THE REVEALED BOOK
and
ITS SPECIAL FEATURES

BY

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PRAISE OF ALLAH

First of all we thank God Who has brought us to life. Not we alone as we live are His handiwork but every particle of which our bodies are made and every attribute of every such particle is the work of His mighty hands as are also our souls and all their attributes. For the God who is our Lord is a perfect God and without any defect, and His grace and blessings run through our whole existence and on all sides of us. And as he is our Creator and the breather of life into us, so also is He the maintainer of our lives, for as we have come out of His hands, it is only with His support that we can live. If our souls had not been the creation of His hands, then indeed we could have lived independently of Him, for a life which did not owe its existence to God could not have needed His support for its maintenance. Indeed so great are the blessings of our God and so entirely do they encircle us all about that we find ourselves unable to express them in words. We also thank the Government under whose benign and just rule we are able to express the beauties of our religion without any fear.

The views entertained by different Religions on the revelation

Without making any further preliminary remarks, I come to the question proposed to be
answered at this Conference by the representatives of different religions. That question is, Has any Book been revealed by God; if so, which? The question is of such a fundamental importance in religion that it inspires the adherents of every religion to come forward and state their views so far as they bear upon it, and accordingly from the standpoint of Islam, I shall try to give an answer to this question. Before stating the Islamic view of the question of revelation, I shall briefly state the different views that are held by different people.

Firstly, there are people who totally deny the existence of God, and hence Divine revelation which presupposes the existence of a Divine Being is an impossibility with them.

Secondly, there are those who do not totally deny the existence of a Creator but their belief in God is tantamount to a partial denial of the Divine Being. To this class belong the people who deny that matter and soul with all their powers and attributes are made by God. They believe in God but at the same time look upon matter and soul as self-existent and eternal like God. Such a belief also implies impossibilities of Divine revelation, for according to these principles there is no relation between the soul of man and the Divine Being. But when we speak of Divine revelation being granted to a person, we really mean that on account of the close relationship that exists between the Creator and His creation, Almighty God speaks from within that person. If, therefore, there is not this close relationship between God by an insurmountable barrier, and in such a case He cannot speak from within a person just as we cannot speak from with-
in another person, God and man being as distinct and as much apart form each other as two human beings.

Thirdly, there are people who believe in revelation but they do not believe that Almighty God sends down His word upon man and consider that the awakening of any idea or impulse in man's mind is a Divine revelation.

Fourthly, there are and have been sects which think that man does not stand in need of Divine revelation, but that the faculties which have been granted to man by God are a sufficient guide if they are properly used.

Fifthly, there are the believers in Divine revelation who admit that Almighty God revealed His will to mankind and sent down His word upon His chosen servants in the past, but they at the same time believe that the conditions are now changed and that God has changed the law according to which He spoke to His servants in the past. Revelation according to them belongs to the past and the future has no share in it. They believe in effect that Almighty God listened to the prayers of His servants and spoke to them in the past. Such a belief is also defective, for it renders the Divine attributes to be imperfect in this age.

Sixthly, there is another class of believers in Divine revelation. They believe in the revelation of a book for guidance to mankind, but they think that the gift of Divine revelation is limited to one language, one people, one age and one country. They believe that Almighty God spoke to a few men in the beginning of creation but that He has
not since spoken to any body else. In other words, there has been no inspired person in the world except two or three persons of a single nation in a very remote age in the past, nor will the world so long as it exists see any inspired person in the future.

These are the various conceptions as prevailing in the world with regard to revelation and we will now state our own views in this fundamental question.

The Attitude of Islam towards other Religions

The principle on which Almighty God has established us and which He has revealed to us through His Holy Book is that surely there is a God and surely Divine revelation is true. But as God is the God of the whole world and not of any one sect or one tribe, He has also blessed all parts of the world and all tribes of the human race with the greatest of His gifts, i.e., Divine revelation, which is the fountain-head of true guidance, and He has not been sparing in the granting of this gift to any people. And thus it ought to have been. For, we see that things on which the physical life of man depends as earth, water, fire, air, sun, moon, corn, etc., are found in all countries and among all people though they are only meant for man’s short-lived course of life upon this earth. How can it, therefore, be supposed that those guidances and heavenly blessings, on which depends the spiritual life of man which is his life eternal, should be granted to one particular tribe in one particular country and all other tribes and people should be kept entirely ignorant of them and thus made to fall into the pit
of destruction. Human reason if not blinded by prejudice cannot accept it for a moment, nor can it attribute such injustice to Almighty God who is the God of all people, that He should favour one people and remain aloof from all others as if He were a tribal deity. This principle has been taught to us by Book which is called the Quran in which it is said. "And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them," (35:24). Elsewhere it says "Say, (O Muslims)! We believe in God who is Allah (the possessor of all perfect attributes and free from every defect) and we believe in that which has been revealed to us and in that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and in that which was given to the prophets from their Lord. We do not make any distinction between any of them (so as to accept the prophets of one tribe and reject those of another) and to Him we submit. If, then they believe as you believe in Him (and do not reject any prophet of God) they are indeed on the right course; and if they turn back, then they are only in great opposition, so God will suffice thee against them: and He is the Hearing, the Knowing (and He hears and knows what they say and do). (Almighty God has taught you this way of baptism) (Receiving) the baptism of God, and who is better than God, in baptising? and Him do we serve. (ii : 136-138.)

The end of the chapter quoted above has another verse to the same effect. It runs thus "The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers; they all
believe in God and His angels and His books and His apostles (so as to reject some and accept the others): We make no difference between any of His apostles; and they say: 'We hear and we obey our Lord! Thy forgiveness (do we crave) and to Thee is the eventual course.' (ii : 285.)

All these verses show that the Holy Quran makes it obligatory upon its followers to accept all the prophets who are accepted by large numbers of the human race. According to the Quran it is sufficient argument of the truth of those prophets that they are accepted as true by a great part of the world and that the assistance and support of God was granted them at every step. High is the dignity of God and He is above such things as that He should make millions of human beings the devoted followers of a person whom he knows to be an impostor and a deceiver and a liar, for if the same honour is given to the impostor as to a true prophet of God, then there remains nothing which should enable the seeker after truth to distinguish the one from the other and every matter relating to prophethood becomes obscure. It is, therefore, a very clear and true criterion of the truth of a prophet that he is granted an acceptance in the hearts of men and there is no step that he takes but the assistance and support of God are with him. A prophet who satisfies this criterion can never be an impostor. But it is possible that the later generations of his followers tampered with the scriptures which he left to them and made alterations in them, and reversed the significance of his word by comments in which they followed their own desires. Ancient books are in fact liable to be
altered by different people interpreting them in different manners, their interpretations by and by taking the place of the text and becoming parts of the book itself. It is due to such differences that different sects are formed in every religion, each sect interpreting certain words in a manner different from that in which another interprets them.

In short, the principle which the Holy Quran has taught us is a very sound and stable principle, for human nature itself bears witness that the prophets whose acceptance finds a place in the hearts of millions of men and whose love and esteem are rooted deep in hearts and upon whom Divine assistance was showered are not impostors at all; for the evil-minded impostor, who tells lies about God and says that revelation is granted to him or that God speaks to him while as a matter of fact no revelation comes to him nor does God speak to him, is not granted such honour. The person who thinks that such Divine assistance and heavenly signs may also be granted to an impostor does not really believe in the power and wisdom of God and denies His very existence. The criterion which we have stated here is satisfied pre-eminently by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and is one of the most convincing arguments of his truth, for the height of glory to which he attained was not attained by any other prophet, and the Divine assistance which was granted to him was not vouchsafed to any one else. He came at a time when the whole world had fallen into a state of spiritual lethargy and was filled with *Shirk* and idol-worship. The worship of the true God had almost disappeared from the face of the earth. Some people worshipped
stones and others fire: some bowed down before
the sun and others took water for their Lord; while
not a few had deified a man. The whole world
was sunk deep in sin and vice and evils of every
kind. The Holy Quran thus significantly describes
the moral and spiritual degradation of the world
of that time “Evil reigns supreme in land as well
as in water,” in other words, that the people who
had scriptures in their hand become as corrupt as
those who had no heavenly book to guide them.
It is such a true description of the state of the world
at that time that the history of every country bears
witness to its truth. Can the wise historians of
this land of Aryas deny that the time of the
appearance of the Holy Prophet was such as it has
been described in the Holy Quran to be, when
idol-temples were so highly revered throughout the
whole country as if idol-worship were the true
religion of the Vedas? And will not the Christians
admit that not only had Jesus been given the place
of the one and true God at that time, but his ardent
worshippers prostrated themselves even before his
picture while his mother was also worshipped as a
God in the Christian church at that time?

Such was the state of the world at the time of
the appearance of the Holy Prophet Muhammad,
but what a change was wrought by him in a few
days and what a glorious revolution was brought
by him. That Arabian peninsula which knew
nothing but the worship of idols and stones
resounded from one corner to the other with
exclamations of the unity of God. But what is
particularly important to bear in mind is that the
signs and miracles which were granted to our Holy
Prophet, were not limited to his life upon this earth, but have been, and shall continue to be, witnessed in all ages. Another distinction granted to our Holy Prophet is that he is the seal of all prophets, not only in the sense that all the excellences of prophethood were manifested in him, but also because there cannot be any new prophet after him who should abrogate the law laid down by him or any new apostle who should not be from among his followers. Every one who is spoken to by Almighty God is made the recipient of this heavenly favour through the Holy Prophet, and must be one of his followers. As regards his acceptance and the turning of the hearts of men in submission to him there are to-day more than two hundred millions of Mussalmans of every class and grade who stand in his presence as respectfully as servants before their master. The most powerful monarchs have deemed it a pride to be counted among his servants, and even now the Muslim potentates regard themselves but as his slaves and would show their reverence for his name by coming down from their thrones.

Now consider if such honour and such greatness, such success and such glory, with thousands of heavenly signs and a thousand more heavenly blessings, can be granted to an impostor! We are indeed proud that the Holy Prophet whose followers we are had the grace of God granted to him in such abundance. He is not God but through him we have no doubt seen God. The religion which he has given us is a looking-glass of the mighty powers of God. Had there not been Islam, it would have been impossible to realize in this age
what prophethood is and whether miracles are possible and whether they are within the laws of nature. It is the unintercepted grace of that great Prophet that has solved this mystery, and it is an obligation we owe to him that we do not relate stories of wonders wrought in the past as other people do, but have even now that Divine light and Divine assistance with us which others can only boast of having possessed in the past. We have not the words with which to express our thanks for this great blessing that the God who is hidden from the eyes of other people and that unseen power from whom others are separated by a thousand screens—that glorious God has manifested Himself to us through our Holy Prophet.

With all these facts before us it is astonishing to find that our opponents bear the greatest hatred towards that perfect Prophet. No other prophet in the world has so much hostile and abusive literature written against him as our Holy Prophet. This shows that him, whom God loves most of all and grants the greatest share of His greatness and glory, this blind world hates most of all. Many are his obligations upon the nations of the world. It is he who taught us that we should not reject the prophets that have appeared among other people, and that the prophets and apostles who are recognized as such by the nations of the earth and who are honoured and respected in any part of the world were really prophets of God. Their scriptures may have on account of the lapse of long time been altered or changed, or a wrong interpretation may have been put upon their words, but these scriptures were no doubt heavenly books revealed to those prophets in
their time and must therefore be honoured and respected.

The Muslims are exhorted to be respectful to all those religious leaders who are accepted in the world as prophets of God. This is mentioned on more occasions than one in the Quran, in order to impress upon the Muslims that they should not speak lightly or contemptuously of any religious leader of humanity.

A Message of Peace

The Muslims may indeed feel proud for this lovable and attractive principle, for other people not having any such principle to guide them speak disrespectfully and very often abusively of the holy prophets of God who are accepted as guides by millions of people, when they find them differing from themselves or their cherished beliefs on the most insignificant point. The most vulgar and contumelious attacks are in particular directed against the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Our opponents cry for peace with their tongues, but the same tongue they employ like a drawn sword against that beloved Prophet of ours under whose feet lie our very souls. None is more persecuted than we are, for while we regard with honour and respect all the prophets who have been accepted as such by other great nations of the world and believe in them as true prophets of God in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Quran, the Holy Prophet, our love for whom knows no bounds, is openly abused in lectures and writings by our very neighbours. We do admit, and a public declaration of this admission we
consider to be our happy duty, that Moses and Jesus and the other prophets were all the holy, righteous and chosen prophets of God, and that the holy men through whom guidance was brought to the people in this land were all the chosen servants of God to whom He sent down His grace and upon whom He showered His blessings. But is there any body who would listen to our complaint that other people do not deal with us in the same liberal and humanitarian spirit? From whom should we seek justice in this matter?

Consider how beautiful this teaching of the Holy Quran is, for it lays down the basis of peace and union in the world. It requires all the different peoples to become one people, for it demands of all that they should revere the sacred religious leaders of the others. It must be admitted by all that the root of the strong hatred and enmity between various people is the contempt and hatred of the prophets and messengers of God who are accepted and revered by millions of the people of every country. The person who speaks abusively or contemptuously of the prophet of a people or befriends an abuser and then desires that that people should be in harmony with him is a fool and his folly and ignorance are unequalled. Can a son live in peace and friendship with the abuser of his father? That cannot be. Those who cry most for peace and union with their tongues should first conform their conduct to a peaceful attitude. My dear countrymen! do not throw away these words of mine but give them your deepest reflection. We live in one country and are one another's neighbours. Let us then live in such peace and friend-
ship that we may be as part of one body. But bear in mind that hypocritical love would not avail in the least. Nay such peace is a poisonous seed which will give a fatal fruit in the end. Peace is no doubt an excellent thing, the one thing that can be desired, but remember that peace and abuse cannot live in the same heart. Are you then prepared, my friends! to take this step to lay the basis of the long desired union by accepting this principle of peace, viz., that as we regard those rishis and avatars of yours, who are accepted and highly revered by millions of your people, as truthful and righteous servants of God, you also may in like manner believe with a sincere heart in the prophethood of our Holy Prophet Mohammad and unite with us in reciting the holy words which are so dear to every Muslim's heart (La ilaha illallah ho Mohammad ur-Rasool Ullah) i.e., "There is no deity but Allah and Mohammad is the Apostle of God."

My countrymen! I entreat you to join with us in advancing towards that goal of peace and union for which we have already started, and thus deal a death-blow to the hatred and ill-feeling which is eating away our country. We do not require you to do anything which we have not ourselves done first and our requisition relates only to a condition which we have already satisfied. To uproot all enmities and to establish a true and sincere union, it is sufficient that as we look upon your rishis and avatars as true prophets of God, you should also express a belief in the truth of our Holy Prophet and make this declaration public. We cannot, of course, act in accordance with all your current beliefs, for Almighty God has informed us that the
scriptures which are in your hands have had alterations and changes made in them by human hands. Moreover, your own religious differences are so great that the beliefs of one sect contradict those of another, and it is useless to enter into these discussions, for the final commandment of God as contained in the Holy Quran has freed us from all other obligations. Therefore all we desire of you is that you should believe in the truth of our scriptures and prophets in the same manner as we believe in the truth of your scriptures and prophets.

In short, we have come to you with this principle of peace in our hands, so that you may bear witness that we accept your great and revered leaders as prophets of God, and we hope that if you love peace and desire to promote union between various people, you will have no hesitation to accept our Holy Prophet, as a true Prophet and righteous Messenger of God. The argument to which we have drawn your attention is a very clear and cogent argument. But if peace and union are not brought about by this method, bear in mind that they will not be effected in any other way, and mutual hatred and enmity will daily be on the increase.

The Muslims are a people who lay down their lives for the honour of their noble Prophet, and they would sooner die than suffer such disgrace that they should be sincere and loving friends of a people whose business it is to abuse day and night their noble Prophet and who speak of him in the most contemptuous and vulgarly abusive terms in their books, periodicals and notices. Bear in mind that
those who are taking the leading part in abusing thus the sacred leaders of humanity are not real well-wishers even of their own people, for they are sowing seeds of thorny shrubs in their way. I say to you truly that it is possible for us to live in peace with the serpents of the jungle and the wild beasts of the forest, but it is absolutely impossible to live in peace and harmony with a people who would on no account give up abusing the holy prophets of God. They think that they can win a religious controversy by resorting to abuse and contumely but they are mistaken, for success and victory come from heaven. Those who are pure-hearted are triumphant in the end and they win the hearts of their hearers by the pure words to which they give utterance. But men of impure heart know nothing beyond this that they cause hatred and disunion to prevail in the country and thus cause its peace to be disturbed. Would that people had followed such peaceful principles as are laid down in the Holy Quran and then the country would have been filled with blessings! But unfortunately these principles are not liked by our countrymen. There is one book and only one under the heaven which lays stress upon the principle that those prophets and messengers whom the great nations of the world have followed as their leaders and who are accepted and honoured as truthful in vast countries were really true prophets of God. It is in fact a strong argument of their truth and of their being from God that Almighty God inspired millions of men to accept them as true and granted them His assistance in an extraordinary manner. It shows that they loved God and were loved by Him and that their con-
tempt is really the contempt of their Divine Master who raised them for the regeneration of the world.

The Quran teaches us not only that we should honour and respect the sacred leaders of other people, but it also requires us to show sympathy to all people. It is for this reason that Islam forbids the taking of usury from the Muslims as well as the non-Muslims. Nay, the Muslims are not prohibited the taking of interest only but they are even enjoined to remit the original debt when the debtor is in too straitened circumstances to be able to pay it, or at least to delay its payment until he is in ease to discharge the debt. In like manner, the Holy Quran teaches us not only to forgive the sins of our own brethren, the Muslims, but also the sins of other people. It says: “and they should pardon and turn away. Do you not love that God should forgive you? And God is forgiving and Merciful,” (xxiv: 22).

It is true that the Gospel also teaches forgiveness and forbearance, but there is an important difference between the two teachings. For the Prophet Jesus was an apostle of the Israelites to the exclusion of all other people. On one occasion he clearly denied that he had anything to do with any other people, for he said, that he had been sent only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His sphere of sympathy could not therefore be wider than the pale of the Israelites. But the Holy Quran contains express injunctions for showing sympathy for other people in the same manner as for the Muslims and to forgive other people like one’s own brethren. For the Holy Quran nowhere says that
the Holy Prophet Muhammad was sent for his own tribe, the Quresh. Nay, it is plainly written in the Holy Book that he had been sent for the whole world, as it says: “Say, O people (of the world)! surely I am the Apostle of God to you all.” Here the Holy Prophet is commanded to say that he was sent for the whole world and not for any one particular tribe. Elsewhere Almighty God thus speaks of the universality of the mission of the Holy Prophet in the Holy Quran: “And We have not sent thee but as a mercy to all the people.”

Thus as God is the God of the whole world and not of any one tribe, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, is the Apostle of the whole world, and a mercy for all mankind. The circle of his teachings of sympathy and fellow-feeling, therefore, includes the whole world in it and is not limited to any one tribe or people. The teaching on this point contained in the Holy Quran is of such a universal and perfect nature that it is unparalleled in the teachings of all the great teachers of the world. The Holy Quran says: “Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good and the giving to the kindred.” This verse speaks of three stages of doing goodness. The first is spoken of as mere justice, i.e., doing good for good. It is the lowest stage of goodness that when a man receives any good from any one he should do good in return, and when he claims a right, he should not claim more than is justly his due. Then there is the second stage of goodness which is spoken of as ihsan. The essence of this word is that goodness should be done to a person without ever having received any benefit from him. It consists in bestowing favours upon persons who
cannot claim them as of right. But as to this stage of doing goodness is often attached the infirmity that the doer expects thanks in return for the good he does or reminds the person to whom he does any good of the obligation, the Holy Quran speaks of a third stage of doing goodness which is free from all defects. This stage is spoken of as "the giving to the kindred," by which it is meant that the idea of doing goodness should proceed from sincere sympathy like that which is shown to a person's nearest relations or kindred, to a child, for instance, by his mother. In this stage a person is required, in fact, to look upon the whole world as his kindred and to do good to all as if they were his near relatives. This is the only form of perfect goodness and the Muslim is required to rise above all limitations in doing good to humanity.

This perfect teaching we do not find in any other book. It is true that the Christian scriptures enjoin forgiveness and the doing of good, but these injunctions relate only to the Israelites. In like manner, the scriptures of other people, no doubt, teach forgiveness of evils and the doing of good, but all these teachings are limited to one particular tribe or country, and the universality and perfectness of the teachings of Islam is wanting in all of them. I hope our friends of the Arya Samaj will not be offended if I say that the teachings of the Vedas as now in their hands are quite inconsistent with any teaching of forgiveness of the faults of others. For a God who did not or could not Himself forgive the slightest fault of any of His creatures, but punished the same by making the poor creature suffer by passing through innumerable forms, could not reasonably enjoin
those very creatures to forgive the faults of their fellow-beings "Forgive that you may be forgiven" is a reasonable teaching, but a religion which denies the latter proposition cannot inculcate the former. The manner in which the advanced Hindu society of the Arya Samaj deals with the sacred leaders of other religions makes one even suspect that abusing the prophets of God may perhaps be a Vedic teaching. It may be said that even the Muslim controversialists sometimes speak in unbecoming words of the religious leaders of other people, but it should be remembered that those who are guilty of this make a departure from the teachings of the Holy Quran. To speak the truth, however, those persons are to blame for this who abuse the Holy Prophet of the Muslims and speak of him in scurrilous terms. For instance, no one can deny that the Muslims highly respect the Prophet Jesus, on whom be peace! and believe in him as a righteous and chosen Prophet of God, but when a narrow-minded Christian missionary assumes a disrespectful attitude towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and speaks of him in contemptuous and abusive terms, even a Muslim disputant, whose feelings are injured by the use of such harsh language, may sometimes be compelled to speak of Jesus Christ in terms which are disagreeable to his opponent so that the latter may be able to realise the injury to feelings which the use of such language concerning sacred religious leaders who are held dear above all things in the hearts of their followers brings about. But even then the Muslims would speak in guarded terms, for his object is not to bring any real objection against one whom he believes to be a prophet.
of God, but to make his opponent conscious that similar objections might be advanced against his own religious leader by some body else who does not consider such religious leader to be an inspired person. For, to speak contemptuously of any prophet of God is according to Islam the most heinous of sins. A Muslim is thus placed in a very difficult position for he has on both sides those whom he honours and holds dear. His own spiritual leader and the religious leader of his opponent are in one respect equal in his sight, for both are prophets of God. The best course for him, is, therefore, to suffer patiently what is said concerning his own Prophet, for even to refer to a Prophet of God in contemptuous terms is a great sin and the wrath of God descends on such a person.

JEHAD

From what I have said it is clear that Islam is pre-eminently a religion of peace, and its particular message to the world is a message of peace. But it may be said Islam cannot claim to be a religion of peace inasmuch as it enjoins Jehad with the infidels. This charge against the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad is absolutely false. Islam never enjoined its followers to compel the non-Muslims to accept Islam or to propagate their faith by means of the sword. To any one who has even a surface knowledge of the early history of Islam, it must be quite clear that the thirteen years of our Holy Prophet's life at Mecca were years of such continued suffering, such unremitted persecution and such hard trial as none but the elect of God, who have their sole trust in Him, can bear. During this time many of his
dearest companions were cruelly put to death and not a few were subjected to excruciating tortures. Instances are not wanting in which the Holy Prophet himself was pelted with stones by his unbelieving opponents to such an extent that he was literally bathed in blood from head to foot. When all these relentless persecutions failed to stop the progress of Islam, it was planned as a last measure to exterminate it by murdering the Holy Prophet himself and with this object the house in which the Prophet lived was besieged. Then Almighty God revealed to His Prophet that the time had come when he should leave the city. In obedience to this Divine commandment the Holy Prophet left Mecca with only one companion, Abu Bakr. What a wonderful miracle that although hundreds of men were lying in wait for him and watching his movements, not one of them could see the Prophet as he left his house and passed through them. As he left the city behind him, he stood on a stone and facing Mecca addressed it in these words: "Thou, O Mecca, wast my dear home and my beloved city, had not my people driven me from thee, I would not have left thee." Then was fulfilled what some of the scriptures had announced long before, viz., that the promised Prophet would be expelled from his home.

All this, however, did not satisfy the unbelievers, and they pursued the Holy Prophet to execute their evil designs. But Almighty God saved him from all their mischiefs, and the Holy Prophet succeeded in effecting a secret flight to Medina. Even then the opponents of Islam did not relax their exertions to uproot it, and had it not been for
the special protection and assistance of Almighty God, they could have easily managed to cut it off with a single stroke. The enemy numbered hundreds of thousands while the Muslim companions of the Holy Prophet living at Mecca did not exceed seventy and even these had already left the city. Certainly this was not the time when the Holy Prophet and his companions could have taken up the sword to compel their opponents to accept Islam, and yet it was at this juncture that permission was given to the Muslims to fight with their enemies. The persecutions of the Quraish had reached their climax and nothing, not even the flight from Mecca, could deter them from doing their worst towards the Muslims. They were now, in fact, more determined than ever to blot out every Muslim from the face of the earth and thus to extirpate Islam in such a manner that no trace of it should be left in the world. They were ready to deal this death-blow with the sword when Almighty God sent down His permission to His Holy Prophet to take the defensive. It was in self-defence and to repel the aggressive attacks of the opponents that the taking up of arms was allowed in Islam, and the Holy Quran is very clear on this point. The following verse bears testimony to this “Surely God will repel (the mischief and oppression of the unbelievers) from those who believe, Surely God does not love any one who is unfaithful, the ungrateful. Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed and most surely God is well able to assist them, i.e., though they are few, yet with the assistance of God they will be able to repel the attacks of their
enemies)” (xxii : 38, 39).

The verses quoted above are the first that sanctioned the taking up of arms by the Muslims, and any one can see for himself whether they show the Muslims to be the aggressors or merely as an oppressed party compelled to take up arms to save their lives. The hostilest critic cannot deny that the same Quran is in our hands as was promulgated by the Holy Prophet, and hence any statement which contradicts the clearest testimony afforded by such an authentic and contemporaneous record must be rejected as absolutely false and untrustworthy. The Quran is the book which furnishes the surest and the most reliable history of Islam in the time of our Holy Prophet and as much its statements are conclusive.

It is clear, therefore, that the injunction to fight was given to the Muslims at a time when they were being murdered most unjustly and cruelly and were an oppressed party in the sight of God. Under the circumstances one of two things was inevitable, viz., either the Muslims should have been allowed to perish or they should have been permitted to fight in their defence against their oppressors. Nor could the latter course be suitable for them unless God Himself had succoured them, for they were so few and so weak that they had not the power to stand against their numerous and powerful enemies. The permission given on this occasion was, however, made subject to another condition in a latter verse, by which the Muslims are prohibited from assuming the offensive in fight or exceeding the limits of self-defence. It runs thus: “And fight in the way of God with those who
fight with you, and do not exceed the limits (for then you will be unjust) Surely God does not love those who exceed the limits,” (ii : 186). To the same effect we are told on another occasion: “God does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of your religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes that you show them kindness and deal with them justly: Surely God loves the doers of Justice,” (60 : 8). According to this verse the Muslims are enjoined to extend their kindness and charity even to their enemies making an exception only in the case of those enemies who took up the sword for the extirpation of Islam itself and were bent upon murdering every Muslim who fell into their hands. From this it is clear that war was declared only against those bitter enemies of Islam who could not rest satisfied except with the utter extinction of Islam.

In the tenth chapter of the Holy Quran which is entitled the Immunity and which was revealed only a short time before the death of the Holy Prophet, there is a similar injunction: “If one of the idolaters seek protection from thee, (in the time of fight), grant him protection, till he hears the Word of God, then make him attain his place of safety, this is because they are a people who do not know (as to whom they are fighting with),” (ix : 6).

The Holy Quran goes further than this and declares in the clearest words that the permission given to the Muslims to fight against their opponents was not only to establish the liberty of the Muslim form of worship, but to bring about freedom of
religious worship of every kind in the world. This is stated in plain words along with the first permission of fighting given in the Holy Quran in the chapter entitled the Pilgrimage, where it is said immediately after giving permission to the Muslims to fight against their enemies who had taken up arms to destroy them: "And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which the name of God is much remembered; (xxii: 40). In this verse, Almighty God tells the Muslims that He is the protector and helper of the temple of religious worship of all the religions, and that, therefore, if any Christian country, for instance, falls into the hands of the Muslims, it is their duty not to interfere with their religious worship and not to destroy their churches. Similar injunctions are also contained in the traditions of the Holy Prophet, for whenever an army was sent out, the commander was strictly enjoined not to destroy any cloister of monks or any church or synagogue. It is a proof of the broad and humanitarian spirit of Islam, for it undertakes to protect the Jewish and Christian places of worship in the same manner as Muslim places of worship. It is, no doubt, true that Almighty God who Himself laid the basis of Islam did not like to have it annihilated by the aggressiveness of its opponents, and allowed the Muslims to fight in self-defence and to take up arms in resisting the attacks of their opponents. The words in which the Holy Quran incited the Muslims to fight with their opponents are a clear proof that the commandment related only to defensive fighting. Thus it says on
one occasion: "What! will you not fight a people who broke their oaths and aimed at the expulsion of the Apostle and they attacked you first," (ix: 13). And again: "And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it (and make peace with them)." The rebuke conveyed in the first of these verses was due to the fear of the Muslims who thought that their numbers being insignificantly small in comparison with the overwhelming majority of their opponents, they could not do battle with them, or that if they did, they would suffer a crushing defeat.

Attention may also be drawn to the following verse of the Holy Quran in this connection: Whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men, "(v: 32), that is to say, the slaying of one person without due cause is, in the sight of God, like the slaying of all mankind. It shows what a heinous crime it is according to Islam to murder a person without due cause.

All these verses show conclusively that the Holy Quran forbids aggressive fighting. On the other hand, it enjoins that even when a mischief is done by an opponent, it should be met with good in return, as it says: "Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and thyself was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend," (xli: 34). Again in speaking of praiseworthy qualities in a man, it says: i.e., "(The faithful are) those who restrain their anger and pardon men; and God loves the doers of good (to others)." (iii: 133).
An Important Criterion of a Divine Revelation

Reverting to the original subject, I would now state the chief criterion by which we have come to recognise that Holy Quran is the Word of God. The most important criterion of a Divine revelation is that it should have a distinct superiority over the writings and words of men in giving a deeper knowledge of God and bringing a surer conviction of His existence to the heart. For, it would be easily seen that if the Word of God cannot bring to us a higher knowledge of God and a greater certainty of His existence than what sound reason can do, it cannot claim the slightest preference over the latter. In fact, there is nothing in such a case to show that such a word is the Word of God, and the need of Divine revelation vanishes altogether. For instance, with the help of sound reason we can go no further than this that there must be Creator of the Universe, for so the consummate order and perfect arrangement of its various hearts lead us to conclude, but mere reason, however sound, cannot show us that the Creator does in fact exist. If, therefore, any book which is taken by any people as Divine revelation does not take us further than reason, it is useless, does not add to our knowledge of God and certainly about His existence but stops where reason stops. Such a book is not wanted by humanity for its guidance, for whatever guidance it can afford is already in the possession of humanity through sound reason. The truth is that man stands in need of Divine revelation because reason alone cannot lead him to the highest certainty regarding the existence of God. There is no doubt that the order
and design witnessed in the great orbs which constitute the host of heaven and the consummate laws of order that regulate the universe, the interrelations of the various planets and stars, the marvellous power and wisdom displayed in keeping up this vast system for a length of time which human reason cannot even guess—all these arguments lead us to the conclusion of the probability of the existence of a Creator, of a Power whose will and order are working behind this system, but still probability does not prove actual existence. Reason has not seen the Creator nor can it make us see Him, but the Word of God brings with it the most firm persuasion and the strongest conviction, not only that there must be a God, but that God actually exists. The book that fails to bring such a conviction, that does not take us into regions far above the domain of reason and make us taste of the actual existence of God, leaving the probability of His existence far behind, cannot be said to be a revealed book. This is the chief criterion of Divine revelation.

It should be borne in mind that a revealed book ought to have Divine power in it. If a book has deep philosophical truths in it or contains nice points of knowledge and wisdom, only this much is not sufficient to entitle it to be called a revealed book, for these things are not beyond the sphere of human power and capability. Genius has wrought such wonders in physical as well as metaphysical sciences that it would be a most grievous error to consider a book to be revealed merely because it contains some good philosophical truths. Nor is it a sound argument for a book to be considered
as revealed that it has existed for a very long time or from ancient days, for such a claim has no bearing upon the question of revelation. Moreover, it is almost impossible to decide conclusively which is the oldest book in the world. For instance, the followers of the Vedas claim that their scriptures were revealed some millions of years ago, but then there are the Parsees who claim that their books are a thousand times more ancient than the Vedas. Who in the absence of all historical evidence for either claim can decide which is the more ancient of the two? And even if a particular book were proved to be the most ancient of all, would that show it to be the only revealed book, or a revealed book at all?

It must, therefore, be clearly understood that the only criterion which can ultimately decide the question of the revelation of a book, is the possession of Divine power and distinct superiority over the words of man. For the word that comes out of the mouth of God must, like the work that comes out of His hands, be superhuman. Unless, therefore, a book that claims to be revealed can show that it has in it a Divine power which distinguishes it from the word of man, its claim cannot be recognized.

I would now show that the important criterion by which a heavenly book can be recognized as such is satisfied only by the Holy Quran, and that at the present time it is the only book in which all those excellences are to be met with, which must necessarily be possessed by a revealed book. The scriptures of other people may have satisfied that criterion or possessed those excellences at a previous time,
but at present they do not. Though, therefore, as already stated, we consider such scriptures to have been revealed at an earlier time, yet in their present state they do not possess the particular qualification which distinguishes a revealed book from other books and hence they are useless. They are in fact like a fort which has been deserted and is quite desolate neither having treasure nor the garrison which made it a stronghold.

The Holy Quran has that mighty power in it which draws its followers out of doubts and scepticism and makes them attain the highest certainty in the existence of God.

Distinctive Features of the Holy Quran

So far I have spoken of the mighty power of the Holy Quran which influences the life of its true followers, but it is also full of other miracles. It gave the news of the victory, triumph, and grandeur of Islam at a time when the Holy Prophet, wandered alone in the deserts of Arabia and his followers were only a few poor and helpless men who were themselves bitterly persecuted for the sake of their religion. Again, when the Roman Emperor was vanquished in a fight with the Persians and Khusrau of Persia subjugated many of his provinces, the Holy Quran gave expression to a prophecy stating that within nine years the Persians would be defeated by the Romans, and the prophecy was clearly fulfilled. A mighty miracle was also wrought by the Holy Prophet in rending the moon into two which clearly shows the hand of God in its working. We find it plainly stated in the Holy Quran that the moon was rent asunder and that the unbelievers witnessed this miracle, and to say
against this that it is against the laws of nature is simply absurd. The Holy Quran says: “The Hour drew nigh and the moon did rend asunder, and if they see sign they turn aside and say: Transient enchantment (the effect of which had even gone up to heaven)” (54:1,2) Now it is clear that there is here not only an assertion on the part of the Holy Quran, but the unbelievers themselves who were the deadliest enemies of Islam are cited as witnesses of the occurrence. Had, therefore, the occurrence never taken place, the opponents of the Holy Prophet and the bitterest foes of Islam who lived at Mecca could not have remained silent. They would have denied ever seeing the moon rent into two at the command of the Holy Prophet, and no sensible person can conceive how it was possible for them to be the witnesses of this mighty extraordinary occurrence. In such a case it was their duty to speak out if the thing was not true. The silence of such deadly enemies seals the truth of the occurrence narrated in the Holy Quran. There being such sure and conclusive evidence of the circumstances having happened, it is idle to say that it is against the laws of nature, for no one can claim to have discovered all the laws of nature. Moreover, a miracle is a miracle because it is against the known and ordinary laws of nature and is a special act of Divine power.

In short, the Holy Quran is full of mighty miracles, and the limits of this paper do not allow me to enter into details. But I would state here a distinctive characteristic of this Holy Book, a feature which will not be witnessed in any other book. Whenever it describes the attributes of the
Divine Being, such as His power, knowledge, mercy, forgiveness, etc., it does not like the words of weak human beings, content itself with simple description, but it goes further and gives a living and fresh proof of the facts that God is All-powerful, that He is All-knowing, that He is Merciful and that He it is Who gives salvation. With new prophecies and new miracles it makes a man witness afresh the truth of these attributes of the Divine Being, so that he is filled with the certainty that whatever attributes of God are related in words are actually met with in Him and realises the deep and certain truth of all that he is at first required to believe.

The teaching of the Holy Quran forms another distinctive feature of the Holy Book, for this teaching is in perfect accord with human nature and human requirements. For instance, stress is laid in the Mosaic law on retribution and in the Christian teaching upon forgiveness. The one teaches tooth for tooth and eye for eye under all circumstances while the other enjoins non-resistance of evil in every case and the turning of the other cheek when one is smitten. But the teaching of the Holy Quran is practical as well as mild: it is a mean between the two extremes of the Mosaic and the Christian doctrines. It says: “The recompense of evil is punishment, like it, but whoever forgives and amends he shall have his reward from God, (i.e., forgiveness must be preferred in such a case.)” (42: 40) It cannot be denied that different men have different natures. The doer of an evil to another person may sometimes benefit by the latter’s forgiveness and mend his
ways for the future, while another man may not be deterred from doing evil even by ordinary punishment. Hence it is that the Holy Quran does not make either retribution or forgiveness the rule in every case. With differences existing in human nature itself, the only teaching which is in consonance with human reason and nature is that inculcated by the Holy Quran, and the teachings of the Mosaic law and the Gospels both lack the perfection of the Quranic teaching. They both look at human nature from one side only and can both at the utmost supply nourishment and food to only one branch of it. They are in fact like local and temporary laws, while the Quranic teaching is universal, and aims at the perfection of all sides of human nature.

I will illustrate the universality of the Quranic teachings by two more examples. The Gospel forbids a man “to look on a woman to lust after her,” but the Holy Quran forbids unnecessarily looking at other women in all cases, for an innocent look may soon be converted into a lustful one. When necessary, a man may look at a woman with a half-closed eye. Again, the Gospel says that a wife should not be divorced unless she commits adultery, but the Holy Quran does not narrow the advisability of divorce to such an extreme case. According to it divorce is not limited to cases of adultery but it may be resorted to whenever there is a reasonable cause advising the necessity of such a course. If, for instance, enmity springs up between the husband and the wife, or they cannot live together with agreement and in peace, or there is danger of loss of life, or though the wife may not actually commit adultery
yet she indulges in the preliminaries of adultery and lives in the company of other men, in all these cases the husband is allowed to divorce his wife if he thinks such an extreme step to be necessary, but even here there is a strict injunction that divorce should not be resorted to hastily. It is clear from this that the teachings of the Holy Quran are in perfect agreement with the requirements of human nature and any departure from them is sure to bring about evil ultimately. This is the reason that many Christian Governments have been compelled to allow divorce where there is no adultery, against the plain statements of their scriptures.

The Doctrine of Salvation in Christianity, Hinduism and Islam

As regards the doctrine of salvation as narrated in the Gospels, the essence of which is the crucifixion and atonement of Jesus, the Holy Quran has rejected it. Though it makes mention of Jesus as a righteous Prophet of God and speaks of him as one who is the beloved of God and who has attained His nearness and has a dignity in His presence, but at the same time it clearly states that he was no more than a human being. Neither does it consider necessary for salvation that the burden of a sinful person should be thrown on the shoulders of an innocent one. Reason also repels the theory that one person should commit a sin and another be made to answer for it. Even human governments have never been guided in their dealings with offenders by any such principle.

It is further to be deplored that the Arya Samajists also entertain erroneous views of the
doctrine of salvation like the Christians, and a misconception prevails among them also as to its true nature. According to the teachings of the Arya Samaj, there is no forgiveness of sins, nor is there any such thing as repentance. Unless a man passes through all the forms according to the doctrine of metempsychosis, there is no salvation for him, and even then the salvation he attains is a temporary one. God, according to the Arya Samaj, has not the power to forgive sins, and true repentance, which is really a death of the old sinning spirit and a fire in which a man chooses to burn himself to please his Maker, is nothing. Such a doctrine represents God as a narrow-minded person. Moreover, when He enjoins His creatures to forgive the sins of their fellow-beings and to pardon those who have offended or disobeyed them. He requires them to show that moral beauty of which He Himself is destitute. The followers of such a religion would no doubt feel their inability to display those moral qualities which are against the moral attributes of God Himself, for they would argue that if God cannot forgive the sins of those who have disobeyed or offended Him, how is it possible for them to do it. If people had such temporal rulers over them as would not under any circumstances whatever forgive their faults, they would indeed be in a miserable plight. How great must then be their misfortune if they have such a master for their God!

The explanation that is given of the doctrine of transmigration is a futile one. It is said that everyone suffers in a succeeding birth for the sins of his past life. Now the death of a person is a
fact which we witness with our eyes, but that the soul enters any other body after leaving one has never been witnessed by any body. The punishment inflicted, therefore, is absolutely useless, for if the soul that is reborn has no warning is utterly ignorant of the sins for which it is made to suffer, what benefit can accrue to it from the punishment that is inflicted upon it and how will the punishment help it in shunning similar sins again. It should be borne in mind that human nature with all its excellences and beauties has this defect in it that on account of its inherent weakness it sometime stumbles and falls into sins, but the Almighty God who is its Maker has not made it thus weak to keep it in everlasting torture, but has done so that His attribute of forgiving sins may find a manifestation. Sin is no doubt a poison, but seeking the forgiveness of God and true repentance make it a panacea. The sin of a person thus becomes after true repentance the means of his advancement, and thus the very weakness of man is instrumental in destroying the root of egotism from within him, and dealing a death-blow to such evil qualities as vanity, self-glory and self-conceitedness.

The truth is that no one can attain to salvation by his own deeds, for salvation can only be attained by the grace of God. The God in whom we believe is a most Merciful and Gracious God: He is the all-powerful and all-pervading one in whom there is no weakness or defect. He is the source of all manifestations and the fountain-head of all grace and the Creator of the whole universe and the Lord of all bounty and grace; He is the possessor of all praiseworthy moral qualities and all perfect attri-
Butes: He is the source of all light and the soul of all souls and the sustainer of everything that exists; He is nearest to everything but He cannot be said to be identical with the things themselves; He is highest of all but there is nothing that intervenes between Him and us; His person is the most hidden of all hidden things but at the same time it is the most manifest of all that exists. In Him alone can be found true bliss and true happiness, and this is the true philosophy of salvation.

With respect to this salvation the Holy Quran has taught us that its effect is witnessed in this very life, as it says: "And whoever is blind in this he shall (also) be blind in the hereafter (17:72)." In other words, it is in this life that a person gets the senses with which he can see God, and it is here that he finds access to the means whereby he can attain salvation. The Holy Quran has also repeatedly said that the means whereby a person can attain to salvation have existed from eternity as God himself is eternal, and it rejects the doctrine which represents Him as having come to the conclusion after long ages that all other means of the attainment of salvation having failed, He should give salvation to mankind by submitting Himself to death. A person can in fact be said to have attained salvation only when all his sensual passions are burned down and the will of God becomes his will, when he is so completely annihilated in the love of God that he retains no trace of his own self and knows God to be all in all and his words and deeds and movements and intentions are all for the sake of God, when he feels in his heart of hearts that all his happiness is in God only and that a separation from Him even for an
instant is death to him, when an intoxication of the
love of God overtakes him so completely
that all things that exist beside God are as naught
to him and even if the whole world should attack
him with the sword to frighten him with the
object of making him renounce the truth, he stands
as firm as a mountain, when the flame of the per-
fec t love of God is lighted within him and he hates
sin as the most detestable thing in the world, when
he loves God with a love far greater than that with
which men love their wives and children and near
relatives, when out of love for God he becomes
like a mad man and is willing to submit to every
suffering and trial on account of the intensity of his
deep and perfect love. It is when a person
reaches this stage of the love of God that all his
sensual passions are burned like chaff with the fire
of love and a mighty transformation is brought
about within him. Then he is granted a heart which
he had not before and eyes which he did not possess
already, and certainty so completely overtakes him
that he begins to see God in this very life and the
burning and restlessness for this life which are met
with in the men of world are changed into perfect
contentment and happiness and bliss. This is the
condition which is termed salvation, for in this
condition the soul falling down at the threshold of
God with burning love finds everlasting rest, and
the love of man being blended with the love of God
makes him attain that stage of annihilation which is
beyond all description. Human nature is so made
that it has love of God hidden within it and when
that love is cleansed of every kind of dross by the
purity of the soul and every tinge of darkness is
removed from it by exertions in the path of God, it becomes a mirror for the reflection of the Divine light. As when a mirror is placed opposite the sun, the light of the sun is fully reflected in it and the image of the sun is seen in it so clearly that it may be mistaken by the unaccustomed eye for the sun itself, so is the case with the looking-glass of human nature which reflects the Divine light. The Word of God also tells us that the human nature which on account of its own clearness reflects the Divine light may do so to a greater or less extent or more or less perfectly. The smaller the mirror, the smaller will be the image of the sun that is reflected in it. So it is also in the case of human nature and the image of Divine light reflected in it is greater or less according as the sphere of that nature is large or small. Again the surface of some mirrors may be more or less polished than that of others, and similar differences in human nature account for the greater or less perfection of the Divine light as it is reflected in different men.

In this connection it seems necessary to explain the true nature of what is termed Shafā'at or intercession. When an opaque body comes opposite another body which is bright, it also becomes bright. The same law is in operation in the human world. There are some bright natures in which Divine light is reflected as the light of the sun is reflected in a mirror, while other natures in which such light is not reflected directly from the source of the light may be said to be dark or opaque. Now when one of the latter comes opposite a bright nature, it is lighted by the rays that are reflected from that nature, in the same
manner as the rays of the sun reflected from a mirror would illumine the dark places on which such reflection falls. Such is the true nature of intercession. The Arabic word *Shafā‘āt* is derived from the root *Shaf‘a* which means *one of a pair or couple*, or, *one with which another is made to be a pair or couple*. Thus the two persons, the intercessor and the one for whom intercession is made, are as it were a pair or couple. Whenever a person has a close connection with another whose nature is both pure and perfect that the two are as if it were a pair, he must partake of the light with which that other is lightened.

In short, the deep philosophy underlying salvation is that those whose union with God is pure and perfect become manifestations of His eternal light, and casting themselves into the fire of His love, lose their own personality. Their case is like that of the piece of iron which being cast into fire and becoming red-hot becomes like fire though in reality it is still iron. And as the manifestations of the glory of God bring about a wonderful transformation in those who love Him, God also becomes as it were changed for them. It is true that God is the same ever and He is free from and above all changes, but He shows such wonderful deeds for the sake of those persons to whom such transformation has been wrought as if He were a new God and not the God of ordinary people of the world. For, as the righteous servants of God move towards Him with their holy deeds, their sincerity and their faithfulness so much so that their first personality becomes as it were dead, God also moves towards them with honouring and assistance
so much that He shows His help and jealousy for them in an extraordinary manner.

It is impossible and utterly at variance with the gracious and merciful nature of God that He cast into hell any of His servants who is lost in His love with his whole heart and soul and with perfect sincerity. He loves Him as he ought to love Him and knows that none is His equal. He considers everything to be naught as against Him and is ever ready and willing to annihilate himself in His path. Such a one cannot be the recipient of punishment, nay, the truth is that the perfect love of God is the true salvation. Can you intentionally throw into fire a child of yours whom you love greatly? If not, how can God who is all love cast into fire those servants of His who love Him from the depth of their hearts and whose whole being is saturated with His love. There is no sacrifice greater than this that a man should feel that there is no one for whom he entertains greater love than God who is the real beloved of all, and should for the sake of His love give up the love of his ownself and submit to a life of bitterness and suffering.

When a man has reached this stage of perfection, he has attained true salvation. He does not then stand in need of going through the course of transmigration or of having any one crucified for his sake. His salvation at this point of perfection is not an imaginary thing as in the case of ordinary man, but the love which is within him tells him at every step that the love of God is with him. Moving thus onward in the love of God, he gets peace of mind and contentment and Almighty God deals with him in the same manner as He deals with His be-
loved and chosen servants. His prayers are heard; he is instructed in subtle points of wisdom and knowledge and informed of many deep secrets relating to the unseen. Almighty God influences the affairs of the world in accordance with his wishes, grants him fame in the world with honour and acceptance, disgraces the person who does not forsake his enmity and sets himself to disgrace him, and gives him extraordinary support and assistance. He breathes love for him in the hearts of lacs of people and manifests wonderful signs through him. With heavenly inspiration, the hearts of men are attracted towards him, and they make haste to render service to him in every way. Almighty God speaks to him in sweet and majestic words as a friend speaks to a friend and the God who is hidden from the eye of the world manifests Himself to him in all His Divine glory and splendour. His word is a source of comfort to him in the deepest afflictions and is full of eloquence, sweetness and power. He answers his questions and informs him of things which are beyond the power and knowledge of man. But it is not like astrologers that He foretells certain things, but like a powerful King whose word carries awe with it. He reveals to him prophecies which foretell his triumph and success and the discomfiture of his enemies. Thus does Almighty God reveal Himself to His servant with His word and His actions. Then being cleansed of every sin he attains to the perfection for which he has been created, but in no other way can any one be freed from the bondage of sin.

How to Shun Evil

It is the most difficult thing for a man to attain
to a certainty relating to the existence of God and to have generated in his heart the strong faith that obedience to God is the source of peace and happiness in this life as well as in the next, and that going against His will is the root of all afflictions. If this conviction comes to a man, he shuns every evil, for he knows it for certain that his evil deeds are watched by God who can turn this very life into a hell for him. It is evident that everybody shuns what he knows to be certainly harmful to him. No one thrusts his hand into a hole which to his certain knowledge has a snake in it, nor does anybody devour what he knows to be a poison. To shun those harmful things he does not stand in need of any atonement, nor does he ever consider it necessary that any one should be crucified to save him from these evils. All that he requires is a certain knowledge that there is harm in the thing and this is sufficient to make him fly from it. No one ever knowingly leaps into destruction. Even the patient avoids the taking of a food which he knows would endanger his life.

Now, when we find this innate quality in human nature, the question at once arises, why does not man eschew evil and fly from sin as he flies from other harmful things? The answer is clear, because he has not as sure a conviction of the harm of sin as of the physical things mentioned above. It is, therefore, beyond the shadow of a doubt that what man needs to avoid sin is not atonement but a certain faith in the existence of God and a strong conviction that sin against Him is rank poison. With this faith and this conviction reigning supreme in
his heart, man is as sure to fly from sin as he flies from a venomous reptile.

We have thus established beyond all doubt that the daring with which sins are committed is due only to want or weakness of faith in God and His retribution. The poison of sin is devoured so frequently and so easily because of the ignorance that sin is a poison. Otherwise there is in the nature of man an innate fear of what is harmful to him. If several men are comfortably sitting under the roof of a house, one shock of earthquake would be sufficient to make them run for the doors and get into the open. All comforts are sacrificed because it is known for certain that a few moments’ shaking would bring down the roof upon their heads and end their very lives. But the sinner is not as sure of the evil that must overtake him as a consequence of his sin and this is the real cause of his recklessness in the sinful course. Those who seek false methods of salvation grow bolder in the commission of sins because false schemes cannot lead to certainty. It is only the certain knowledge of the existence of God and of the poisonous nature of sin that can save a man. But remember that certain knowledge is the one thing wanted and traditional beliefs would not avail in the least.

The question would now be asked as to how it is possible for a man to attain to this stage and to have such a strong certainty of the existence of God and His retribution, so that he may fly from the slightest disobedience to Him with the same horror as he flies from death. In answer to this question I would state that the righteous men who have passed before us bear
witness to this truth that by following the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Mohammad, with true sincerity and persevering faithfulness, the love of God is gradually instilled into the heart, growing ever deeper and deeper, and a light is granted to the soul of man by the spiritual power of the Word of God which enables the inner eye to see the wonders within and ultimately the wonders of the next life. It is then that man knows for certain that there is a God. This continues to grow stronger and stronger until the whole truth is realized. When a person believes in the Holy Quran and in the Holy Prophet, it is not at the first step that he attains the stage of the purity of soul. At first he remains steeped in many sins, then the grace of God takes him by the hand and faith is strengthened by extraordinary methods, in accordance with the promises contained in the Holy Quran which says that “for the faithful are glad tidings in this life.” Thus the believer is granted glad tidings from God concerning himself, and as they gradually strengthen his faith, he eschews sin and evil more and more and advances in virtue step by step. It is to this gradual advancement from a sinful life to a life of virtue that the Holy Quran refers when it says: “Some of them injure themselves by evil deeds; others keep the mean between good and evil; and others employ the fullness of their in doing good.” This verse mentions three classes of believers which are really three stages of the advancement of man. Those belonging to the first class are termed salim, i.e., unjust or iniquitous, that is to say, they are still involved in sins, their evil deeds outweighing their virtues.
To the second class belong those who keep the mean, that is to say, who are not yet entirely released from the bondage of sin, but who are not at the same time steeped as deep in sin as the first class and whom the power to do good is at least not less effective than the inclination to fall into sins. In the third class are the righteous men who excel in virtues and high morals.

In the earliest days of Islam, our Holy Prophet brought about a transformation in the lives of his followers which exemplifies the advancement from the lowest stage described above to the highest one. Those who believed in him were at the time of their conversion in that state of moral degeneration which marked Arabia at the advent of the Holy Prophet. They were worse than barbarians and led lives which were more beastly than human. They were so deeply involved in gross immoralities and vices that they had fallen off from the elevation of humanity, and at the same time they were so ignorant that they hardly knew their degenerate condition. They could not distinguish between good and evil. The immediate effect of the Quranic teachings and of the company of the Holy Prophet upon them was that they began to realize their moral nudity and their fallen state. Their previous state is described in the Holy Quran as like that of beasts, nay, even worse, as it say: "They are like beasts, even more astray than beasts." When they realized by the wonderful efficacy of the Quranic teachings that the life they led was steeped in deep immoralities, they began to move towards a virtuous course of life with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Hence it is that Almighty God says
of them: "He has assisted them with a spirit from Him." This spirit of God was the unseen power which strengthened their faiths and which is granted to every believer after he believes and shows perseverance. After getting this power they did not remain in the stage in which they realized their weaknesses and hated the stench of sin, but they now took an onward step in the path of virtue until they reached the middle stage in which they acquired a power to practice virtue, sufficiently strong to counteract the effect of the evil to which their weakness still some times led them. Then they advanced another step and led by the Holy Spirit they were able to conquer the tempter with their virtuous deeds. Their exertions for advancement in the path of God became harder as they saw the heights which they had to traverse, and ultimately they did those wonderful deeds, greater deeds than which it is possible for man to perform. In the path of God they did not value their lives even as chaff. Then they were accepted and Almighty God made their hearts utterly hate sin and generated in them the love of virtue. Thus He fulfilled the promise which He had given in the Holy Quran: "As to those who exert themselves in Our path, We certainly make them walk in Our paths."

In short, there are three stages through which the believer passes; the first stage being that in which the evil tendencies are predominant, in the second they are counterpoised by the virtuous inclinations in man, and in the third, virtue becomes the guiding rule of life. In the first stage, though sinfulness has the upper hand, a man is still able
to realize his fallen state; in the second he gains the power to do good but is not able to crush the demon of evil utterly; and in the third he employs the fulness of his power to do good. In this last stage his onward movement is a continuous one, and he gains such knowledge of the power, greatness and glory of God as if he had seen Him, for in this stage Almighty God Himself shows him the paths by the extraordinary workings of His spirit. The assistance of the Holy Spirit which is granted to the true believer is simply a grace from God which is bestowed upon those who believe with a true and sincere heart in the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Holy Spirit is thus the gift of God which is granted only through His grace and it is not granted as a result of any exertions. But such a gift does not come to any body who is not persevering and faithful and patient in trials. And while the Holy Spirit lights the way and prepares a man for undertaking hard exertions, these exertions make the workings of the spirit more powerful and strong. There is such a change that the strengthened spirit appears like a new spirit, but these are really only different manifestations of one and the same spirit. As God reveals Himself to His chosen servants with manifestations of glory and assistance which are not witnessed in His dealing with other men and shows wonders in their support which he does not show for others, but still He is one and the same God, thus also it is with the Holy Spirit which is one and the same, but its manifestations and workings are different in the different stages of the spiritual progress of the human soul. The greater the
faithfulness which is shown by a person, the greater are the wonders which God shows for his sake, so that heaven and earth seem to be serving his cause; and the less the sincerity, the faithfulness and the perseverance of a man, the weaker are the manifestations of Divine power that are displayed for him so that such a man ultimately meets with discomfits and failure and trials and afflictions.

Reverting to the original subject, the God in whom the Holy Quran requires us to believe is a mighty and Omnipotent God Who is possessor of all perfect powers. The person who turns to Him with a sincere heart and whose steps in His path are guided by truth and faithfulness is made unique among men even as God is unique in His Oneness, and the doors of heavenly blessings are opened upon him. As God has shown innumerable wonders of His power on earth and in the heavens, other wonders of Divine power are manifested at his hands and extraordinary signs are shown through him which are beyond the power of mortals. No one who stands in opposition to him can be triumphant over him, for Almighty God Himself becomes his tongue with which he speaks and his hands with which he does wonderful deeds in the world. He is not God or the son of God, but there is no doubt that the person who is a follower of the Holy Quran makes his love and sincerity attain to the utmost height which man can reach and becomes, so to say, a manifestation of the attributes of God. This is all the result of that mighty power and those characteristics which we witness in the word of God, the Quran. That mighty power and those characteristics are not
me with in any other book which is considered as a revealed book by any other people. It might be that these books have been tampered with or their significance has been corrupted God has taken away their blessings so that in these last days all differences may be removed and all people may take only one book for their guide. We cannot explain away in any other manner the fact that other books do not possess the characteristic which is met with in the Holy Qur'an, viz., that by following it a person becomes one of the chosen ones of God and one of those who have attained near access to Him. This is the reason that the followers of all these books deny even the existence of those excellences which a man attains to in the nearness of God, and laugh at signs and miracles. But we do not laugh at them, nay we are grieved on account of their deprivation of these Divine blessings.*

I do not mention these blessings of the Holy Qur'an on the basis of statements made by others but I state only what I have myself experienced and call attention only to the blessings which I have personally tasted. The miracles which have been wrought by me are not less than a hundred thousand and may even exceed that number. Almighty God has said in the Holy Qur'an that a true follower of it will not only believe in the miracles wrought by the Holy book, but that he himself will be granted the power to work miracles. This efficacy of the Word of God I have myself witnessed, and to me

*Extract of a paper written by Hazrat Mirza Gulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement and read on the 3rd December 1907 at a Religious Conference, held at Lahore.
have been given the miracles which cannot be wrought by any human power and are solely the work of God. The disastrous earthquakes which have upset vast tracts of land, and the plague which is cutting off human life like a scythe in a ripe field of corn, are only two of the signs which have been given to me. Long before their appearance I published in my work, the Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya, that disasters were about to overtake the country and now we are in their midst. But this is not all. Heavier disasters are yet in store for the world. New kinds of pestilence will make their appearance and they will strike terror into the hearts of the people. The plague that has already made its appearance will assume a very dangerous attitude in this country as well as other countries. A devastating earthquake would also come all of a sudden which may lay waste a particular portion of the country or affect the whole of it. If people fear God, these disasters may yet be averted, for God is the King of earth and heavens and as He can pass a decree, He can also avert the evil. But there are no signs of turning to God, for the hearts have hardened beyond all hope. Nor do I think that the foretelling of these disasters and the giving of warning beforehand will have any effect: nay, I know that my words will be laughed at or abusive epithets will be hurled at me or I shall be blamed for causing apprehension.

It must, however, be remembered that for the warding off of disasters, it is not necessary that people should accept Islam, for errors in belief shall be dealt with on the judgment day. What is
required is that they should shun the ways of evil, hold their tongues from abusing the holy prophets of God, not oppress the poor, show charity to and sympathy with their fellow-beings, not set up gods with God, not give the dignity of God to any stone, or fire, or human being, and give up every kind of mischief. If the people shun all these ways of evil and fear God, I am sure it would serve them as a safeguard against all disasters, for Almighty God has addressed me many a time saying: 

ان الله لا يغير وما يغير وما يغير وما يستغفرو ما بانفسهم

“Verily God shall not take away the evils which are distressing the world until the people bring about a transformation in their lives.”

I do not relate stories of miracles but say only what I have myself experienced: I have seen a mighty power in the Holy Quran and a wonderful efficacy in following the Holy Prophet—a power and an efficacy of which all other religions are devoid—, vis., that a true follower of them reaches the stages of the nearness of God. Not only is he favoured by God with His word, but His deeds also reveal to him that He is the God who has created the earth and heavens. His faith then attains to heights which are beyond the farthest stars. I have personal experience in this. God speaks to me and He has manifested more than a hundred thousand signs at my hands. Though I hold in respect all the prophets that have passed in the world and revere the sacred scriptures of every people, yet I look upon Islam only as the living religion, for it is through Islam that God revealed Himself to me. Any one who doubts the truth of these statements,
may stay for two months with me and he will personally witness their truth. I think only that religion is worth the name which is a living religion and which reveals God in His glory by the living and fresh manifestations of His power. Mere assertions of the truth of any religion are futile.

A Philosophical Explanation of the Doctrine of Hell

The belief in the continuity of the existence of the human soul is a universal belief, and one so deeply rooted in the very nature of man that the most powerful forces of materialism have not yet affected it in the least. Whether the deep-rootedness of this belief in human nature is due to its innateness, or whether, as an Atheist or an Agnostic would argue, it clings to the mind with the ordinary tenacity of old associations, it is a solid fact that the belief in a life after death has not lost any ground even in this civilized and materialistic age; and it is equally true that the progress of science and the application of scientific principles to all branches of learning is in favour of, rather than against, the truth of such a belief.

Starting on the basis, then, that there is a life after death for every human being, the first question of vital importance which arises in connection with this belief is as to the state of the soul in that after life. That every religion has preached that the righteous will be rewarded for their good deeds and the wicked punished for evil deeds is an undeniable fact, but even philosophically considered the question affords a similar solution. We see that most often a man reaps
even in this life the good or bad consequences of his good or evil deeds and that except in rare cases he himself is responsible for the happiness or misery which is his lot in this life. If a life after death has been ordained for the human soul, it could not have been meant but for its progress, advancement to higher and higher stages. Without this the doctrine of a life after death becomes horrible. Even in this short space of life we find the soul progressing and advancing step by step from lower to higher stages. Could an everlasting life have then been designed for the unending torments of hell? The very idea makes one shrink and turn back in horror. Such a doctrine deals a death-blow to the justice and mercy of God. No intelligent being could have made man and preserved his soul for such an end.

Most religions have fallen into a grievous error on this point, and it is only the teaching of Islam that we find conformable to reason and in consonance with Divine justice, love and mercy. There are many that talk of the love and mercy of God, but, as if God were only the God of a particular people, His love and mercy are considered not to touch any one who is outside the circle of believers in a particular set of doctrines. To such a person God cannot be said to be even just as He punishes his evils or unbelief of a few years with everlasting woes and torments. And though a tendency is witnessed in certain quarters to soften this horrible idea, the sublime truth that the human soul is ever progressing and attaining to higher and higher goals of spiritual progress and union with God which the Holy Quran alone has taught has not yet been recognized.
Even the opening chapter of the Holy Quran gives us clearly to understand that Almighty God made man not for consigning him to everlasting torments, but to make him attain to higher and higher conditions of existence and to deal with him most mercifully. It reads thus: “All praise is due to God who is the Nourisher of all the worlds, who is the most Merciful (the Ar. word Rahman used here indicating the showing of mercy by God to His creatures without their having done anything to deserve it), the most Compassionate (the Ar. word Rahim indicating that whenever a person implores His mercy or does anything to deserve it, He forthwith shows mercy), the Lord of the Day of Judgment.” The four attributes of the Divine Being mentioned in these opening verses of the Holy Quran are the basis of all His other attributes. It will be seen that all these four attributes speak of the unbounded mercy of God shown to His creatures in all the worlds, i.e., in this world as well as the next. There are numerous other verses in the Holy Quran which speak of the great mercy of God to His creatures and leave no doubt that man has not been created for being subjected to torments. But everlasting torment inflicted upon a person without any good following therefrom, as torment in generally interpreted to be, is opposed to the Divine attribute of mercy as the Holy Quran depicts it.

It is true that the Holy Quran mentions hell as the abode of the evil-doers and even depicts its horrors, but it must be borne in mind that according to the Holy Quran both heaven and hell are places for the perpetual advancement of man to
higher and higher stages. The Holy Quran says on one occasion: “Verily you shall all be surely transferred from state to state” (lxxxiv: 19). The whole mankind is addressed in these words and accordingly as those in paradise shall make perpetual advancement, those in hell will not be suffering fruitless torments. On the other hand, the torments of hell will be the means of purging them of the evil effects of their deeds done in this life. This is the only philosophical explanation of hell, and this explanation has been given by no other book but the Holy Quran. It is the Quran only which teaches that heaven and hell grow out of a man, that a heavenly or a hellish life begins in this world and that the spiritual fruits of good or evil deeds done in this life assume a manifest form in the next. The fire of hell is no other than the fire of sins as the Holy Quran says: نار الله الموقدة التي تطمئن على الألثمة “The fire of the wrath of God burned on account of sins which rises above the hearts.” The origin of the fire of hell is, therefore, in the sins which a man commits in this life, and it is thus with his own hands and in this very life that he prepares a hell in which he will find himself in the next.

The Holy Quran, as I have already said, does not teach that those in hell shall suffer everlasting torments, and this is an important consideration which conclusively settles the question that hell is meant for the advancement of man and for his purification. There is no doubt that the abiding of evil-doers in hell is mentioned in some verses of the Holy Quran to be for abad which some times means prospective eternity, but abad also signifies
a long time. Hence we have such phrases as 'كان هذا في إياء اليوم' which means: "This was a long time ago" (see Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon). But there are numerous passages in the Holy Quran showing that those in hell shall ultimately be taken out. Thus in vii: 129, we read:

"God said, Verily the fire is your resort to dwell therein unless thy Lord will it otherwise, verily, thy Lord is Wise and Knowing." On another occasion, those in hell are spoken of as "staying therein for years" (lxviii: 23). The original word is (إحقاب) أحقاب which is the plural of حقب huqub, meaning a year or years, or seventy or eighty years, or a long time (see Lane's Lexicon). The statement that the evil-doers will abide in hell only for a limited number of years shows clearly that according to the Holy Quran the torments of hell are not everlasting, for infinite time cannot be measured by a finite number of years. Again in ci: 6, the hell is called a "mother" of those who shall go into it. The use of this word is, I think, the clearest evidence as to the true nature of hell as described in the Holy Quran. What is meant is that as a child is brought up by the mother, so those in hell will be brought up in that place for a new life, the life of perpetual advancement in paradise.

It is true that the Holy Quran also speaks of hell as a place of torment or tortures, but these torments according to the Holy Book are remedial. Just as a patient has to devour bitter medicines and to undergo operations and amputations which are most painful, but which are undoubtedly the
only steps which can restore him to health, so also it is with the torments of hell which are not only the natural consequences of the poison of sins, but are at the same time the most necessary steps to undo the effect of the poison and to breathe into a person a new life in which he must go on making unending progress. Thus hell is also a manifestation of the mercy of God though of a different kind from heaven. The one is a place for restoring health to those who have destroyed it by their own actions in this life, while the other is a place for the advancement of those who enter into the other life with their spiritual faculties unvitiated. In fact, so clear is the teaching of the Holy Quran on this point that none but a most superficial reader of it could overlook it. Again and again the Holy Quran speaks of the workers of iniquity as blind, deaf, dumb, dead, meaning of course, that they themselves have wasted their spiritual faculties, and accordingly before they can make any spiritual advancement in the attainment of that highest goal of the human soul, the union with God, they must be subjected to the operations which should restore the action of those faculties. In clearer words still, the Holy Quran tells us that “those who are blind in this life shall find themselves blind in the next,” which means that as they did not make use of the opportunities which were given them in his life to use their spiritual faculties, they will find themselves devoid of these faculties in the next, and will palpably feel the pain and anguish which is the necessary result of their loss and which they are unable to feel in this life on account of their engrossment in the things of this world. But the mercy of God will soon take
them by the hand and they will, after passing through all the stages through which it is necessary to pass to regain the use of the lost faculties, attain the real object of their lives. They will be purged of all uncleanness, for this is necessary to attain to a perfect union with the Divine Being which is the source of all purity.

There are many sayings of the Holy Prophet and his companions which clearly show the truth of what I have said above. In the Holy Quran it is written that “Almighty God has made it obligatory upon Himself to show mercy to His creatures,” and there is a tradition of the Holy Prophet according to which Divine mercy is not displayed only in this world as we find it so abundantly manifested, but far greater mercy will be displayed in the next, and the fact is that if this had not been the case the showing of mercy in this life would have been futile. The tradition to which I have here referred, says: “The Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said that God displayed only a hundredth part of His mercy in this world and it is only this hundredth part whose manifestation is witnessed in all the creatures in this world, and that the other ninety nine parts of His mercy will be displayed in the next life.” According to this saying the love and mercy of which we witness countless manifestations in this life, and in which is included not only the mercy of God which He shows to his creatures but also the mercy and love which is displayed in His unlimited creation, is only a hundredth part of the Divine mercy, and the perfect manifestation of His love and mercy will be witnessed only in the next life.
There is another tradition which is met with in the most reliable collections of tradition according to which God will ultimately take all those out of fire who have done nothing to deserve deliverance therefrom. The concluding portion of this tradition runs: "Then will God say, the Angels and the Prophet and the faithful have all in their turn interceded for the sinners, and now there remains none to intercede for them except the most Merciful of all merciful beings. So he will take out a handful from fire and bring out a people who never worked any good." According to this tradition all those who did any good deed in this life, however slight it might be and however preponderating might be the evil which they did, will be taken out of fire upon the intercession of the Angels and the Prophets and the faithful, and there will then remain a people in it who never did any deed of goodness. These will be taken out of fire only through the mercy of the most Merciful. It should not be thought that a handful is too small a thing or that even after taking it out there might still be many dwellers in hell, for a handful of God could not leave out anybody. In the Holy Quran it is said that "the whole earth is a mere handful of God on the day of Judgment." It is also clear that since according to the tradition the people who are thus taken out are not taken out because of any good that might have served in them as a seed for a growth of immortal life, but only because the most Merciful will desire to show the full manifestation of His transcendent mercy, therefore it could not be in consonance with Divine mercy that one part should have been chosen for its
manifestation while the other part should have been left without any mercy being shown to them.

There are many other traditions from which it appears that ultimately even those will be taken out of hell who never did any good deed, while there are certain sayings of the Holy Prophet and his companions according to which hell would ultimately be emptied of all those who are in it. Some of these traditions are met with in the Kanzul Ummál, and the following two would be sufficient for our purpose: "Verily a day would come over hell when it will be like a field of corn that has dried up after flourishing for a while" (vol. vii, page 245); "Verily a day would come over hell when there shall not be a single human being in it" (vol. vii, page 245). There is a saying of Omar on record (vide Tafsir Fathul Bayan, the Fath-ul-Bori, Durr-i-Mansûr and the Hâdid Arwâh of Ibn-i-Qayyûm) which runs thus: "Even if the dwellers in hell may be numberless as the sand of the desert, surely a day would come when they will be taken out of it." A saying of Ibn-i-Masood is reported in connection with comment upon a verse of the Holy Quran which has already been quoted according to which "a time would come upon hell when there shall not be a single person in it and this will be after they have dwelt therein for ahdâb" (years referring to the verse containing the italicized word as quoted already). There are many other sayings to the same effect, but I think that the quotations already given will suffice to show the reader that Islam rejects the doctrine of everlasting torments in hell.
But even when all this has been said, there remains an important question which has no doubt troubled many a mind. Does not the Holy Quran like the scriptures of other religions promise salvation and paradise to those who believe in it, and does it not consign to hell all those who do not believe in it? In other words, does it not unduly narrow the sphere of salvation by limiting it at first to those who express a belief in it, and unduly widen it again by extending it to all believers whether they have actually done anything to deserve it or not? In order to answer these questions we would first explain the attitude of Islam to other religions and then show what is meant by salvation. These two considerations would show the reader the Quranic attitude towards the "unsaved." Of all religions of the world Islam is pre-eminently the one religion which assumes a most tolerant attitude towards other religions and a most respectful one towards the founders of those religions and the great leaders of humanity. Its teaching on this point may be briefly summarized as follows. The one and the chief object of the creation of man is that he should attain a perfect union with God, and to make him attain this object Almighty God has been raising prophets in all countries and in all ages who pointed out the right way to their followers. But after a certain time the teachings of the prophets were neglected or perverted by their followers and other prophets were raised to again point out the right way. According to this teaching whenever a prophet is raised by Almighty God, true salvation can only be attained by following him, because it is through
him that Almighty God is pleased to reveal Himself at that time. Islam does not, therefore, arbitrarily narrow the sphere of salvation by making it attainable by believers in a particular book, but it bases it on the sound principle that the way to salvation is pointed out by every prophet of God and that it is by following that way that salvation can be attained. The Holy Prophet Muhammad was raised at a time when corruptions and errors had found their way into the systems founded by all the previous prophets, and hence it is through him only that salvation which is another name for union with God can be attained. Those who do not attain to this union in this world, which is a preparatory world for the next, must pass through another stage which is represented in Islam as the punishment of hell.

This is the explanation which the Holy Quran gives as to the necessity of hell in after-life and this is the reason why all those who do not follow the Holy Prophet of Islam are spoken of as having their abode there. As regards the second question, whether all those who have accepted Islam will be saved unconditionally, it must be emphatically stated that the Holy Quran does not teach any such doctrine. It says clearly that only belief in God or the Holy Prophet or the Holy Quran would not avail any person unless he does the righteous deeds which the Quran states to be necessary for attainment to union with God. Right belief is according to the Holy Quran the seed which if properly nourished by righteous deeds will bring fruit, but faith alone is not sufficient to make a
man attain to union with God. Such union, on the other hand, is considered a very hard task and it is expressly said that there are very few who attain to such union in this life.