it 'was' really as stated by him. This is the reason why those in the past, who had taken their stand on the basis of their observation and experience of the material world, had never been able to rise to any agreed conclusion. Nor any agreement is found in the case of such people these days.

One can say with the fullest faith that there is not likely to be any greater degree of agreement among them in the future. Of course, in a corner of the heavens, if one could see inscribed in indelible letters, for instance, 'I am indeed the only and the peerless Lord, Who has made all these things, Who will reward the good for their virtue, and punish the evil-doers', humanity would have faith in the existence of God and the Hereafter. If such had been the case, there would have been no need for the Almighty to have made available for the benefit of man any other basis and means to breed in him the required degree of firmness of faith and conviction.

When they look at the material phenomena from this angle, all the wise people find themselves in a position where they have to concede that, from a look at the earth and the heavens, the testimony that rises to the surface is certainly not one that can be said to attain the stage of absolute certainty and conviction, with no shade of doubt lingering anywhere in it. All that is obtainable from such testimony does not amount to anything more than a kind of idea, a likelihood, which only means that there ought to be a Creator at the back of the material universe. But even this 'ought to be' would rise in the mind of only those people who would be prepared to rule out the possibility of the material universe having come into being

quite of itself as purely a chance happening, with no scheme or purpose in it. The 'ought to be' would have no value in the eyes of an atheist who believes that the material universe is something that is eternal, interminable in time and space, his line of thought and the logic of his reasoning being that, if it was not possible for anything to come into being without there being some creator for it, then who created God?

It may be said here that there are people who repose no faith in the Day of Judgment on account whereof the Creator is called "Master of the day of Requital." These people deny the manifestation, and understand salvation in their own whimsical way. They believe not in that sort of salvation which lasts for ever, but contend that permanent and perpetual peace can be had neither here nor in the Hereafter. According to their doctrine, this world, too, is, in all its perfection, the place for reward and punishment; and the wealth that one has down here has been given him as a reward for the good deeds done and that he has the rights to spend it in this very world for the gratification of his egoistic desires and pleasures.

It may be noted that God's giving of wealth to a person in this world that he may, believing it to be the reward of his noble deeds, use it as a weapon for the purpose of eating, drinking and every kind of voluptuousness, is obviously such an

iniquitous act that to ascribe it to the Almighty constitutes contempt of the most wicked nature. It needs no saying to what an horrible extent a man will be the slave of his carnal self when he considers all his riches and all his power to be only the recompense of his previous good deeds. But if, on the other hand, he had known that this world is the place of tribulation and not that of reward, and that whatever has been given him is for his trial so that it may be disclosed how and in what way he spends it, and that not a thing there is which belongs to him as a matter of right, he would have seen his salvation in spending all his wealth on good and noble deeds. Besides, he would also have been grateful for the reason that only such a person can express gratitude with heart-felt sincerity and love, who feels that all that he has got has been given him free, and without any title to it.

Atheism

Certainly, there is room here to say that an atheist has some ground for differing on the question of the existence of God, with a man who takes his stand on problematical 'oughts' and 'musts', because a look at the material world does not yield any absolute testimony in regard to the existence of a Creator thereof. We do not find indicated therein that, in reality, a Creator does indeed exist; what is indicated is that there should be a Creator of all these things. This is the reason

why a due recognition of the existence of God remains doubtful in the eyes of an atheist. Human intelligence can, at the utmost, establish the need for a Creator, but falls short of proving His actual existence in fact. And, quite obviously, it is one thing to establish the need for an object to exist, quite another to prove its actual existence.

Therefore, for a man with whom the recognition of God is confined only to what he might be able to glean and conclude, from his observation and experience of the material phenomena, there is no basis for rising to the position of a firm faith and absolute conviction that God does indeed exist. His knowledge and realization cannot go beyond an estimate, an assessment of the situation that there should be a Supreme Being. But, even this only in case one does not become disposed to think like an atheist. This is the reason why those among the earlier thinkers, who stuck firmly to only logical reasoning, have made serious errors. By raising a hundred kinds of differences of opinion, they destroyed the very possibility of an agreed conclusion ever emerging from their discussions and dissertations. For, on one side, they remained overpowered by their love for things of the material world; while, on the other, they could not determine what would be the nature of things they would have to confront in future, in the realms of the Hereafter. They had, therefore, to pass away from

this life in a state of utter remoteness from the firmness of faith and conviction, which lies at the root of that peace of the mind without which there is no rest, no true happiness, no abiding satisfaction for the human soul. What has survived of them is only their own confession that their knowledge concerning metaphysical affairs, in regard to the Hereafter, could not be termed reliable — being only of the nature of conjectures, imaginary possibilities, an uncertain kind of sense, without sufficient knowledge of the reality of a matter, which vaguely feels that it should be in such and such wise, without knowing whether or not, it 'was' really so. Whatsoever the learned people came to hold in their own private opinion, that it should be so and so, they proceeded to assume that it 'was' really so.

It is to be noted that in every human being, who relies on his own conjecture and speculation, there is always a vein of atheism. In an outspoken atheist, this vein becomes avowedly pronounced, while in others it is almost invisible. The only thing that can thoroughly uproot this vein is a revealed Book. As explained above, in drawing a conclusion to that end, from an observation and an experience of the material universe, the human mind has essayed in various directions, some taking it to mean one thing, while others took it to mean something vastly different. No such difference of opinion,

however, is possible when the argument is firmly anchored on the basis of a revealed Book. Even an atheist will not dare deny that a speech cannot have come into existence without a speaker in being—like the heavens and the earth that it can have existed immemorially.

Tackled from this angle, an atheist would hold out only until he is forced to concede the matchlessness of a revealed Scripture. The moment he has to concede that production of a book of this kind was beyond the genius of mortal man, immediately the seed of an ultimate belief in the existence of God secures a lodgment in his mind. There can be no speech, if there is no speaker who uttered it. Besides, in the Word of God is also found a sure knowledge, in regard to the origin and the end of the material universe and man's place in it, which is essential for the perfection of the human soul. This advantage, too, does not accrue from a study of the heaven and the earth. For, in the first place, from a study of the material universe, no knowledge is to be gleaned of the subtle verities and mysteries in the field of religion. If anything at all is to be gleaned from such a study, it all remains vague.

Firm conviction

Observation and experience of the material phenomena can never suffice to produce perfect faith and firm conviction. All that has been

attainable on this basis, all that people have actually attained to, is that they realized the need that there ought to be a Creator, Sustainer, and Controller of the universe. Further, this sense of likelihood applies to the realization of the need for the existence of God. In regard to the idea of punishment and reward in the Hereafter over human actions in this life, there is not even this sense of probability. When observation and experience of the material phenomena failed to create a perfect and absolute conviction, we have to accept one position out of two alternatives: either that God never intended to bring into existence means to enable man to rise to a point of perfect faith and firm conviction, or that He must have provided such means for the benefit of mankind. Of these, the former view is obviously false and untenable; and no sensible person would, or could afford to, doubt its falseness. In the case of the latter assumption, there is no other option than to accept the view that the need can be fulfilled only by a revealed Scripture, unrivalled in itself, embodying a full exposition of the laws of nature in every detail. Only such a Book can have this quality that it should take man to the point of a perfect faith and conviction, on the ground that it is matchless, beyond the compass of a human being that he should be able to produce anything like it.

The stage of complete conviction lies in a proper perception of things as they exist in fact; but human intelligence, by itself, cannot bestow this kind of strong conviction on man, for, the utmost that human intelligence can do is to establish the need for the existence of a thing; on the basis of reason and argument, it can become, that existence of the object in question was necessary and essential; it cannot definitely say that the thing also existed in fact. The stage of perfect conviction is reached only when the 'ought to be so' in regard to a thing changes into 'in fact it is so'. And this happens only when human intelligence gains the help and assistance of a faithful companion which confirms the validity of a conjectured situation, by turning it into a factor which can be observed and verified.

Evidently, it is one thing for the need of a thing to be established, and quite another that the actual existence of the object in question should come to be fully established. In any case, human intelligence cannot do without help from a friend and an auxiliary, which should turn the 'ought', established by the rational processes of the human mind, into an 'is', capable of being perceived and felt as matter of fact, enlightening the mind in regard to the matter as it actually stands. Therefore, God, Who desires that man should attain to the stage of perfect conviction, has fully provided

for this great need : He has taken steps to fill this dire gap ; He has appointed a number of such aids and auxiliaries, which open for man the way to a complete and perfect conviction, so that he should not come to be deprived of salvation which, primarily and essentially, depends on the attainment of a complete and perfect conviction in regard to things and factors which play an important part in his life ; that he should duly cross the bridge of mental speculation and imaginary structures in regard to certain things to reach the place of safety on the other side of the river.

Where the matter in question pertains to the tangible and material things of this world, seen daily, or heard, or smelt, or felt, the aid and auxiliary that comes forward to help human intelligence to the stage of perfect conviction, is correct observation and experience on a basis of the various senses with which the human mind has been blessed. Where the matter in question pertains to incidents and events which have transpired in the past, or are transpiring in the present, this aid is called history, correspondence, and communication. Like human observation, these factors also clarify the smoky light of human reason and intelligence. And where the matter pertains to events in spheres beyond the range of the material senses, which the human eye cannot

see, the ear cannot hear, the hand cannot feel them by touch, nor can history manage to probe into them, there is a third friend that comes forward to assist : Divine Revelation.

Divine Revelation

Faith in the Supreme Being receives further strength from the spiritual experience of humanity which is the surest evidence of the existence of God. The Almighty has been revealing Himself in all ages to all nations. Man can make all discoveries in the sphere of the finite, and he can conquer all forces of nature, but the Creator is Infinite, and outside the sphere of man's discoveries : "Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends (all) vision ; and He is the Subtle, the Aware."¹

So, out of His great Mercy, He reveals Himself to man ; He revealed Himself through His chosen servants in every age and every country : "Surely We have revealed to thee (Muhammad) as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave to David a scripture. And (We sent) messengers We have mentioned to thee before and messengers We have not mentioned to thee."²

1. The Quran, 6 : 104.

2. *Ibid.*, 4 : 163-164.

Only mortals, to whom He revealed Himself, were sent as reformers, because none but a mortal could serve as a model for men: "We sent not before thee (Muhammad) any but men to whom We sent revelation; so ask the followers of the Reminder if you know not. Nor did We give them bodies not eating food, nor did they abide."¹

It is to be noted that discussing whether a religious Scripture is such that in its qualities and attributes, it is beyond the powers of mortal man to produce anything like it, forms only a part of the main question of divine revelation, of which the need is not logically proved. When it is not established that revelation is indispensable for human progress then discussion whether a particular Scripture is so sublime that the human mind cannot produce anything to match it, becomes entirely useless.

As a matter of speculation, whatever picture may be built up in regard to the Lord and other related metaphysical questions, it fails to create perfect conviction and complete knowledge. The doubts and misgivings which remain lurking in the mind cannot be eliminated except with the help of divine revelation. On the basis of a study of the universe, the conclusion to which the human mind can rise is that there ought to be a Creator Who brought it into being. Of course, when we

1. The Quran, 11 : 7-8. See also 17 : 95.

see a building, we feel sure that some architect and engineer must have set up the structure ; but this kind of conviction is the result of our routine observation, since every day we see around ourselves structures being put up, and we also see the engineers, builders, masons and other workmen employed on them. But who can manage to show the Builder of the earth, the heavenly bodies, and other related phenomena ? Our conviction in regard to Him will become firm only when someone shows some sign or trace of His existence and presence. Even if human intelligence comes forward to testify as to His existence, this intelligence will immediately find itself running out of depth ; it will begin to flounder in the face of a question : why no one has ever seen Him, if He does really exist ?

Therefore, at one stage, if human intelligence leads a man part of the way towards a realization of the existence of God, the same intelligence, a little later, confuses the issue and puts out the light, plunging the seeker-after-truth into a distressing kind of darkness of the mind. It turns some into atheists ; others into 'naturalists' ; some begin to incline this way, while others rush off at quite another direction. How can mere speculation satisfy the mind when there is nothing to confirm its veracity ? Even if the speculative power of the human mind took a bold leap, and said there

should be a Creator at the back of the measureless material phenomena, who is there who would give satisfaction and peace to our mind by convincing us that there is no fallacy involved in the conclusion to which we find ourselves driven in this sacred search? Beyond this point, there is nothing at all to which our intelligence can lead us; and here we find ourselves confronted by a weighty question: if human intelligence is enough for leading man, then why does this intelligence begin to flounder? Why does it collapse and refuse to proceed? Is this the height of our knowledge and comprehension in regard to the Supreme Being? Should we stay contented with this frame of mind? Taking our stand on weak and baseless ideas of this kind, can we come to inherit the eternal happiness and peace, prepared for those who have a firm conviction, and a deep realisation in regard to the existence of God? Is this the perfect and complete faith for which the human soul is always thirsting? Had more human intelligence been in a position to lead us to God, we could have said with a measure of justification that we had no need for inspiration and revelation, since we had already arrived at our goal. But, if we do not look around for some remedy, even after we have been struck down by an illness, if we do not try to discover means for the restoration of our health, we are indeed very unfortunate people.

Therefore, when the Lord has provided people with eyes, that they should see and, consequently, look at the question with open eyes, can they deny that mankind stands in need of divine revelation? The attainment of firm faith and complete conviction is not possible except with help from revelation, without which there can be no dependable immunity against error; nor can a firm stand be taken on the principle of the Unity of God. It is only on this basis that we find so much and so convincing talk in the world to the effect that God exists. It is revelation from Him alone, from the earliest times in human history, that has been putting an ardour of devotion in the heart of man, which springs from a realization of His bounties. It invests man's worship of His Being with deep, inexpressible joy and ecstasy which goes with it, planting the satisfaction and peace of conviction in the heart of the believers about his existence and the reality of the life Hereafter. It is due to revelation alone that millions of people, who have realized the Truth—bound up with the idea of God's existence and the consequent Hereafter—have left this transient, material life with a firm and unshakable expectation and a sure hope in regard to the supreme sweetness of the life to come. It has enabled thousands of martyrs to sacrifice their lives without the slightest hesitation. Revelation, the blessed ark, in times of deadly storms

and tempests, darkness and moral disease, has taken humanity to the shore on the other side, to the safe haven and anchorage represented by the philosophy, centering on firm conviction in the Unity of God. It forms the last retreat, the last resort, the last point of safety in the darkness of doubts and apprehensions, created in the human heart by ill-informed groping schools of material thought.

The harm suffered by mankind through the wrong working of the rational faculty is not hidden from people gifted with eyes. What made Plato and his disciples deny the creative genius of the Supreme Being? What made Jalinus fall into doubt in regard to the indestructable nature of the soul and the validity of punishment and reward for human actions in the life to come? What made so many learned people in human history deny that the knowledge of the Creator was comprehensive, and that it embraced a perfect awareness even of the minute details in the way the universe existed, and worked as a faultless machine, without fear of breakdown or disruption? Who, or what made so many philosophers of imposing stature fall down in worship before lifeless and unavailing idols? What made people sacrifice animals at the altar of so many gods and goddesses? Was it not this very rational faculty of man, where it was not aided by divine revelation?

Some people may urge that divine revelation blocks the way to the perfect knowledge whereon depends the attainment of life eternal and blessedness of the highest order. The contention is that revelation retards the progress of thought, and prevents the process of investigation and research from moving forward.

This objection has, in its composition, ingredients of falsehood, prejudice and ignorance. The falsehood is that despite the full knowledge of the fact that great truths and profound principles have progressed in the world through the efforts of such people who adhered to divine revelation, and that sublime secrets of the Unity of God have spread in the world through such exalted persons who reposed full faith in the Word of God, controverts have stated contrarily to their knowledge. The prejudice is that, in order to stick unreasonably to their stubbornness, they have concealed deliberately the obvious truth that in theological matters intellect alone cannot guide to the point of perfect faith. And ignorance is that Revelation and Intellect have been looked upon as two contraries that cannot exist together. This apprehension is, again, baseless. The follower of true Revelation cannot be held back and hindered from intellectual research. On the contrary, he gets guidance and assistance from revelation to probe into the properties of things in a right and

reasonable way, and falls not into error and doubt due to the light given by it.

In short, the function of intellect is to disclose and display the facts of revelation in an hypothetical way, whereas that of revelation is to guard and protect intellect from wandering astray into the wilderness. It is thus clear that there is no dispute, nor disagreement, between intellect and revelation, nor is the real Revelation any obstacle whatsoever in the way of intellectual advancement. It is, on the other hand, the giver of light and guidance, help and encouragement to intellect. The Lord has Himself said that "these parables, We set them forth for men, and none understand them but the learned."¹

Just as the usefulness and worth of eyesight is known by means of the sun only, in the same way, the excellences of intellectual sight are displayed only by means of Revelation which, having saved intellect from straying, points to the nearest way to get at the cherished goal of knowledge and wisdom.

It is a well known fact that if, at the time of thought and contemplation, this much guidance be vouchsafed as to which is the right course to be pursued, a good deal of help is rendered to intellect which is, in this way, saved from confused thinking and vexation. The believers in revela-

1. The Quran, 19 : 43.

tion have a liking for the excellent faculty of intellect not only of their own accord, but revelation itself enjoins upon them to strengthen and stimulate it. They are, in this way, roused to action in the matter of intellectual advancement by a double incentive. One is the natural zeal and earnestness in man which impels him to know in a rational way, the intrinsic worth and properties of each and every thing, the other is the revelational injunctions which intensify and emphasize this fervour. People who study the Holy Quran, even cursorily, cannot deny the fact that it is replete with injunctions for the exercise of thought and observation, so that it has been said to be the distinctive sign of the believers that they always reflect upon the wonders of the earth and the heavens, and ponder over the divine law of wisdom. It is stated in the Quran that "in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, there are surely signs for men of understanding. Those who remember Allāh standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord, Thou hast not created this in vain."¹

There is yet another objection adduced in this connection: that revelation is a bondage, and

1. The Quran, 3 : 189-196

that by being free from every such bondage a person may be materially much happier.

We agree with this critical observation, and admit that revelation is undoubtedly a restraint. But, it is a restraint of such a nature that without it true freedom is impossible to achieve; for, true freedom connotes that man, being emancipated from every kind of error, doubt and suspicion, should attain to the stage of perfect belief, and behold his beneficent God in this very world. This true and real freedom has been achieved by perfect and saintly men in this world by means of the true Scripture. In a way, however, the people who have raised this objection, by means of this unrestrained liberty, undoubtedly acquired the pleasure of this world to their heart's content, so that what is permissible and what is not, depends simply on their word. But they shall have to taste the bitter fruit of this unbridled liberty on the Day of judgment when they shall have to account for their disbelief and unrestrained action.

Recipient of revelation

Divine revelation is conferred only on those persons whose souls are wholly pure and untouched by all kinds of pollution and corruption, and whose piety is of such a high degree that thought cannot go beyond it. That perfect holiness is an essential condition for the reception of revelation is not such

a matter which has weak and unconvincing arguments in its support. It is, on the contrary, the great principle which is evidenced and proved by the heavens and the earth, and testified by every particle of this universe. It forms, as a matter of fact, the basis whereon stands the order and arrangement of the whole world. The Quran has illustrated this principle by means of a parable: "Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth. A likeness of His light is as a pillar on which is a lamp — the lamp is in a glass, the glass is as it were a brightly shining star — lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof gives light, though fire touch it not — light upon light. Allāh guides to His light whom He pleases.¹

It may be objected that if the perfection of man's realization and comprehension of God depended so entirely on a revealed Scripture, it was better, in that case, that revelation should have been vouchsafed to every individual without exception, so that all human beings could have attained to the required degree of comprehension, without any intermediary. If all people cannot become recipients of revelation, it should not be possible in the case of any one of their number.

For one to become a recipient of revelation, a proper capacity for the purpose is an indispensable

1. The Quran, 24 : 35.

condition. It is not possible for every individual to become a messenger of God, as the Quran states : "When a message comes to them (the unbelievers) they say : We will not believe till we are given the like of that which Allāh's messengers are given. Allāh best knows where to place His message."¹

In other words, the Beneficent knows who is worthy, and the blessing of revelation comes down only on the deserving. To develop this point fully, it should be remembered that, for a variety of reasons, the Almighty has created individuals with a vast range of differences of temperaments and capacities. Human nature and human capabilities are like a long line of which one end stands extremely high, while the other lies at an extremely low point. At the higher end, stand people with great capabilities and pure minds; at the lower end, come those whose minds are impure and capabilities almost nil. In between stand the majority, who have middling powers and capabilities. To prove this point, careful observation of the variety which occurs among people in regard to their powers and capacities is needed. Owing to various causes, events, and circumstances, just as some people are born handsome and healthy, or ugly and weak, similarly, individuals differ in strength of minds and enlightened hearts. Of course, it is true that everyone can make progress

1. The Quran, 6 : 125.

in terms of his intelligence, righteousness, and love of God. But it should be noted that in making progress, no individual can step outside the range of capabilities made inherent in his being, no matter how great are the pains over his education and instruction, no matter how able and learned his tutor. If there were no difference in powers and capacities among individuals, there would be no difference in the knowledge and learning acquired by various people; there would be no reason why some minds should excel others in the power of grasp and understanding.

It is also true that in some cases, careful education retrieves, to some extent, low types of minds and characters; a wicked person may reform himself, while a coward may sometimes show remarkable courage. From an observation of such cases, many people might think that these persons in question changed their nature. But, we may again emphasize that it is not possible for any human being to step outside the limit fixed by nature for the capacities and the temperament he is endowed with. No matter what kind of progress he makes, what kind of attainments he comes to acquire, he would essentially remain within the range imposed on his mental and physical powers.

In the earlier eras of human history, corruptions and iniquities in human affairs, which the Book was to rectify, had not yet reached the

extreme point, but at the time when it was revealed they had done so. Thus between the Quran and the other religious Scriptures there is this difference : even if they had remained immune against human interference and interpolation, these Scriptures would have gone out of date, giving rise to the necessity for a Book with an up-to-date teaching, capable of providing mankind with a torchlight which would shine for ever, showing the way clearly at all times in the future. But in the case of the Holy Quran, there is no need now for any other Scripture, for there is nothing more to be added. Nor is it possible for anyone to corrupt the Book, because God says that "We have revealed the Reminder, and surely We are its Guardian."¹

For the last thirteen hundred years, the world has seen this prophecy being fulfilled. No idolatrous teaching has been able to find its way into the Quran ; and for the future, too, there is no rational basis for any assumption that some interference with its text might take place, since there are thousands of people who know the Book by heart ; there are hundreds of commentaries and millions of people recite different portions of it in their daily prayers. Moreover, copies of the Quran have spread all over the earth and people, almost everywhere, are informed in

1. The Quran, 15 : 9.

regard to its contents. All these circumstances are obviously such that they exclude the possibility of any interference with its text.

Human intellect

It should be remembered that mere intellectual thought suffers not only from the defect that it falls short of the high degrees of profound and perfect faith, and cannot encompass all theological niceties, but there is yet another shortcoming that, in producing an effect upon that soul, mere intellectual discourses are weak. The cause of this weakness is that, for a word to have the power of producing an effect upon the soul, it is essential that the fact of its truthfulness should be so clearly established and proved in the hearer's mind that not even the smallest vestige of doubt is left behind, and it is believed with full faith that, in the coming event, the knowledge of which has been communicated beforehand, there is no possibility of error.

It is thus clear that the signs which arise from perfect faith, and the effects which indisputable word produces upon human minds, can never be expected from single-handed intellect, the proof whereof is fully furnished by our daily experience. For example, when a man returns home from a foreign country, people gather round him seeking to know about that place, and the narratives of

this eyewitness produce an effect upon their minds, and are believed to be correct and true, without any doubt, more especially when he is also looked upon as a virtuous person. The reason why his word should carry so much force, and produce so great an effect upon the minds is that having accepted him as an eye-witness of the place related about, and as a righteous man, it has been believed in respect of him that whatever he relates about that country is true. His statements penetrate so deep into the soul that a picture, as it were, of those events comes before the eye; and often when he relates a soul-stirring incident of his travels, or a pain-producing story of a people, it seizes so strongly upon the minds that tears burst from their eyes, as if they are themselves witnessing the distressing scenes of sorrow. But if a man, on the other hand, who has never stepped out of his house to pay a visit to that distant land, nor ever heard its account from eyewitnesses, should give a description of the unseen country by a random guess, his gabble, to be such, will not produce any effect on people.

Therefore, a man's word, until he is believed by the audience to have a full knowledge of an event will, instead of imparting an effect upon the soul, only excite raillery and ridicule; and this is the reason that the dry discourses of these intellectuals have not been able to divert anyone's attention

in full faith towards the Great Beyond. People think that just as these thinkers speak at random, they can also fly against their opinion in the region of conjectures and surmises. None of them, neither the speakers nor the audience, have witnessed and seen the true facts on the spot. So, when some wise persons began to express their opinion on the existence of God, other wiseacres stood up against them and compiled books in support of atheism.

The truth about the matter is that even those philosophers who believed, to some extent, in the existence of God, have never been, nor are even now, wholly free from the virus of agnosticism. Do the unbelievers consider the Almighty to be endowed with perfect attributes? Do they admit that He is not speechless, but possesses, in the real sense, the power of speech as it ought to be in a living, existing being? Do they really believe that He is the All-Knowing, All-Wise, Ever-Existing, Ever-Lasting, Who can transmit His voice unto the hearts of such people who are pious, sincere and faithful? They do not; rather they look upon Him as a mere fanciful object having no existence whatsoever except in the imagination of the human intellect; and no voice, as in the case of a living speaking being, comes from that quarter, as if He is no God.

In short, human intellect, on account of its limitation and imperfection, cannot perform and

accomplish any task with complete confidence and lastingness, until a sincere companion lends his helping hand ; nor is it possible for human intellect, without the guidance of this companion, to remain free and safe from error, particularly in the attainment of divine knowledge, the precise nature of whose truths is not of the substance of this world, nor any similarity of them is to be found on the face of this earth. In these mighty matters, human intellect cannot even guide to the high stage of divine knowledge and wisdom. Whatever is achieved with the help of bare intellect boils down to the ultimate point that the intellectual thinker, in his opinion which may be proper or improper, determines the need and necessity of a thing, but cannot prove whether the thing which has been adjudged to be so essential, has any external, physical existence also ; and it is for this reason that his knowledge, having been based upon some imaginary need of the external existence of which he has no proof in his hand, will be considered as a mere conjecture without any foundation. From the side of perfect faith and belief, he will have nothing but utter disappointment and dismay.

It is also true that intellect is not without its use and good purpose. But how can we run away from the fact that, by means of intellect and thought only, we cannot acquire that great wealth of perfect belief and faith which can be achieved

with the help of intellect-cum-revelation; nor can we be safe from fault, error and deviation, arrogance and self-assumption; and our own ideas, too, cannot rule over our passions like the mighty and majestic Divine Word; nor can our capricious conception and baseless whims give us that happiness and pleasure which the enrapturing Word of God vouchsafes. Shall we, then, follow in the footprints of the single individual intellect, and draw upon ourselves all the adversity and misfortune, and open the gates against us for the invasion of many a misery?

No sensible man will ever be able to believe that He Who created a thirst for perfect knowledge and wisdom should so parsimoniously desist and deny to provide the cup of that knowledge, and He Who, of His own accord, drew the minds of men to Himself, should close so tightly the doors of true knowledge, confining all the sublime stages of God-consciousness to the narrow limit of fruitless reflection over imaginary needs. Has man been created so unfortunate in this world that he should have nothing but dismay in the achievement of that supreme satisfaction which his soul yearns for in the way of God-consciousness, and for the attainment of which an ardent zeal runs through his veins? Is there not a single soul who can understand this simple truth that the doors of divine knowledge, which can only be opened by God,

can never be opened by any amount of human power and skill? The communication of knowledge by the Almighty, with regard to His own existence, is such that it exhibits Him to view, and places Him in sight, as it were; but not so the word of man based, as it is, on conjecture and nothing firm. Now, since the Divine Word, which points to and proves His existence, cannot stand on equal footing with our intellectual inferences, why should not, then, for the perfection of faith, a need be ardently felt for His Word?

There should be no difficulty, therefore, in understanding that human intellect can never be an instrument or means to know the secrets of the Unseen. Is there any one who can deny that whatever is going to happen after death is all included in the unknown secrets of the Unseen? For instance, who knows with precision how life departs from the human body at the time of death? Where does it go to? Who attends upon it as a companion? Where is it lodged? In all these matters, how can human intellect pronounce a precise verdict?

A careful consideration of all these facts leads one to the conclusion that the nature in which God created man, required indispensably that man, who is ever liable to err, should not be left entirely to his own imagination and opinion. The Merciful, therefore, raised for him Teachers, whose

guidance could give him consolation and comfort, subduing his rebellious passions, and dispelling his spiritual distractions, and revealed unto him the Mighty Word which could remedy all his ailments. This proof of the need of revelation is not of a different stamp, but the divine law itself proves it. Is it not a fact that millions of men, who are afflicted with misery, transgression and apathy, are influenced and swayed by the words of others, and their own knowledge and thoughts do not always suffice? And, the more the veneration the deliverer of the discourse commands in the eyes of the listener, the more solacious is his speech; and the word of only that man who is, in the opinion of the listener, truthful and honest, and also possesses the power to fulfil and redeem his promise, can give satisfaction. Under these conditions, who can contend against the obvious and distinct truth that in matters relating to the next world, and those not subject to sense perception, the highest stage of mental satisfaction and solace, which dispels carnal passions and spiritual griefs, can be obtained by the Word of God exclusively? By casting a glance on the laws of nature also, no other thing except the Divine Word can be adjudged and proved as a better bestower of mental satisfaction and solace.

It will, therefore, be seen that those who have rejected revelation have adopted the ways of faith-

lessness and falsehood, and encouraged the spread of atheism in the world. These people think not how and in what manner can belief be induced in the Supreme Being, Who can neither be perceived, nor touched, nor smelt, if the sense of hearing, too, should be deprived and divested of His Word? And, if the sensible experience should produce a thought in the mind that there should be a Creator of all these things, will not the seeker-after-truth,—when he will find that even after a sustained effort he has not been able to see that Creator with his own eyes, nor has ever been apprised of His communications, and never beheld, in a state of watchfulness and vigilance, any sign in respect of Him—be confined into doubts and fears? Will he not be tempted to think that his imagination has very likely erred somewhere in the fixation of such a Creator, and that the agnostic and the ‘naturalist’ may perhaps be on the right when they say that certain elements of this universe are the creators of others, and that there is, therefore, no need for any other creator?

We know it for certain that such a doubt will capture the mind of the worshipper of intellect when he will fly his thought further in this field. For, it is impossible that, having failed to find a divine sign, despite a strong and sincere effort on his part, he could remain safe and unaffected from these doubts and fears. The reason is obvious: It

is human nature that, when he thinks that the existence of a thing is necessary, but finds no trace of it in the physical world, he begins to harbour doubt in respect of the correctness of his thought, which ultimately leads him to the perilous point of utter denial. It is man's daily experience that he exercises, again and again, his imagination with regard to some hidden matter, thinking that it should be like this or it should be like that; but when it actually comes to be disclosed, it turns out to be something quite different. From this every day experience of life, man should learn the important lesson that it is indeed unwise to confide wholly in the imperfect human intellect, and be completely contented therewith.

It is imperatively necessary that, just as God sees, hears and knows, in the same way, He speaks as well; and since the power of speech exists in Him, the benefit of this attribute must also be conferred on chosen persons from among the human race, for the simple reason that none of the attributes of God is divested of bountifulness and munificence, and He is, with all His attributes, the great source of all benevolence, and the great blessing for mankind. Is it something incomprehensible that man, who is ensnared in many a kind of carnal passions and driven every moment towards greediness and avidity, cannot by himself be the author of religious law; and that this sacred

law can be issued by the Lord alone? Is there left any doubt whatsoever that in the matter of God-consciousness, intellect, all by itself, can never lead to the stage where God is? Is not in the human minds found a natural yearning to go beyond the limit of intellectual surmises in the search after the Creator? Does not the soul of sincere seekers feel extremely restless for such revelations which may confer on them complete satisfaction with regard to the existence of the Supreme Being, His promises, and the unseen World?

If some people, in spite of the self evidence of the need of divine revelation, still persist in their denial and call the Holy Book of God as man's forgery and fabrication, how it can be thought that they have some fear of the Almighty in their hearts? It is regrettable that many people, who call themselves wise, are seized with ignorance. There are, for instance among unbelievers, people who have made such a show of their wisdom that they have cut asunder and separated the eternal attribute of God from His person, calling Him speechless, and imperfect in power and beneficence. When such is the plight of these people, will not the one shorter in intellect amongst them denounce divine attributes altogether? For, if the Creator has no power of speech, how is one to know that He has power of seeing, hearing and knowing? What is the proof that other attributes exist in

Him? And if the attribute of speech does exist in Him, but it has conferred no benefit on any human being, will not one be justified to conclude that the great Tree of Blessings, with all its branches which are perfect attributes, cast no shade over its creatures, and some of its branches are dead and dry which have never yielded any good to any human being?

It may be pointed out here that the worshippers of mere intellect are as deficient in the matter of proper action, faithfulness and sincerity as they are in divine knowledge, wisdom and belief. They have not been able to produce any example to show that they are also the chosen servants of God, like those holy personages who showered their blessings on the world so profusely that, by their excellent example and attention, prayer and precept, millions of people, becoming pure and godly, turned towards their Creator so vigorously that, setting aside this world with all its pleasures, power and pelf, they walked resolutely on the path of Truth and Righteousness, for which many had to lose their lives. They displayed, in the face of all this tyranny and torture, firmness of faith and fortitude of such a high degree that, like a true and devoted lover, they smiled with fetters on their feet; they went into exile gladly for the sake of their unflinching love and loyalty to the Supreme Being, accepted willingly humiliation for honour,

misery for comfort, poverty for pelf and endured all wrongs with patience and fortitude, setting with their blood the seal of confirmation on the existence of God. These chosen people existed not only in bygone ages, but they have invariably been found amongst the followers of the True Scripture all through the centuries.

Rational faculty

To raise the point that people have reverted to paganism, even after they had once yielded belief in the veracity of divine revelation, is not relevant, for their falling away from the right path was no fault attributable to revelation. This error lies at the door of those who mixed falsehood into the recorded Revelation in their possession. But, we find that even in such cases revelation has never neglected such people after they had gone astray. Fresh revelation always came to retrieve them from the errors into which they fell, and to lead them all back to the right path.

If it is urged that the fault attributed above to the rational faculty of man is of those who make wrong use of it the argument would not be correct. Evidently, the rational faculty of man, in the abstract and in its entirety, is not something that operates, or can operate, in itself. It functions only in individual cases, to the extent it does in the life and thought of individual persons. But,

where is the man who would undertake to produce a human being, depending upon his rational faculty alone; who never made a mistake in his philosophy of life, in his beliefs and actions? Where is that human being who walked only in the light of his own rational faculty and yet managed to avoid pitfalls and mistakes in the domain of metaphysics and divinity? Where is the man who depended only on the rational faculty and yet managed to reach the point of the most perfect conviction in regard to the existence of the Creator of the universe, in regard to the matter of reward and punishment for human actions in the life Hereafter?

As already stated, the really learned thinkers and philosophers in every age have themselves freely conceded that, proceeding on the basis of his own observation and experience alone, no human being can ever reach the stage of perfect and complete firmness of faith and conviction, where no possibility is left for any shade of doubt in the mind, the subject remaining only entangled in various inconclusive lines of conjecture and speculation. Evidently, so long as his knowledge and awareness remain subject to doubts and misgivings, uncertainties and groping speculations, falling short of complete conviction and firmness of faith, a human being cannot experience any real peace of mind, being always exposed to the

danger of going astray, just as a blind man is always exposed to the danger of stepping off the path, and wandering miles off his course.

It is also wrong to assume that mistakes made by the rational faculty of man, in its earlier approaches to a problem, can be rectified by it on second or third revision. It has already been explained that, in the domain of metaphysics, the human mind is prone to make mistakes when it works by itself, unaided by any divine light. Therefore, the rectification of a mistake, which is unavoidable, is evidently not possible by means of a factor, which is not dependable, that will not always come into operation. The rectification which, in itself, is indispensable, can be made only by something which is sure and certain, which will not fail to come into operation whatever the conditions and circumstances.

As for the question why no proper realization of the Unity of God is at all possible except on the basis of revelation and why a man, who denies the truth of revelation cannot attain complete purity from various kinds of involvements in idolatry, it answers itself in one's mind, the moment one grasps the precise nature and quality of a proper realization of the Unity of God. For, an adequate realization of this concept implies, in fact, that the Supreme Being should be taken to be absolutely unique and unrivalled in every way. It

should be noted that before the power and might of the Lord, things which are not possible in any other way, become possible.

Evidently, those who deny the reality and possibility of divine revelation also hold the belief that various objects of nature possess powers and attributes which belong only to the Almighty; or they hold that it is possible for these divine powers to be found in some human beings. It is their idea, their belief, that the discovery that God exists stands to the credit of their own intelligence, so that even He is beholden to them, since human intelligence had suggested the imperative necessity of assuming His existence; and since, if it had not been for this development in human thought, He would have remained undiscovered, quite unknown. Is a belief of this kind less objectionable than the beliefs of idol-worshippers? Not in the least. If at all there is any difference between the two, it is that those who worship idols, or other objects of nature, consider these things to be the source of all kinds of blessings in their lives, while the latter leave aside the Creator and maintain that it is their reason that guides them to the right path.

All this clearly shows that denial of divine revelation not only entails this defect that those who do not believe in it remain infirm and shaky in their views in regard to the Supreme Being and His attributes, and, therefore, remain involved in

many kinds of mistakes and serious errors, but they also remain devoid of the proper and adequate realization of the Unity of God, and involved in idolatry.

Even if it should be conceded that though a perfect awareness and comprehension is not possible without revelation it cannot be denied that some measure of comprehension is certainly attainable without aid from revelation; and this measure, in itself, is enough for the salvation of man; this objection is rooted in pure prejudice and bias. It has already been stated that a good end to the life of a person, in which he is not tormented by doubts and apprehensions, depends entirely on the perfection and strength of conviction in regard to the existence of God; also that this kind of faith is not attainable, except with help from revelation. Similarly, it is not possible for man to remain safe against the commitment of errors without a faith which comes only from perfect conviction; and this perfection of faith is not possible without divine revelation. Then how can human reason and intelligence suffice for the salvation of man?

Some people have assumed the Supreme Being to be so weak and helpless that He is deprived of all the strength and glory which belongs to Him. They hold that for man to obtain some trace of the existence of God is not due to the mercy of the Lord, but entirely a matter of chance, or a result of the

endeavours of wise men. They explain that, in the beginning, when the human race came into existence, people were mere brutes, without intelligence, quite like the lower animals. God had not vouchsafed to them any awareness or knowledge in regard to His own Being; but that, gradually, as man began to rise in the scale of consciousness, he himself conceived the idea that he should appoint for himself a deity to be worshipped. He began by taking mountains, rivers, and other objects of nature as gods. Then he came to bow down before rains and storms. At the next stage, he took to the worship of the sun, the moon, and the stars, rising gradually, through these stages, to a realization of the need for faith in the existence of a Creator.

This process of the human mind, it would be seen on proper reflection, creates a swarm of doubts in regard to God being the Living One, Sustainer of the universe, with a conscious and deliberate purpose. It has to be assumed that He has vouchsafed no sign to man in regard to His existence as was proper for the Supreme Being Who really existed. Therefore, at times, the ignorant gave this position to water, sometime to trees of various kinds and sometimes to stones. Then, they assumed that these objects could not rightly be taken for deities; that the deity must be some other entity that remained invisible. Would not this belief throw man into a doubt, that if this assumed deity had

really existed, like all other objects which truly exist, and demonstrate their being, it should have given some indication of its existence? The doubt would be especially strong in the case of a man who came to perceive it was not proper to assume that the deity was imperfect and faulty, deaf and dumb; that just as it was essential that the Supreme Being should be able to see and hear, it was also essential that He should have the power to speak.

At the next step, a man would begin to wonder that in case the Almighty possessed the power of communication, where was the proof that it was really so? And, further, if the power of speech did not belong to Him, He would have to be held a "defective" God; and if He were defective, how could He be God at all? Moreover, if it is permissible to believe that He was dumb, how was one to know that He was not deaf, and blind as well? The only way to steer clear of innumerable doubts of this kind is through belief in the validity of divine revelation. Otherwise, like so many philosophers and thinkers, who fell a prey to atheism, because they sought to solve these questions on the basis of their reasoning faculty, he also would come to fall in the same pit.

It may be added here that it is impossible for true believers to sink into idolatry; the Supreme Being Himself having said that "Truth has come,

and falsehood neither originates, nor reproduces.”¹ Despite the passage of a long period of time, and in spite of the many changes which come in the lives of people, owing to various factors, idolatrous views and practices have not been able to come back to the countries and climes from which they had been uprooted by Islam, and nothing has been able to replace the philosophy of life of which the pivot is belief in the Unity of God.

Human reason

In the universe, we find that God has created things in pairs so that they operate best when they function in union with their counterparts.² In the same way, human reason works best when it is aided by divine revelation. It is common experience, in regard to various things, that as long as they remain separated from their proper complement, they fail to yield a proper result; their good points remain concealed. In fact, in many cases, they prove harmful instead of beneficial. This is true also in regard to human reason and intelligence. In the study and contemplation of religious truths and metaphysical problems, it yields good results only when it comes to be complemented by divine revelation. If it is left to function without this aid, it viciates itself, and begins to work as a disadvantage, full of dire peril.

1. The Quran, 34 : 49.

2. *Ibid.*, 51 : 49.

Every sensible person can see for himself that there is nothing in the world that can lead to good results, except when it has the advantage of help from its complement or counterpart. In the face of this clear evidence, who can dare claim that human reason and intelligence can produce anything good and beneficial? Is not this intelligence the same that has openly been disgraced on so many occasions? Has it not proved itself to be a liar, utterly unreliable, so easily prone to go astray? Indeed it has devoured many of its lovers and devotees, so that they had no chance to rise back to life. Following one's reason and intelligence, what new truths has one discovered in the field of religion which were not already embodied in the Holy Scripture ?

In the face of all these facts and arguments, no one can possibly deny the need of divine revelation and hold that the prophets were only selfish people. One should not be misled by the idea that human reason is good. It is true that all our study is conducted with reason and logic, true also that this faculty in man is beneficial. But, its real merit comes to the surface only when it functions in the light of revelation. Bereft of this light, reason is more deceitful for man than even his worst enemy. This divine law is such that everything serves its purpose best only when it works in union with its complement or counterpart. We see only when

the light of the sun is there to help our eyes; we hear only when the air is there to carry the vibrations made by sound to our ears. These are facts which should not be beyond anybody's grasp.

Eternal Hereafter

If it should be conceded that, for a complete comprehension of the reality in regard to the existence of God, revelation is indispensable, of a type as should be unique, perfect and unrivalled, it does not necessarily follow that this revelation has actually been vouchsafed by the Lord, for there are many things which man would like to have, but he cannot, since the Almighty has not fulfilled all the needs which come to be felt by human beings. For instance, man desires that he should never become destitute, fall ill, and die. It is, however, found that he eventually often suffers from want and poverty, falls ill many times, and dies in any case.

Therefore, to picture the Hereafter on the basis of this material world is a glaring blunder. The Creator has not made this universe so that man should always remain in it happy and satisfied; nor has He made it that he should always be in distress — happiness and suffering are both passing phases; both finally come to an end. But, the Hereafter is a world of eternal joy and peace, or of suffering and punishment. From fear of this

punishment, every far-seeing individual strives to live in obedience and surrender to the Lord. He forsakes luxury and comfort; he accepts rigours and hardships. It is up to people to see whether it is not a case of clear loss if life in the eternal Hereafter comes to be placed on the same level with life in the transitory, material world.

It may be added that death, in the light of the teachings of the Quran, is not the end of man's life; it only opens the door to another, a higher form of life: "See you that which you emit? Is it you that create it or are We the Creator? We have ordained death among you and We are not to be overcome, that We may change your state and make you grow into what you know not."¹

Just as from the small life-germ grows Man who does not lose his individuality for all the changes which he undergoes, so from this man is made the higher man, his attributes being changed and he himself being made to grow into what he cannot conceive at present. That this new life is of a higher form is also made plain: "See how We have made some of them to excel others. And certainly the Hereafter is greater in degrees and greater in excellence."²

The Quran, therefore, accords to faith in the future life an importance which is next only to

1. The Quran, 56 : 58-61.

2. *Ibid.*, 17 : 21.

faith in God. The greater the faith in the good or bad consequences of a deed, the greater is the incentive which urges a man to, or withholds him from, that deed. But more than this, such a belief purifies the motives with which a deed is done. It makes a man work with the most selfless of motives, for he seeks no reward for what he does; his work is far higher and ends nobler, relating to the life beyond the grave.

Atonement

Some people might be under the impression that the Creator has made the idea of His Unity fundamentally inherent in the human mind, since the Quran says that "When thy Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants, and made them bear witness about themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: yes; we bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of Resurrection: We were unaware of this."¹ And again: "Set thy face for religion, being upright, the nature made by Allāh in which He has created men. There is no altering Allāh's creation."²

It should be noted that what follows from these verses is that the seed of a natural tendency towards God and a realization, in some measure,

1. The Quran, 7: 172.

2. *Ibid.*, 30: 30. See also 51: 56.

of His Unity, has been planted in the human mind. It does not follow that this seed, in every mind, is of an equal degree and force. In fact, it is repeatedly said in the Quran that this seed, in its quality and strength, differs from one individual to another. In some people, the difference is small; in others middling; while in some other beings it is quite distinct: "We have given the Book as inheritance to those whom We have chosen from among Our servants: so of them is he who wrongs himself, and of them is he who takes a middle course, and of them is he who is foremost in deeds of goodness by Allāh's permission."¹

In short, although the Supreme Being has said the tendency to march in the direction of a proper realization of His Unity is basically in the human mind, He has repeatedly made clear that, in its quality and strength, this tendency varies widely from one person to another. In some cases, the carnal and worldly desires become so strong that this tendency is practically choked out of existence. We have, therefore, to concede that the fact of some animal instincts and behaviour, being a natural quality of the human mind, does not exclude the presence in human beings of a natural tendency in the direction of a proper realization of the Unity of God. No matter how exceedingly man may lie helpless in the hands of his brutal instincts, some

1. The Quran, 35 : 32.

feeble ray of divine light is always lurking in his nature. For example, a man commits theft or murder or adultery; then, although he has been impelled by his natural propensity to do it, yet the heavenly light, which has been ingrained into his nature, reproaches and reprovcs him on the commission of any such sinful deed.

Therefore, the Benefactor has conferred upon every human being a kind of revelation, called the "inner light", which discriminates between good and bad. When a man does a bad action, God at once puts it into his mind that he had acted in a bad way. But he pays no heed to this admonition, for his inner light (or conscience) is dim, and his intellect weak, and his sensual desires strong and predominant. Human natures of this sort—the existence whereof has been proved by daily observation—are also found in this world. The turmoil of their passions, which is a natural trait with them, diminishes not. A remedy, however, has been prescribed by Him. It is, repentance, regret and remorse. When people commit sinful deeds, impelled by natural inclination, or an evil thought which crosses their minds, and they seek to remedy it by means of repentance, regret and remorse, the Merciful grants His pardon and forgiveness for that sin. This is atonement in its true sense, which expiates for the sin ingrained in human nature. The same statement is found in the Holy Quran:

“O you who believe, turn to Allāh with sincere repentance. It may be your Lord will remove from you your evil and cause you to enter Gardens wherein flow rivers, on the day on which Allāh will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will gleam before them and on their right hands—they will say: Our Lord, make perfect for us our light and grant us protection; surely Thou art Possessor of power over all things”¹

These verses, full of knowledge and wisdom, signify that moral transgression is a distinctive trait of imperfect and weak souls, whereas forgiveness is the everlasting and eternal quality of the Divine Being, Who is Merciful and Compassionate. His forgiveness is not a mere matter of accident, or a casual happening, but it is His everlasting and eternal attribute, the benefit of which He likes to confer on every deserving soul.

1. The Quran, 66 : 8. See also 39 : 53.

THE CHIEF ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

“He is Allāh besides Whom there is no God: The Knower of the unseen and the seen; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful”—59 : 22.

We shall now describe the chief attributes of God as mentioned in the opening chapter of the Quran which, by consensus of opinion, and according to a saying of Prophet Muḥammad, is the quintessence of the Holy Book.

Attributive names

Among the attributive names of the Almighty, four stand out prominently in the *Fātiḥa* : “In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Praise be to Allāh, *the Lord of the worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful, Master of the day of Requital.* Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help. Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not

those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray.”¹

Of these attributive names, priority has been given to “the Lord of the worlds” (*Rabb al-‘ālamīn*); next comes “the Beneficent” (*al-Raḥmān*), then “the Merciful” (*al-Raḥīm*) and, last of all, “Master of the day of Requitai” (*Mālik yaum al-dīn*). These attributes manifest themselves in this very order which is, therefore, the natural order of their display.

First grace

The divine grace of *Rabūbiyyat*, or bringing to perfection by fostering, which is absolute and all-embracing, covers all things from heavens down to this earth without any discrimination of the animate or the inanimate. It is on account of this attribute that a thing which existed not comes into being and, passing through a process of evolution, attains to its highest point of perfection. The Quran says: “Indeed He (Allāh) has created you by various stages.”² And again: “You shall certainly ascend to one state after another.”³

It is by means of this great attribute that all the souls and all the bodies have come into existence, and each and every thing is fostered and

1. The Quran, 1 : 1-7.

2. *Ibid.*, 71 : 14.

3. *Ibid.*, 84 : 19.

fed. It is, as it were, the life-breath, the animating spirit of the whole universe. Should it cease to function ever for a moment, the whole world would disappear; and if it had not been, there would not have been any creation.¹ Hence of all His gracious attributes, God has made first the mention of *Rabb al-‘ālamīn* (the Lord of the worlds), the reason being that the attribute of *Rabūbiyyat* has precedence and priority over all the other attributive names. Their relative importance is further shown by the fact that while the name *Allāh* is found in the Quran some 2,800 times, the name *Rabb* occurs about 960 times, no other name being so frequently mentioned.

Second grace

The second kind of grace, standing next in importance, is the general grace. The difference between the two kinds is that whereas the former is *Rabūbiyyat* on an unconditional and universal scale, the existence and exhibition of the whole universe having been on account of it, the latter special divine favour having its relation exclusively with the living creatures. The purpose of this divine favour is to bestow upon all living creatures, according to their needs, without any one's having any right, title or privilege thereto. It is neither a recompense nor a reward for any one's actions or

1. The Quran, 6 : 165.

deeds. On the other hand, it is on account of the blessings of this divine grace that every living creature lives, eats and drinks, and has its needs satisfied and fulfilled ; and that all the requirements of life, necessary for the subsistence of each and every living being and its species, seem to have been provided for and supplied.

All these are signs of the same divine grace that, whatever was needed for the physical development of living beings, has all been given unto them ; in the same way, for the good of such creatures which, along with their physical upbringing, also stand in need of spiritual nourishment — they have in them the power to make spiritual advancement. Divine Word, just in times of urgent need, has ever since been revealed for their guidance. In short, it is by means of this second kind of God's grace that man has been successful in getting over his various needs and requirements. For his residence he has the vast surface of this earth, the sun and the moon for light, air for breathing, water for drinking, different kinds of food for eating, many medicinal herbs for the treatment of his illness, clothes and garments of so many kinds for wearing, and heavenly Books to give him guidance. And none there is who can put forth the claim that all these things have been created in consequence of his actions, and that he had done some noble deed as a reward whereof the Lord

of the world has conferred all these innumerable blessings upon him.

It is thus clear that this divine grace, which is in operation in many different ways for the good of living beings, is a gift without any right or title. It is not a reward nor a return to compensate some deed or action, but it is purely a fine fervour, an admirable ardour of divine love and kindness, so that every living soul may get to its destined goal, and the needs which have been infused into his nature may be accordingly provided for. Therefore, the purpose of God's eternal favour in this grace is to provide for the requirements of man and all other animals so that they may perpetuate and the powers and faculties created in them may not remain in a state of inaction. The existence of this bountiful attribute in the person of the Almighty stands manifestly proved by an observation of the law of nature, for, no sensible person can have any objection to the fact that all the indispensable necessities of this world — the sun, the moon, the earth, the elements of nature, etc., whereon depended the life of all living creatures — have come into existence on account of this divine grace, and each and every living being, without any discrimination of man or beast, believer or heretic, good or bad, is deriving benefit from these great gifts according to his needs, and not a soul there is that has been deprived of this

great good, which has been called *Rahmāniyyat*. With reference to this attribute, God says: "My mercy encompasses all things."¹

Since, after *Rabūbiyyat*, this divine grace stands second in dignity and rank, the Almighty has made a mention of it after the attributive name of *Rabb al-‘ālamīn*, keeping in view their natural order and sequence.

Third grace

The third kind of divine grace known as *Rahīmiyyat* is of a special nature. The difference between *Rahīmiyyat* and *Rahmāniyyat* is that, whereas it is not essential for the recipient of benefit under *Rahmāniyyat* to make himself noble and good as a prerequisite for the attainment of that favour nor to pull himself out of darkness, nor to perform some kind of strenuous spiritual struggle but, under that attribute, the Supreme Being confers of Himself on every living creature all the requirements of life which a living being naturally stands in need of, and provides for all the requirements without any request or attempt for their achievement. In the second kind of grace, effort and struggle, purification of the heart, prayer and supplication, humility and humbleness, turning towards the Lord, and any other sort of spiritual struggle that suits the occasion, is an essential

1. The Quran, 7 : 156. See also 25 : 60-63.

condition. This favour is achieved only by he who seeks after it and it is granted unto him who works hard for it. Its existence, too, is proved by an observation of the law of nature. For, it is clear that the unconcerned cannot stand on the same level with those who work hard and strive in the way of God. There is no doubt that people who struggle on the right path, abstaining from every kind of evil and darkness, are made the recipients of a special kind of favour. And it is on account of this special grace that *Rahīm* is the name of the Almighty in the Quran. This attribute, for the reason of its being a special kind of favour, bound up with certain conditions, stands next to *Rahmāniyyat*, because the latter came into play first, after which the attribute of *Rahīmiyyat* began to function. We are told in the Holy Quran that “those who believed and those who fled (their homes) and strove hard in Allāh’s way — these surely hope for the mercy of Allāh. And Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful.”¹

In short, God’s grace of *Rahīmiyyat* surely comes upon those who deserve it, and none there is who sought after it and got it not.

Fourth grace

The divine grace of the fourth kind, called *Mālikiyyat*, is of a greater nature. It is such

1. The Quran, 2 : 218. See also 7 : 56 ; 33 : 43.

that it cannot be displayed merely on account of one's hard work and labour. The first and foremost condition for its coming into play is that this world of cause and effect should completely cease to exist and the perfect power should display its splendour without God's stirring up the usual causes. For, in this last grace, the finis of all the favours, whatever more can be imagined intellectually with regard to the previous favours, is that this grace should be crystal-clear, and not a shade of doubt or deficiency should be left in it. In other words, there should not remain the slightest suspicion regarding the fact of the Merciful's having bestowed it with a will, and that it is the real and true favour and the perfect special blessing; rather the bountifulness and benefaction of the Great Giver of this grace should shine forth like the sun, so that the recipient thereof may be able to cherish the firm belief that, in reality, it is the Divine Sovereign Who, with His will, mercy and power, is bestowing this great blessing upon him, and that he is, as a matter of fact, getting on a perfect and perpetual basis in return for his good deeds, the reward which is excellent, pure, delightful, and that it is neither a trial nor a tribulation of any kind.

To be blessed with such a perfect, perpetual, and excellent grace depends upon the fact that man should depart from this world, which is

imperfect and gloomy, fleeting and doubtful, and go to the next world, for this divine grace is a manifestation of great splendour and glories, with the condition that the excellences of the Benefactor may be seen to the highest degree of firm belief and conviction. And there should be left no stage unachieved in this matter of manifestation, observation and full belief, nor any screen of common causes standing in between, and every subtlety and acuteness, connected with the perfect divine knowledge, may get out of the place of concealment into the open field of action. Moreover, the grace itself should be so distinct, so well-defined, that the Lord Himself may say in respect of it that it is pure and clean of the scum of every kind of trial and tribulation. Besides, it should have in itself delights of such a high order that the perfect nature of which should exercise such a complete influence over the mind, body and soul, and every spiritual and physical faculty of man, that it will be impossible to imagine anything over and above it intellectually, speculatively, and even capriciously. And this world, which is imperfect and impermanent, obscure and inadequate, cannot stand to bear those great glories, brilliant lights and everlasting favours, nor can it contain the radiant rays which are perfect and ever-abiding; but quite another world is required for its display which is wholly pure and clean of the common

causes and is the manifestation of the perfect power and majesty of the Creator of the world.

It is also true that some sort of felicitous foretaste of this super-special grace is enjoyed even in this world by those pure and virtuous men who trudge upon the path of Truth and turn towards God, having torn themselves off from the will and desire of their bodies; for, they die before dying, and although to all seeming they are in this world, in reality they reside and live in the next world; and since they separate their minds from the means and resources of this world, breaking away from the tendencies of human nature, and adopt a way which is extraordinary, therefore, the Almighty, too, treats them in the same singular manner, and confers upon them His special lights, which cannot be given unto others without death.

It may also be recalled that the divine purpose in making a display of this fourth truth is to disclose the following facts upon every soul to the point of firm belief: Firstly, that reward is a positive fact which comes upon the people from their Lord in accordance with His Will; but such a display is not possible in this world for the reason that the why and wherefore of the pleasure and pain that befall the human race, and the power under whose authority it works, is not disclosed upon the people in general in this world, and none of them feels or perceives, nor hears a voice saying

that he is reaping the fruit of his deeds. Secondly, this great truth brings to light the fact that common causes of daily occurrence go for nothing, and the real power is God, Who is the Supreme Source of all good and grace and the Master of every kind of reward and requital. Thirdly, the exalted blessedness is that state of splendid bliss and glory when heavenly light and ecstasy, benign pleasure and comfort, penetrate into and pervade over the entire human body, externally as well as internally, and not a limb nor any human faculty remains without the line of its effect; and the bitterest misery constitutes that excruciating pain which, in consequence of man's disobedience and defilement, going astray and in remoteness, takes fire in the heart, blazes and spreads over to plunge the whole body into the horrid fire of hell. And these great manifestations cannot be disclosed in this world, for, being turbid, tainted and shrunk, so far as causes are concerned, it is in an imperfect state, and is, therefore, incapable of standing these displays. On the other hand, trials and tribulations predominate over this world and both its pleasure and pain are impermanent. Moreover, whatever befalls a man in this world is under the cover of causes, on which account the face of the Master of Requital remains concealed.

It is for this reason that this world cannot be the day of Requital in a perfect and manifest way,

but the real day of Requital, on the other hand, will be the next world, the place for the perfect display of great manifestations, majesty and grace. And since the present world is the place of trial and affliction, hence whatever pleasure or pain, adversity or affluence, sorrow or delight befalls human beings, is not an indication nor evidence of the Supreme Being's favour or frown. For example, a person's becoming wealthy is no argument to prove that the Creator of the world is pleased with him, nor his falling into poverty implies that He is annoyed with him. But both these conditions are two kinds of trial, that the wealthy one may be tested in his riches, and the poor in his penury.

All these truths, it may be pointed out here, had disappeared from the world before the advent of Prophet Muḥammad, and not a people there was that conformed to these truths without any admixture of exaggeration or decrease. When the Quran was revealed it pulled out these lost truths from the limbs of oblivion, brought them anew to the ears of the erring, and enlightened the world with their celestial light.

From the explanations thus given of the four names — *Rabb*, *Raḥmān*,¹ *Raḥīm* and *Mālik* — from

1. The Prophet is reported to have said: "*Al-Raḥmān* is the Beneficent God Whose love and mercy are manifested in the creation of this world, and *al-Raḥīm* is the Merciful God Whose love and mercy are manifested in the state that comes after.

the frequency of their mention in the opening chapter, it is clear that the Quran looks upon these four names as the chief attributive names of the Divine Being, and all His other attributes are but the offshoots of these four essential attributes.¹

Worship

“Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help” — continues the opening chapter. This means that we worship God alone, and we believe not in the intermediation of anything else to reach Him, nor do we rely on our own intellect and knowledge, but in every affair seek His help alone. This truth is concealed from the eye of the unbeliever. Turning away from the heavenly light of revelation, the faithless seeks salvation in the imperfect intellect and believes himself to be safe.

Such a view is faulty and fallacious. It has been explained that mere intellect cannot be the means for the attainment of those high aims of perfect faith and true knowledge whereon depends salvation. Intellect, it may however be conceded, can appreciate these sublime truths only after these have been acquired; but then the perfect manifestation comes exclusively from that pure

1. On the basis of a report from Abū Huraira, which, however, is regarded as weak by Tirmidhi, ninety-nine names of God are generally mentioned, the hundredth name being Allāh, but while some of them occur in the Quran, others are only inferred from some act of the Divine Being, as finding expression in the Holy Book.

light which exists only in the Divine Being ; and the imperfect light of human reason and intellect becomes simply useless and unavailing in this case.

Right path

“Guide us on the right path” — we implore. This constitutes, in fact, the true and real prayer of man that he should search the right way, which may lead him to God, for such is the natural law ordained by the Lord that measures by means of which the desired object may be achieved and fulfilled should, as a matter of principle, be adopted. When man treads on the right path, and adopts the necessary measures and means, the desired object is achieved automatically. It has always been the law of nature that, for the acquirement of every object, there be a fixed way, and that, unless man follows that way, no one be able to achieve that object. Hence, the goal to be acquired with all the toil and trouble, prayer and supplication, is the Right Path.

It is thus clear that the unfaithful are bereft of this truth as well. Some ask for food and comfort in their prayers ; others believe that a sinner is not permitted to seek after guidance ; yet others argue that a set form of prayer need not be specified.

Such views are baseless. Having emerged from all kinds of darkness, man should reach the highest stage of divine knowledge and no trace of any infidelity should be left behind in him.

Recognizing God in the most perfect way, and having been saturated with His pure love, he should attain communion with Him, which is the highest state of blessedness. It is, therefore, the true prayer which man stands in urgent need of, and whereon depends his whole beatitude. The simple and straight way for its achievement is that we should beseech the Merciful to guide us on the right path.

Favour

The opening chapter of the Quran (*al-Fātiḥa*) ends in saying: "the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray."

It may be recalled that the children of Adam, according to their words and deeds, intentions and actions, are of three kinds : Some are sincere seekers-after-God and tend towards Him with a true and humble heart. The Almighty, too, becomes a Seeker-after-them, and bestows His blessings upon them. This is called "Divine Favour" (*In'ām-i Ilāhī*). The second kind consists of those people who adopt intentionally the course of conflict and reject God, and He, too, turns away from them in disgust so that the animosity and aversion, the resentment and repugnance that lay hidden in their hearts assume the form of a separating wall between Him and them. The name of this condition is the "Divine Wrath" (*Idlāl-i Ilāhī*).

The third kind of people are those who remain unconcerned towards God, and make no effort to search Him, and so He, too, becomes indifferent towards them, and guides them not unto His path for the obvious reason that they have themselves become sluggish and slothful in searching for His way. The name of this state is the "Divine Indignation" (*Ghazab-i Ilāhī*).

In short, the quintessence of the above three verities is that just as man stands in three different relations to God, in the same way He, too, deals with them accordingly. With them who resign themselves contentedly to His will, and yearn after Him with true love, He showers upon them the blessings of His pleasure. With regard to those who turn away from Him, He assumes the same role, paying them back in the same coin; and with them who become careless as to institute a quest for Him, He deals accordingly, leaving them to wallow in the mire of error.

These three examples illustrate the three states, which emerge from man's own action. However, some people argue as to why God gives not guidance to mankind indiscriminately; others contend, how can the quality of "wrath" be possibly found in Him? The former oppositionists think not that divine guidance comes only to those persons who sincerely strive for its achievement, and who tread upon those ways which are necessary

for this purpose. The latter reflect not that the Almighty deals with each man in conformity with His fixed and immutable Laws; of His help and guidance He deprives him who, out of carelessness and indifference, turns away from Him; but shows His ways to him who struggles for them with all his heart and all his might. For, how can it be that he who idles away his time in doing nothing, neither stirs nor moves his foot in quest for the Lord, should be treated on a par with him who seeks after Him with all his soul and sincerity? The Supreme Being has Himself said that "those who strive hard for Him, He shall certainly guide them in His ways."¹

In the name of God

Mention may now be made of another truth contained in the opening chapter of the Quran. The first verse reads: "In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful" (*Bismillāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*). It may be remarked here that other chapters of the Quran are also headed by this verse. It occurs once in the middle of a chapter as well,² and the recurrence with which it has been repeated in the Quran is not to be found in the case of any other verse. In Islam, it has been adopted as a practice that in the beginning of

1. The Quran, 29 : 69.

2. *Itid.*, 27 : 30.

every affair, for which prosperity is desired, this verse is recited to invoke divine help and benefaction; it has acquired such a wide usage among young and old, that even though a Muslim may not understand all the Quranic teachings, yet he will not be ignorant of this verse.

The real aim underlying the revelation of this verse is to educate the humble and the unformed in the subtle point of divine knowledge that, out of the many attributes of God, only two have been stated here: Beneficence and Mercy. It is of these two attributes that Divine Word, together with its blessings, descends from on High. It is on account of the manifestation of the quality of "Beneficence" that the Divine Word is revealed for the knowledge and guidance of mankind, for it is a specific character of this attribute that it comes into play merely through the munificence and generosity of God before man has done any deed to deserve it. For instance, He has created the sun, the moon, the rain, the air, etc., for the good and benefit of man. All this benevolence is in consequence of His attribute of Beneficence, and no human being can put forward the claim that all these things have been created as a reward for any of his deeds.

The revelation of the Quran, which took place in order to quicken life into the dead earth, has been caused into creation by this divine attribute.

It is this attribute which, in the physical field, takes care of the famine-stricken and pours the heavenly rain on the dry soil. It is, again, this attribute which, in the spiritual sphere, takes pity on the hungry and thirsty, standing on the deadly brink of agnosticism and unbelief, denuded of the truth which sustains spiritual life. The Beneficent, therefore, out of His mercy and grace, provides spiritual sustenance at the time of true need, just as He provides food at the time of hunger. It is true that Divine Word is vouchsafed only to those chosen persons with whom He is pleased; but it is certainly not true that with whoever He be pleased, a heavenly Book should be sent even unnecessarily without any genuine need whatsoever. The Word of God descends from on High only when there exists a vital need and exigenc / for its revelation.

To invoke help in the name of Him Who is the Beneficent and the Merciful is indeed the way of profound humility and resignation unto divine will. The importance of this way lies in the fact that it forms the first rung of the ladder of unity in actions and deeds, by means of which man, adopting the humble submissiveness, is purified of all arrogance and conceit; then, having full belief in his own weakness and the divine help, he gets a share of the supreme knowledge which is given only to the chosen ones. There is no doubt that

the extent to which man adheres to this way, and considers it his duty to act upon it, and sees death and damnation in renouncing it, to that extent he is purified in his belief in Divine Unity. It is, thus, the sublime truth which guides man gradually to the stage of annihilation in the Creator of the world and he sees that there is nothing his, but all things have been conferred upon him.

In pursuance of this truth, the sincere seeker has to acknowledge the fact of his own frivolity, and accept that God is the Possessor of all power and glory, and the source of all blessings. Both these things are such which constitute the ultimate goal of the seeker-after-truth, and the essential condition for ascending to the stage of annihilation. For instance, rain, although universal, drops only on him who stands in the shower; in the same way, he who seeks, gets, and he who searches, finds. People who, at the commencement of a work, repose their confidence in their own power, wisdom and skill, do not appreciate the greatness and worth of the All-Powerful.

It may also be pointed out here that there are philosophers who say that there is no need of invoking divine help in the commencement of a work, for God has already created powers and faculties in man, and it would be vain to ask for them again.

The Almighty, it is no gainsaying the fact, has bestowed upon us some powers for the performance of certain deeds, yet His dominion has not passed away from over our heads; from Himself He has not separated us, and from His support, He has not detached us, nor deprived us from His blessings that know no end. Whatever He has conferred upon us is limited and small, and what is begged of Him is limitless and unbounded; and for the accomplishment of those matters which are above and beyond our bend, no power has been vested in us. These truths are so manifest and clear that any one can test and appreciate their truthfulness by making his own experiments. No man can exist from whom these transcendent truths can remain hidden. However, these are not disclosed upon such people who, on account of their hard-heartedness and indifference, have their eye only on the few limited means, and possess no knowledge of the Divine Process; nor is their wisdom and understanding sufficient to think that it is not within the power of mortal man to prepare and provide for the innumerable things, celestial as well as terrestrial, which are required for each and every comfort and adornment of the human body, and that it is only the Possessor of all the attributes Who brings into existence all those requirements from above the heavens and from beneath the earth, and has a strong dominion over them.

An objection is sometimes adduced as to why this seeking of divine help does not bear fruit invariably, and why does not God's mercy manifest itself every time when His help is solicited? It is only the misconception of a truth that has given rise to this doubt. For, every prayer offered with a true and sincere heart is surely heard by the Lord, Who sends His help in the way He thinks best; but sometimes it also happens that a man's prayer and supplication are devoid of sincerity and humility, and his spiritual condition, too, is unsound and impure, and with his lips he utters the words of prayer, whereas in his heart there is indifference and even hypocrisy; and it may also sometimes happen that God is pleased to hear his prayer, and bestows upon him what He deems profitable, but the unwise man cannot comprehend this subtle favour, and begins to complain, failing to appreciate the sublime teaching that "it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you; and Allāh knows while you know not."¹

Divine power

It should, therefore, be understood that what is illimitable and infinite cannot be brought under the operation of any law for the simple reason that a thing which is, from beginning to end,

1. The Quran, 2 : 216.

within the ambit of a known and accepted law, and no portion thereof falls without its field, nor is unknown and incomprehensible, is undoubtedly limited and confined within bounds. If the perfect divine power should, likewise, be understood to lie within the limits of a definite law, then a thing which has been accepted and acknowledged as illimitable and infinite shall have to be regarded as confined within limits. Those who want to squeeze into the narrow hole of their knowledge and experience the illimitable power of God, understand not that such matters which fall within the operation of a definite law must be limited and narrow, whereas the wisdom and power found in the Infinite Being must necessarily be boundless and unconfined. Can any sensible man say that the Supreme Being knows only to create in this way, and nothing beyond this? Can His infinite and interminable power be measured by the imperfect human imagination? Can His inexhaustible and eternal power be ever inoperative and helpless in its dominion over this universe? His powerful hand, beyond the least shadow of doubt, is holding its sway over each and every particle; and not a single creature there is that depends not on Him, and owes its existence to the greatness of its own creation. Countless fields, which neither internally nor externally have any end or extremity, lie open before His limitless power.

Just as it is possible that He can create external causes to extinguish the heat of a blazing fire, in the same way it is also possible that, in order to destroy the burning quality of that fire, He can create causes to that effect within its very body.

Moreover, when we have accepted God's power and wisdom to be limitless and eternal, it becomes equally incumbent upon us to believe that it is merely impossible for us to know of all His power and wisdom. We cannot, therefore, frame any rule for His boundless strength; and we certainly cannot measure a thing the limits whereof we do not know. This world is indeed very small, and yet we do not possess full knowledge of this tiny sphere. It will, therefore, be unwise on our part if we should try to measure the infinitely immense power and wisdom of the Creator with our imperfect and inadequate scale.