

(In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful)

A RUNNING COMMENTARY
ON
THE HOLY QUR-AN

BY

AL-HAJJ KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN

FOUNDER OF
THE WOKING MUSLIM MISSION
ENGLAND.

www.aail.org

PUBLISHED BY
The Woking Muslim Mission & Literary Trust,
The Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, Surrey,
ENGLAND.

Published by :

Khwaja Abdul Ghani

Secretary The Working Muslim Mission & Literary Trust,
Azeez Manzil, Brandreth Road, Lahore.

Printed by :

Sh. Mohammad Ahmad
at the Northern Army Press,
65, Railway Road, Lahore.

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---------|---------|
| Preface | ...i—iv |

CHAPTER I

| | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| The Opening (Al-Fatihah) | ... 1 |
|--------------------------|-------|

CHAPTER II

| | | |
|------------|---|---------|
| Section 1. | Fundamental Principles of Islam | ... 17 |
| „ 2. | Lip-Profession | ... 19 |
| „ 3. | Divine Unity | ... 23 |
| „ 4. | Man's Vast Capabilities | ... 26 |
| „ 5. | Fulfilment of Israelite Prophecies in the Holy Qur-án | ... 35 |
| „ 6. | Divine Favours on Israel and their Stubbornness | ... 38 |
| „ 7. | Divine Favours on Israel and their Stubbornness (<i>Continued</i>) | ... 45 |
| „ 8. | Israelites' Degeneration | ... 48 |
| „ 9. | They Grow in Hard-heartedness | ... 53 |
| „ 10. | Their Covenant and its Violation | ... 62 |
| „ 11. | Their Rejection of the Prophet | ... 64 |
| „ 12. | Their Enmity towards the Prophet | ... 77 |
| „ 13. | Former Scriptures are abrogated | ... 85 |
| „ 14. | Perfect Guidance is only in Islam | ... 94 |
| „ 15. | Covenant with Abraham | ... 99 |
| „ 16. | The Religion of Abraham | ... 134 |

PREFACE

Every age evolves a process of thinking peculiar to itself. Even different nations living in the same age differ in this respect. For instance in Urdu and some other Indian languages the verb follows the object, whereas in English the object follows the verb. An Indian would seem to be more anxious about the object of an act, whereas an Englishman appears to be more particular about the act itself. This seems to be the only explanation of the respective sequences of the parts of speech in the two languages. As in the construction of sentences so in the construction of a form of reasoning. The process varies from age to age even in the same nation. When people's minds are more or less simple and primitive, every step in the syllogistic process and every turning point of reasoning has to be clearly stated. But in societies intellectually advanced, one or more steps can be conveniently dropped for the sake of brevity and in the interest of art. In this respect our present generation of authors will be found to differ from the writers even of a generation ago.

The Holy Qur-án's process of reasoning approaches very nearly the one current in our times. It has many things to say and many suggestions to make. It could not afford to indulge in too many conjunctions and parantheses. The readers were expected to bring their own imagination to aid. The scattered pieces of moral precepts, social regulations and spiritual instructions

could be picked up even by the novice but to follow the whole logic of its narration needs a little effort. And it is within recent times that such efforts have been made for public benefit and with a view to bringing the Quranic process of reasoning within the easy grasp of modern man's understanding. The present book is one of those attempts inspired by the missionary zeal of the pioneer Muslim Missionary of this age.

Lack of understanding in this respect has made the Qur-án appear a dry reading for many who living in an age of science and logic are more keen about the manner of putting a thing than about what is presented. If a reader reads even just one part of the Qur-án with the author he will be familiar with the Qur-án's way of putting things and will be able to find his way after that through the whole text of the Book. Like a man who comes suddenly from the glaring light of the sun to a closed room, he will only gradually begin to see the system of the Quranic thought. The logic is there but not in a glaring form. It has to be discovered with a slight effort. The present volume will inspire its readers to make this effort. A widening circle of enthusiastic readers of the Qur-án through this book will we are sure give immense joy to the soul of the author in heaven. He conceived the idea of this commentary during his South African tour in the year 1926. He undertook the task on his return to India in the year 1928. But the attack of Tuberculosis came simultaneously and his failing health would not allow him to proceed with the work in English. He therefore hurried on with Urdu as the vehicle of expression.

Much of what is being presented to the reader in these pages is translated from his Urdu MSS.

In presenting the Qur-án to the world, in the language and logic of modern times, the author, as he himself says in one of his dissertations on this subject, had three needs of the time particularly in view.

He noted with interest the rise of Modernism in Christianity. The enlightened Christian mind could no longer swallow the antiquated and superstitious views of religion as handed down by mediaeval Christianity.

It wanted a rational creed while retaining its faith in the mission of Jesus Christ. The present commentary intends to emphasise such teachings of the Qur-án as will help these new and earnest seekers to find what they are after. Again the people of science having generally recognised the existence of God are still reluctant to believe in the necessity of a religious code of life. Their experience leads them to a view of religion which is baffled by the religious doctrines and practices current in the West. It has been one of the chief aims of this commentary to underline, in passing, all such ideas and suggestions in the Qur-án as will enable these wanderers to recognise a course they can unhesitatingly adopt as their own. And lastly there are Muslims themselves, who while believing in the Qur-án as the infallible way to all-round salvation, are somewhat confused in the existing welter of new and strange ways of thinking. They will be relieved and reassured to find that long intellectual meanderings of the energetic races of the West have brought them with-

out their knowing to the threshold of the principles of life which belong to the religion of Islam. The present book undertakes to clarify the position of Islam in relation to the perplexing ideologies of the West. The knowledge that the West after a painful and difficult intellectual journey finds itself almost at the doors of Islam will undoubtedly give our Muslim brethren a fresh moral vigour and spiritual strength to fight their way out of the prevailing chaos, and to help the reconstruction of the world on foundations that will endure and ensure real happiness and progress to humanity.

In conclusion we can only pray to the Almighty Allah to accept this humble effort from us in the dissemination of His holy word.

Azeez Manzil,
Brandreth Road,
LAHORE. (Pb. India.)

AFTAB-UD-DIN AHMAD,

EDITOR,

The Islamic Review.

A
RUNNING COMMENTARY
ON
THE HOLY QUR-AN

PART I
CHAPTER I
THE OPENING
(AL-FATIHAH)

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All submission (praise and thanksgiving) is for *Allah*—the Creator and Maintainer of the world; the Beneficent (in giving free gifts); the Most Merciful (in giving manifold rewards for every good action). The Owner of the time of requital. Thee do we serve and to Thee do we look for help (as the last resort). Guide us on the right path—the path of those who are blessed: not of those who have invited Thy wrath, and the misled.

What a wonderful piece of literary composition! What a miracle in language! Seven short verses only, but comprehensive enough to include the whole of the Qur-án, and called, for this reason, the Mother of the Book; few words, but each word equivalent to a volume, pregnant with truths to serve as our surest guides on all planes—physical, social, economical, intellectual, moral and spiritual.

At the very outset it speaks of *Allah*, the Name given to God by the Arabs, together with four other

Attributive Names which lead us to a belief in the existence of the Deity, based on intelligence and reason ; referring indeed even to quite recent discoveries of science which distinctly tend to promote such belief. These Names not only do away with all those Attributes of Divinity current in other religions, Attributes which are repugnant to reason and intelligence, but make of *Allah* our Guide and Model in the pursuits of everyday life. It is clear that if Some One is the Author of this beautiful and beneficent universe He is the One who should be followed by us in every way. In short, the chapter is a summary of the whole Qur-án. It gives us a code of life, a code wide enough to bring within its purview all that is necessary for human thought and action in the way of advancement. It presents a religious creed to which no one who has studied Nature and its phenomenon with care and observation can take exception ! To whatever creed or class we may belong, we need a code of life, and such a code, in its most perfect form, will be found in these verses.

Humanity could not make even the semblance of progress while it believed that the universe was a hap-hazard product, the result of mere chance. To-day we realize that the world was designed for our use and benefit, and it is our belief in such a design that urges us to research in its various avenues. But the very idea of design leads us to believe in the existence of a Designer, and next, in the fixed nature of the ways which He has adopted in working out His scheme. This would facilitate our task of research. The Qur-án has, when it is a case of essential verities, never left us

to the mercy of hypothesis or surmises, but gives cogent reasons to establish the validity of each. It comes, therefore, with strong arguments for the existence of the Designer, but shows us also that it is to our own interest to cultivate a belief in the Deity. The history of progress begins with our acceptance of the fact that there exist laws ruling everything in Nature. It is for us to discover these laws and through them achieve wonders in the way of progress. The very idea of law creates belief in the Law-Giver, and so, we cannot make any progress unless we believe in the existence of the Supreme Being.

The world has never been free from atheism. It is more the wrong conception of Divine Attributes than the existence of the Lord itself that gives birth to scepticism. We are asked to hold beliefs by some persuasions, the very acceptance of which is an insult to our intelligence, otherwise no one can take exception to the First Intelligent Cause who decidedly works in the universe all around. Nature exhibits some morals that appear to belong to an Intelligent Being ; we must look to the observance of these laws in the Universe, particularly those affecting our creation and sustenance. We would willingly follow them if they constitute a religion just as we follow the will of a person, out of gratitude, if we are under his obligation in some way. The Qur-án came with this Gospel, and it therefore serves as a real consolation to the secular church.

It, however, may be rightly asked that how can we follow in the ways of the Lord when we do not believe in His existence. Though Science in its initial stages

created an atheistic bent of mind, it has now taken a new turn. It is more an advocate of Divine existence than otherwise. The world has never been free from atheism, and though it had existed from all time, yet no sacred Book, until the coming of Islam, had tried to refute it. Buddhist literature makes no mention of the Deity. Other books, though devoted to Him, give no reasons to prove His existence. Therefore in these circumstances it was natural that scientific mind should have sown the seeds of atheism. It came to its full growth in the first half of the last century, but received a severe check when it became known that scientific research had begun to discover certain laws at work in nature. It was also observed that though these were apparently at conflict, yet, as often as not, they all served the one end. "Monism" was the name that was given to the phenomenon of harmony in the working of this heterogeneous mass. Further exploration revealed in nature Intellect, Power, Rule and Design, and ultimately the evolutionary principles at work in the Universe. This led men to believe in the existence of One Great Mind working behind the scene Who furthered the great Scheme. Thus the idea of God became established but in a most hazy manner, inasmuch as some were found to contend that these things could just as well be the inherent qualities of matter exhibiting themselves in the course of its development without the agency of any Mind. The Qur-án, however, dealt with the subject from an angle which made it impossible for any sceptic to honestly disbelieve in the Mind. The Book did not only lay down logical

premises and then deduce inferences wherewith to preach Divinity, since this method, scholarly and precise as it might be, would not suit every type of intellect ; but it also spoke directly of God and referred to such phenomenon in nature as were too apparent to leave any doubt concerning Him. The Book adopted various ways of achieving this purpose, but I would speak here only of such things out of many, which also comprehend the above-mentioned verities as discovered by Science.

The Rule of Law obtaining in the world is repeatedly alluded to in the Book, and has been described in the clearest terms as a work of God. "Everything in heaven and in earth," the Book says, "submits to Him voluntarily and involuntarily."¹ No one can fail to observe that things in Nature are, as it were, bound to pursue a course prescribed for them by Some One Who has been styled *Allah* in the Qur-án. By way of illustration it refers to the mightiest things and every other luminary moving in the ethereal firmament as being bound with the chains of Law² as being unable to swerve an inch from the orbit of revolution allotted to them. Though moving very near to each other, they never come in each other's way. This, the Book says, is under the decree of the Lord Who is All-Mighty and All-Knowledge.³ The Book also defines the time when this Rule began. No sooner were the things necessary for their further development created, than the Law was at once ordained to guide them.⁴

1 The Holy Qur-án 3 : 82.

2 *Ibid* 36 : 38.

3 *Ibid* 36 : 38.

4 *Ibid* 25 : 1.

Evolution.—The Holy Qur-án, as I observed elsewhere, is the first book that draws our attention to the principle of Evolution at work in the creation of all things. There was nothing haphazard about it, any question of things coming into existence suddenly of their own accord, as it were, hardly arises. There was first a design; then arrangement of original things before their combination; next, they were put in the course which they had to follow through several stages of development till they reached the final goal. The Book also spoke of the various faculties reposed in the original ingredients, which were disclosed gradually in the course of Evolution. It established the working of a ground scheme under the ever-vigilant eye of its Maker, through thousands of years in some cases, in order to bring things to their final fruition. The Holy Book ascribed all this to the One Great God.¹

Monism.—The discovery of Monism had to wait for some fifty years before the idea of God dawned on men of science. It was the discovery of the mind working in Nature which, together with belief in Monism, established Monotheism. But the Qur-án spoke, at the same time, of the Great Designer, wherever it referred to Monism; which was declared to be a part of the scheme. The Book, for instance, announces that all that is in the heaven and the earth is subservient to man.² From the mightiest Sun³ down to the insignificant atom, everything is created to serve one main object: the service of man. How could this grand purpose be attained if there were more than one

¹ The Holy Qur-án 20 : 52 ; 80 : 19 ; 27-32.

² *Ibid* 45 : 15.

³ *Ibid* 14 : 23—33.

hand to work it out? Not even the imagination of all the poets could depict or suggest harmony in the ancient deities. The divinities in Greek or Indian mythology had always some apple of discord to set them by the ears. Again, the Book refers to various other phenomena in Nature that work apart from each other in different spheres which nevertheless converge to the same one end—the service of man. In chapter 2, verse 146, it cites the coming of the rain, which helps us in the production of crops, and traces its origin from the very beginning when the heavens and the earth were created. The latter was made to stand on its axis at a certain angle, and this caused the alternation of day and night. From the torrid regions of the Earth water evaporated upwards, and when cold winds came to occupy the vacuum thus made, the vapours became condensed into clouds which were spread about by the blowing of the winds. These clouds came in the form of rain to fertilize the earth everywhere. The same blowing of winds, on the other hand, helped the navigation on the sea, which, too, produced its treasures for our profit. Thus we find several laws working in spheres far distant from each other to achieve these results. The laws often conflict in their functions, but for all that they are tending to the same end. This is the conclusion as stated in verse 163: “Your God is one God—the Beneficent and the Merciful.” Thus Monism and oneness of design which should be spoken of as it were in one breath, establish Monotheism in unassailable manner.

The Book refers to complementary and supple-

mentary relations existing between things in Nature, and makes mention of the purposes for which they have been created ; their propriety, fitness and the perfection of their fashioning. These four features may be possessed by matter, but it cannot display them unless it comes under the operation of the Mind. Qur-án always speaks of them as instruments to work out some deliberate design. Let me refer to water again in this regard. By means of water our nourishment comes from Heaven, and that nourishment is one of its chief purposes. It travels thousands of miles towards a new sphere of action—the Earth which is ready to receive it in the most proper manner for the purpose. How can an inanimate thing become complementary to another thing from which it is far apart, while that other thing supplements the latter's shortcomings in producing the harvest, unless some mind intends that this should be so. The water comes in a most appropriate form, not in a huge volume, as in the case of floods when it would wash the Earth of all seeds and gravel which is so necessary for cultivation, but gently dropping, since moisture is the chief requisite for growth of verdure, and water cannot moisten clay unless it comes in the form of drops which trickle down gently in its recesses, and the Earth, on the other hand, cannot retain the moisture if its volume be ponderous.

Perfection.—Perfection is observable everywhere. Everything in Nature is free from defect and flaw ; and contains nothing which is evil. Even man with all his inordinacy was born with a sinless nature. Nevertheless, perfection in things is mere chance. It is something

designed. Had things reached their final stage as a direct growth from their origin, one might perhaps think otherwise, but a most complicated process is to be observed in Nature before things attain perfection. No sooner do incipient specks emanate than they come under a long series of collocations specializing new ingredients at each stage of their journey to the goal. Innumerable things are blended together to secure perfection. It has already been shown that ingredients cannot combine with each other unless they come under the control of a Mind. The phenomenon presents a very Mighty and Wise Law extending to the limits of the Universe, which knows not only the whereabouts of the original ingredients, but also wields power over them to bring them to the required place so that they may mix with other ingredients. They combine in prescribed proportion and follow a given course. If such things may be taken as an index of the Mind of their Maker, He must be pure of evil and imperfection, and possess all that is good. Science tells us the same regarding the course which things pursue in order to become perfect. The Holy Book refers to these prominent features in the following verses :

Whatever is in the heaven and whatever is in the earth declares the *Tasbih* (glorification) of *Allah*, the King, the Pure, the Mighty, the Wise.¹

We also read the same in 59 : 1—24 and 51 : 1. On another occasion the Book says :

Whatever is in the heaven and whatever is in the earth

¹ The Holy Qur-án 62 : 1.

declares the *Tasbsh* (glorification) of *Allah* ; to Him belongsthe Kingdom and to Him is due all *Hamd* (praise) and He has pwer over all things.

The current translation of *Tasbih* and *Hamd* “ glorification ” and “ praise ” is not adequate, as the English words do not convey the real significance of the words. *Tasbih* means to declare that *Allah* is free from all evil and error ; *Hamd* that He possesses all that is good. No one can deny the truth of these verses as Science will confirm it word by word. They are sufficient to prove the working of the Mind on matter in creating the cosmos. The Book also refers to four other functions of the Mind observable in the creation of everything. They are *Takhliq*, *Taswiyah*, *Taqdir* and *Hidayat*, which again cannot adequately be rendered into English. I will, therefore, explain them. *Takhliq* is the infinitive of *Khalq* which generally means creation. But it signifies three other different functions, namely, the shaping, the combining and fixing the proportions into which incipient things have to combine in order to create new things. In other words, the work of creation synchronizes with these three things, though they, in a way, precede creation. Combination is the first thing in origination, when shape and proportion are designed. It creates something which in its turn combines with other created things. So the process of combination and creation continues until things take their designed shape at their final development on the earth. Combination is the first process in creation, coming, as it does, immediately after Emanation. But matter itself cannot combine unless it comes under the operation of

some Mind. Electricity, for instance, is created when a metal combines with an acid. Both the elements are in our possession, but they themselves cannot mix with each other unless we combine them for the purpose. How can electricity come into existence in the clouds if there is no Mind to combine the elements in the upper regions? Similarly, hydrogen and oxygen combined become water. We have got them both here, but they never combine with each other. How wonderful of the Qur-án to refer to the very action of *Khalq*, *i.e.*, combination when speaking of the existence of God.

Taswiyah means the reposing of the various faculties in the ingredients of things which disclose them in the various stages of evolution through which they pass before their final development. *Taqdir* is the prescribing of laws which rule creation in the various stages.

Hidayat means guidance to things for observing the proportion in which they have to mix and the way they have to pursue in the evolutionary course from the beginning to the end. These four functions clearly prove the existence of Mind. They work in Nature. They cannot be the qualities of Matter. In short, the said four Names act as the best guide in building up life, so that it may excel physically, morally and spiritually.

Allah.—The word *Allah* is very eloquent in the whole religious literature of the world. The word has, from the very beginning, been used by the Arabs as a proper name signifying the Deity. Even in the Days of Ignorance, when they practised the worst type of

polytheism, the Arabs never applied this sacred Name to any other object of adoration. They worshipped different gods from time to time, but always reserved the name of *Allah* for the One, whom they regarded as a Spirit, presiding, as it were, over the Arab pantheon. In this respect the holy word differs from all like words in any other language that stand for God. They may be used as common names to be applied to God as well as to things, or persons other than God. For instance, *God* in English, *Khudawand* in Persian, *Sahibji* in Panjabi, *Phia* in Burmese, etc., etc., are often used for God, but they also denote various objects of adoration, as well as men of rank and position, but *Allah* is a species of proper name. It may be taken as meaningless in itself, as some grammarians hold, but like other proper names, it possesses certain Attributes. These verses speak of four, but their significance brings within their scope the other 96 Attributes given in the Qur-án. It should not, however, be forgotten that this sacred list in the Qur-án is in no sense exhaustive. The Lord possesses many other qualities that stand far beyond number and imagination. These hundred Names are such as can be read in the pages of Nature. We can perceive them and, to a certain extent, imitate them. In this sense we have been spoken of as protoypes of God and we have been asked to assume His colours and imbue ourselves with the Divine character, otherwise even the working of these Qur-ánic Names baffles our ingenuity. Take an instance. *Al-Musawwir*, The Fashioner, is one of His Attributes. We also fashion things in our small way,

but can we understand, even dimly, His workmanship in fashioning the various things in their embryonic condition ?

My surprise knows no bounds when I think of the Divine Economy in the selection of these Names for our contemplation. Not only do they serve the purpose of theology, but they are comprehensive enough to bring within their scope all that is needed to guide us through all conceivable avenues of human activity, and perfect our civilization. They are our guide in mundane affairs, in ethics, in economics, in morals and in spiritualities.

Whatever branch of life we may enter upon, we find in these Names the surest of guidance. We may entertain any belief or belong to any persuasion we cannot dispense with good character and actions. We therefore must receive from the Muslim formula of faith our inspiration for them. We must keep *Allah*—God in the Qur-án—always before our eyes. We should remember His Attributes as given in the Qur-án through our actions. For this reason we find hardly any page in the Book that does not make mention of the Lord.

There is, however, another reason for it. We have been declared in the Qur-án as the Vice gerent of God on the earth. Nature discloses the best of civilization. If it is the work of God we can as well command the highest progress if we represent Him in a proper manner. But how can we do so unless we appear in His colours ? The Holy Book, therefore, declares it to

be our religion. This also explains why the Book insists upon our belief in the Oneness of God. We cannot serve two masters nor act as lieutenant of the two Rulers. Besides, if the perfection of our character lies in our imitation of God's Attributes, how can we afford to be polytheist? We, no doubt, have passed the days of ignorance when we used to bow down before such effigies as we made with our own hands but the worst type of polytheism according to Qur-ánic teachings lies in obeying our low behests. They lead us to do what is contrary to the requirements of these Excellent Names. How can we win favour with the Lord with such tendencies? If Divine forgiveness depends on our repentance from misdeeds—the fruits of polytheism as explained here—there, then, its follower cannot claim it. The Book asks us to approach our Lord through these Names, which means that we cannot obtain any audience with Him if our actions deviate from the requirements of the Names. But in doing so, we shall be doing all that is needed to perfect our progress. What a wonderful arduous task has the Book come to perform? It comes to give us a religion, but it makes our progress to be our religion. It asks us to worship God, but it proposes that we would adore Him by following such of His Names as will perfect our civilization. Let the Moralists on one side and the people of culture and progress on the other contemplate on these Qur-ánic Names, and see if they can find a better code of life.

The Book properly calls these Attributes Excellent

Names, thus negating the association of God with any form of evil. It is a blasphemy even to imagine that 'God' is the author of evil. Evil is born when we abuse a thing which is meant for good. Evil is the misapplication of things that are really good. Similarly every Attribute that the Holy Book ascribes to God, can create evil if misused. For instance, we read of God as the Possessor of love. But love has got its wicked side too, if we yield to the dictates of lust. God is Merciful. But mercy becomes murder, in the words of Shakespeare, when we forgive those who kill others. He is the All-Giver. But His blessings will create laziness and sloth, if they are showered undeservedly, and the same may be said concerning other Attributes. It reminds me of Nietzsche's Superman. According to him he who subjects others to his will and knows how to make others do what he wants, is the Superman. The conception is perhaps a beautiful one, but it suggests the idea of arrogance and self-will. A person may have a wrong angle of vision and so cause immense harm to society. Moreover, the philosopher's definition of 'Superman' is not exhaustive. We require other things to perfect our character. We find two Names in the Qur-ánic list of Divine Attributes which satisfy the best aspects of the Superman theory. They are *Al-Qahhár*¹ and *Al-Jabbár*.² Both the words have the

¹ The Holy Qur-án 7 : 39 ; 13 : 16 ; 36 : 85 ; 39 : 4.

² *Ibid* 59 : 23.

same meaning but, with different shades. The Attributes signify a person who can bring others to subjection and compel them to do what he wishes. But it *must be for the good of the persons so compelled, which idea is wanting in the Superman conception.* But these are only two Attributes of the Qur-ánic Superman. There are 98 others. Islam has taken another precaution in the use of these Names. The prefix *Al* is always used before them in Muslim literature. *Al*, of course, is the definite article in Arabic, but in the case of the Attributes it suggests that they are to be taken in the best form.

CHAPTER II

Section I

Fundamental Principles of Islam

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. I am Allah, the best Knower.
2. This book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who guard (against evil),
3. Those who believe in the unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them;
4. And who believe in that which has been revealed to you and that which was revealed before you, and they are sure of the hereafter.
5. These are on a right course from their Lord, and these it is that shall be successful.
6. Surely those who disbelieve, it being alike to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, will not believe.
7. Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearings, and there is a covering over their eyes, and there is a great chastisement for them.

The two concluding verses of the first section speak of the second class called in the Qur-án "anger-ridden" people, or those who have incurred the wrath of God. While the first class will succeed in life, the second will never strike the right road to happiness, for which reason the two classes have been mentioned together 111

this section. The wrath of God does not take the form of anything resembling vengeance. God's guidance like the rain comes to everyone, everywhere. But if a person does not make any effort to benefit by it, God will not send any rain for him. Similarly, He withholds His further guidance from those who do not take the trouble to profit by it at first, and this has been termed in the Qur-án His anger. Moreover, such people usually evince this condition of mind from pride and conceit which, in reality, represent the worst forms of anger, wherefore they have been called "anger-ridden" people. It is their own anger that invites the Divine wrath. The same is true of Divine punishment. The bitter results of our misdoings are in themselves painful besides being disastrous to our welfare, but they are also the only punishment administered by the Lord. It should be remembered that hell is only a reformatory and not a place for an extra dose of corporal punishment for the sinner. In these verses the "anger-ridden" people have been defined in a most comprehensive way. "Those who, it being alike whether you warn them or do not warn them, will not believe," are the Qur-ánic words in which such people have been spoken of. Words of advice, with them, fall on deaf ears. They would not heed any warning, they are blind to all that is good. This kind of mentality must entail evil consequences under the Divine laws of causation which never fail. The Book could not have used more emphatic language to show the certainty of this than by saying that the consequences of all evil actions are from God. But it is only a corollary of the said law

and the outcome of our own deeds, otherwise there is no Predestination. If our hearts become sealed against all good things, as the Qur-án says, it is not because we were born with such disposition. Callousness springs from our own obstinacy, we become careless of warning, and commit sin after sin. A sort of stubbornness is produced in our mind under the law of causation. The Book speaks of it in many places, but the action of the Lord in sealing man's heart against good invariably follows a long series of evil committed by him. This, in fact, is a punishment from the Lord, but in consequence of human action, the Book in ch. 4, v. 155, for instance, says that "Allah set a seal upon them owing to their unbelief." These words conclude the verse they are in, but they follow verses 153—155 which make mention of certain Jewish iniquities.

Section II

Lip-Profession

8. And there are some people who say : We believe in Allah and the last day ; and they are not at all believers.
9. They desire to deceive Allah and those who believe, and they deceive only themselves and they do not perceive.
10. There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease, and they shall have a painful chastisement because they lied.
11. And when it is said to them, Do not make mischief in the land, they say : We are but peacemakers.
12. Now surely they themselves are the mischief-makers, but they do not perceive.

13. And when it is said to them, Believe as the people believe, they say: Shall we believe as the fools believe? Now surely they themselves are the fools, but they do not know.
14. And when they meet those who believe, they say, we believe; and when they are alone with their devils, they say: Surely we are with you, we were only mocking.
15. Allah shall pay them back their mockery, and He leaves them alone in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on.
16. These are they who buy error for the right direction, so their bargain shall bring no gain, nor are they the followers of the right direction.
17. Their parable is like the parable of one who kindled a fire, but when it had illumined all around him, Allah took away their light, and left them in utter darkness——they do not see:
18. Deaf, dumb, (and) blind, so they will not turn back.
19. Or like abundant rain (pouring forth) from the cloud in which is utter darkness and thunder and lightning; they put their fingers into their ears because of the thunder-peal, for fear of death, and Allah encompasses the unbelievers.
20. The lightning almost takes away their sight; whenever it shines on them they walk in it, and when it becomes dark to them they stand still; and if Allah had pleased He would certainly have taken away their hearing and their sight; surely Allah has power over all things.

Section II gives us a vivid description of the third class, called the "misled." Their state does not arise from wilfulness as in the case of "anger-ridden" people. They have been misled by passion and its

abuse. Hypocrisy, though hardly a passion, is at the root of much of such abuses. It is their chief characteristic, though conceit also plays its part. They do not believe in good because of their vanity and pride, but, to win favour with others, they say that they agree with such opinions as the others might express. They try to deceive others but they themselves labour under self-deception. Hypocrisy, it should be remembered, like other human infirmities, is ever on the increase, and in the end hypocrites lose all tincture of sincerity, and begin earnestly to hate those who differ from them. If they are told that their duplicity amounts to making mischief, they reply that they have no wish to interfere with others, their only desire being to keep the peace. They do not identify themselves with the followers of the new movement, thinking the latter class to be devoid of wisdom and good sense, while they themselves are lacking in those very qualities. Ultimately, they become undeceived when the new movement succeeds. There is, however, another branch of "the misled" people. They are too timid to act on their own initiative. They say that they believe in the new movement, but if they meet disbelievers they explain that they were only joking, and making a mock of the other people. In the end they are confounded by the success of the movement. They scoff at others, but they are thus scoffed at by God. They, as it were, enter into a losing bargain, exchanging good for evil. They are like those for whose enlightenment a reformer 'kindles fire' and brings light to them, but they keep carefully away from the fire, and edge back into the

darkness. They have also been compared in the Qur-án (verses 18 to 20), with those who are overtaken by heavy rain, lightning and thunder. The rain is accompanied by darkness, and whenever there is a flash of lightning, they begin to walk, but when they hear thunder, they put their fingers into their ears. They do not seem to know that the flash has its work to do, and that the thunder always comes after the lightning has finished its destructive task. This is what the Book says here. The word "rain" here stands for the new movement, the flash of lightning is the hopeful sign of its success, but as it is accompanied by hardship and trial, the hypocrites who join the movement in the hope of gain, give it up when adverse conditions arise. By so doing they lose their pertinacity and independence of character and increase in hypocrisy, so they are already much the worse, though they have joined the other side.

A book that comes for human guidance should treat of such mentalities at the very outset, for our enlightenment. We have to study ourselves and see which sort of physiology we possess. These features do not appertain only to religious matters. They are universal in their application. Those who belong to the first class are sure to succeed in every activity which they may select, the second will, in the end, meet with failure. There is a possibility of reclamation in the third class, who for this reason have been termed "the misled," but if they will not mend their ways, they will share the fate of the second category, and will, in the end, become deaf, dumb and blind to all good things.

Section III

Divine Unity

21. O man serve your Lord Who created you and those before you so that you may guard (against evil).
22. Who made the earth a resting place for you and the heaven a structure, and (Who) sends down rain from the cloud then brings forth with it subsistence for you of the fruits; therefore do not set up rivals to Allah while you know.
23. And if you are in doubts as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call on your helpers besides Allah if you are truthful.
24. But if you do (it) not—and never shall you do (it)—then be on your guard against the fire of which men and stones are the fuel; it is prepared for the unbelievers.
25. And convey good news to those who believe and do good deeds, that they shall have gardens in which rivers flow; whenever they shall be given a portion of the fruit thereof, they shall say: This is what was given to us before; and they shall be given the like of it, and they shall have pure mates in them, and in them they shall abide.
26. Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable—(that of) a gnat or any thing above that; then as for those who believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord, and as for those who disbelieve they say: What is it that Allah means by this parable? He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it; but He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors.
27. Who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut asunder what Allah has ordered to be joined, and make mischief in the land; these

- it is that are the losers.
28. How do you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you life? Again He will cause you to die and again bring you to life, then you shall be brought back to Him.
29. He it is who created for you all that is in the earth, and He directed Himself to the heaven, so He made them complete seven heavens, and He knows all things.

After putting us on our guard against these mentalities the Book speaks of those wonderful resources that the universe possesses for our benefit. They have all been created for our good, but we cannot utilize them without guidance. We needed some direction, which could not come from any other person but the One Who is the Creator of the Universe. Hence the necessity for revelation. Every book may claim to have come from the Lord, but it must possess certain distinctive features—verse 23 speaks of this. That which has been made by God cannot be manufactured by man. It is unique and matchless. The Holy Book, if of Divine origin, must possess the same uniqueness. The world, therefore, has been challenged to produce a composition like it; but the world cannot do so. A similar challenge has been given in chapters Jonah, verse 38, and Hud, verse 13.

It is said that those who would follow its injunctions will have a life of everlasting bliss called *Jannat*—Paradise, in the terminology of the Qur-án. *Jannat* is not necessarily a future experience. The Book speaks of two heavens (*vide* chapter entitled “The Beneficent”), one belonging to this life and the other to the future.

There is no local habitation for the coming heaven. It comprehends heaven and earth (see chapter "Iron"). All our good actions in this life will assume the same form in the life to come. We may not be able to appreciate them here, but they will be the fruits of our own actions. They are another form of the same happiness which we experience in this life when we do some kind action. Verse 25 refers to this, saying that the inhabitants of heaven will at once recognize these heavenly pleasures, and will say that they are the same that they enjoyed in their mortal life.

The Book here has likened heaven to a beautiful garden with perennial streams and shady trees. The comparison is very apt, but the Holy Book has many like similitudes such as those of the fly (chap. 22 : v. 73), or the spider (chap. 29 : v. 41), and these, being misunderstood, may give rise to doubts in some minds. So the Book says that these similitudes to believers, who know about them, are of infinite help, but to disbelievers make confusion more confounded. The Book, however, gives us here another illustration of how people become misguided. Verse 26 of the chapter says that God "does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors," and verse 27 defines these people. This shows that misguidance is the outcome of transgression, not under any pre-ordained Divine decree. But under His laws of Causation, it has been ascribed to the working of the Lord, as it seems. Verse 27 gives us a very fine definition of the "Transgressors." They are the people who go against Laws. They make mischief and "cut a under Divine what they have been

ordered to join, ” but they themselves are the ultimate losers. The concluding two verses (28, 29) of the section give, in a way, the gist of it. Verse 28 refers to our helpless condition saying that our coming into the world and our leaving it are in the hands of God. Every now and then we are in a maze, and do not know what to do. But the Lord has created such a wonderful thing as the universe solely for our good ; we naturally need guidance, to use it aright, and hence the necessity for Revelation.

Section IV

Man's Vast Capabilities

30. And when your Lord said to the angels, I am going to place in the earth one who shall rule (in it), they said : what ! wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, and we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness ? He said : Surely I know what you do not know.
31. And He gave Adam knowledge of all the things, then presented them to the angels ; then He said : Tell Me the names of those if you are right.
32. They said : Glory be to Thee ! we have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us ; surely Thou art the Knowing, the Wise.
33. He said : O Adam ! inform them of their names. Then when he had informed them of their names, He said : Did I not say to you that I surely know what is unseen in the heavens and the earth and (that) I know what you manifest and what you did hide ?
34. And when We said to the angels, Make obeisance to Adam, they did obeisance, but Iblis (did it not)

he refused and he was proud, and he was one of the unbelievers.

35. And We said : O Adam ! dwell you and your wife in the garden, and eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish, and do not approach this tree, for them you will be of the unjust.
36. But the devil made them both fall from it, and caused them to depart from that (state) in which they were ; and We said : Get forth, some of you being the enemies of others, and there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision for a time.
37. Then Adam received (some) words from His Lord, so He turned to him (mercifully) ; surely He is Of-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.
38. We said : Go forth from this (state) all ; so surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.
39. And (as to) those who disbelieve in and reject Our communications, they are the inmates of the fire, in it they shall abide.

This section, in the form of an allegory, gives us a little insight into the history of our race. Adam stands here for man. To begin with, the passage defines our position in verse 30. The former revelations spoke of man as being made after the image of God. This is vague, and has received diverse interpretations, but in the Qur-án we are told that we have come here as Lords of Creation to rule the earth, in the capacity of vicegerents of God. We have not only been given essential capacities, but also the aptitude to learn all that is necessary for knowing and utilizing the various resources of Nature, and those sentient beings, called angels, who bring the powers of

Nature into operation, have also been made subject to us.

It is apparent that everything happening in the universe comes from God, but His will manifests itself through other agencies in the various manifestations of Nature. These, in themselves, possess no intelligence, but their work is marvellously regular and of mathematical exactitude in every way ; so much so that we are almost compelled to believe that they do possess a mind. The angels act as the mind in these unintelligent things, enabling them to display their properties when required.

The Section, in the beginning, refers to a certain controversy between the Lord and the angels as to the propriety of His creating a creature like man on the earth, who would make mischief in it. A dispute like this could not possibly occur between God and His Angels, seeing that they are of a ministerial nature, as the Qur-án says. They have no occasion to exercise their discretion in the matter. They have only to obey orders, so they could not well find fault with the work of the Lord. When we consider human nature and study the universe around us, it appears to be without flaw or imperfection. Beauty and utility are its main features, but it is man who sets himself to abuse these gifts of God and create mischief. We naturally wonder why the Lord of Perfection and Beauty created such a pestilent creature like man to encumber the earth. If He wanted to give expression to His own nature, which is above all evil and flaw, the work of the angels was sufficient for it. This objection often arises in the human mind, and it has been put allegorically into the

mouth of an angel because, at the time spoken of in this Section, there were no other creatures existing, but angels. The Arabic words in the text are *nusabbihu bi-hamdika wa nuqaddisu laka*. "We (angels) celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy Holiness." This means that the work of the angels was sufficient. The words *nusabbihu bi-hamdika* are, however, very expressive. *Tasbih*, the infinitive of *sabah*, the root of *nusabbih* means our declaration of the Lord's freedom from all imperfections and evils. The other word *hamd* means our declaration that God possesses all that is good. The phrase, therefore, means that God is not only above all error and evil, but that He possesses all good qualities. Everything in nature, in its existing form, bears strong testimony to this, but Nature contains a world of potentialities which on their actualization will bear witness to the further glorification and purity of the Lord. But it is man's work to bring those capacities of Nature to fruition. The angels could not understand the need for the creation of man, they asked God concerning it, and He told them, "Surely I know what you do not know." By way of illustration, let me take electricity. It must be the work of angels to make it in the form in which it exists. It is free from any error in its make, but it is man, and not the angels, who has put electricity to such wonderful uses. So the Lord replies, that He knows the work which man has to do in order to establish Divine glory and His freedom from all imperfections. Man, of course, will make mistakes. He has risen from the animal and still inherits animal passions. But he has discretion, he may or may not

make a wrong use of these passions, since evil, after all, is only a misapplication of a thing in itself good. (See Introduction). Hence the above objection. But the very knowledge, which man has natural aptitude to acquire, will also enable him to curb his animal inclinations, if he will. The superiority of man over the angels lies in his possession of knowledge of such properties of things as are not known to the angels. Unless, therefore, man possesses that knowledge and puts it to its proper use, he is not true to himself. His very creation has been justified in the allegorical controversy, solely because of the said knowledge.

The words *tasbih* and *hamd* popularly mean the recitation of sacred words concerning the Glory of God and His freedom from all error. For this purpose, some people make use of the rosary. They count its beads, reciting prayers the while. This is all to the good, as long as it reminds us of our duties, otherwise it is only a form of lip-service which carries no weight. Real *tasbih* and *hamd* consist in our efforts to develop and exploit the forces of Nature physically, morally and spiritually.

The Qur-ánic word *asmá'*—‘names’ used in verses 31, 33, stand for the properties of things. We name a thing because of its inherent quality. Its name, thus given, is an index of the qualities it possesses. These verses, consequently, show what a splendid work we have to accomplish in this world. We must acquire knowledge of everything, including our own moral and spiritual natures. We should then be the vicegerents of God on this earth, and His angels will make

obeisance to us. Verse 34 speaks of this same obeisance. Next we read of another being called *Iblis*—Satan. He by nature belongs to such an order of Creation as, under the law of contrast, will go against everything else. If angels declare their willingness to obey man, Satan must needs refuse to do so.

Recapitulation

The first four sections are worthy of a Book that comes to carry humanity to the acme of its progress. To begin with, it lays down six principles of a successful life. It warns us against the attitude that will surely bring man to failure. It then speaks of such of our ways as will produce disastrous results if not amended. It not only speaks of our high capabilities, but it gives us the most exalted position one can think of in the highest flight of imagination. It declares that we have been created as the Lieutenants of God on this earth and rule the whole nature as far as it is possible in our earthly sojourn. Again it gives us a partial insight into Divine character. God, of course, is transcendental and unconceivable, but the *Qur-án* gives us some of His attributes with which we have to adorn our ways. One has only to consider these Holy names, and he will not find a single desirable thing that does not come within their scope.

God is All-Powerful, but the Holy *Qur-án* would speak of Him in a way that may make Him our possible prototype. The Book makes mention of Divine splendour and grandeur but here again it keeps the same objects in view—the said dignity and glory may partly

be owned by us. For instance, we read the following in the "Throne Verse" in the Book :

Allah is He besides Whom there is no God, the Living, the Self-subsisting, by Whom all subsist; slumber does not overtake Him, nor sleep; whatever is in the Heaven and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases; His power extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the most High, the Great.

The verse puts before us the best model of glory and grandeur. We should be matchless in our ways. We, no doubt, cannot live for ever or be self-subsistent, but we should live in a way that we may leave behind us an immortal name and be able to help others.

For this, first of all, we should ever remain vigilant. Sleeping is undoubtedly a life tendency, but we should take notice of our environments in such a way as if sleep did not ever overtake us. We should master the secrets of heaven and earth that may enable us to rule Nature; we should do justice and equity to others, we should discourage undeserved favour so much so that no one dare come to us with some intercession. We may make exceptions in some deserving cases. Our knowledge should extend to things around us so that we may be able to bring them under our power. We should not allow others to have the knowledge of our ways but with our permission.

We should wield our power in a possible manner on things lying in heaven and earth, and in doing so we should never feel tired.

Prophets are the best pictures of the Lord, yet the Qur-án does not describe their life in a way that may not come within the frontiers of our imitations, besides they came here to act as exemplars to us. They are often beset with insurmountable difficulties. Let other Books paint them as Wonder Workers to meet such exigencies, but the Qur-án would have them solve the situation in a manner which can also be accomplished by a man of high attainments. Moses may save his people by a miracle in crossing the sea and get his enemies drowned in it. But Muhammad had a more arduous task when he was besieged in Madina by ten thousand enemies : he would not resort to any miracle. He did what a capable general would be proud to do in the battlefield. The Book has no doubt spoken of various wonderful feats. When referring to certain events in the life of some prophets, it refers to that special knowledge of the secrets of Nature that God gave His blessed people on that occasion which enabled them to do the needful, as in the case of Moses when he crossed the sea.

The Qur-án thus suggests that we should try to acquire the knowledge which He gave to those prophets in times of difficulties. To-day science has enabled us to locate rocks lying under water, it has enabled us also to have full knowledge of the tides when certain portions of the sea become dry and fordable. No one can deny the Almighty powers of God to do anything that may even imaginably seem to be impossible. Everything that comes from Him speaks volumes of His miraculous powers. They are signs and indications of His existence. Each and everything

baffles our imagination even to find out His ways of making them. A weed or a grass is a better miracle than any feat performed by any man on this earth. All the Messengers came to guide us in our ways of life. How could they be exemplars to us if we were unable to do miracle in our life? We read of them in days of yore, but we hardly come across any person possessed of such a gift. All the miracles I read in the Qur-án are the miracles of knowledge, a knowledge that was given to those prophets at the time of emergency though they did not possess it before ; nor any of their compeers did so. Of course they were wonderful works of knowledge, they guide us to acquire such knowledge, it may be scientific or occult, and enable us to perform similar deeds. Auto-suggestion in our days has given eyes to many who had become blind. It gave speech to the dumb and power of walking to lame persons. The said science is doing almost all the works reported of Christ excepting his bringing dead people to life again.

I do not make much of the so-called laws of Nature which, as some people say, would not allow any man to do anything contrary to their demands, but I do object to believing in a thing which goes against the ways of God mentioned in clearest terms in His Revelations. For instance, there is a verse in the Qur-án which makes it prohibitive for those who leave the world once to come again over here. The said verse has also been explained by the Prophet himself, as a tradition in Bukhari goes to bear the same meaning. How can a mortal being revivify a dead body if it has not pleased our Lord Himself to bring the dead again

to life on this earth as the tradition says? Of course we read of such events in the Qur-án as seem to speak of similar resurrections, but the Book uses the same words to mean spiritual resurrection and not a physical revival. The Arabic language gives such meaning to them also. Where was the difficulty for the Lord to bring departed souls to this earth if He will resurrect the whole dead world on the Last Day! But the verse under consideration prohibits such an event, hence I am compelled to deny Jesus and other Prophets to possess such powers. The Biblical record is more or less a folklore, it was prepared on hearsay. It only gives the impressions of those who were around Jesus, and who, according to his own sayings, were men of weak intellect. They could hardly distinguish between resuscitation and resurrection.

Section 5

Fulfilment of Israelite Prophecies in the Holy Qur-an

40. O children of Israel! call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and be faithful to (your) covenant with Me, I will fulfil (My) covenant with you; and of Me, Me alone, should you be afraid.
41. And believe in what I have revealed, verifying that which is with you, and be not the first to deny it, neither take a mean price in exchange for My communications; and Me, Me alone should you fear.
42. And do not mix up the truth with the falsehood, nor hide the truth while you know (it).
43. And keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and bow down with those who bow down.
44. What! do you enjoin men to be good and neglect

your own souls while you read the Book ; have you
then no sense ?

45. And seek assistance through patience and prayer,
and most surely it is a hard thing except for the
humble ones,
46. Who know that they shall meet their Lord and that
they shall return to Him.

The Book next speaks of the Jews who are a typical example both of the blessed and of those who afterwards came under Divine wrath. They were once the chosen people of God and the recipients of His choicest blessings, but by reason of their iniquities they forfeited the Divine favour. After they had come out of Egypt God spoke to them through Moses as they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai that towered over their heads, and certain covenants were made between them and God. He undertook to give them laws for the promotion of righteousness and earthly happiness, and to bless them if they should obey these laws faithfully. But their history is a record of constant disobedience and obstinacy. Every now and again they were forgiven, but only to sin again, more grievously than before. They were twice expelled from their promised land, firstly, by Nebuchadnezzar and then by Titus ; they lost all temporal power before the advent of the Holy Prophet. They had, however, been promised the restoration of their lost power, if they would ' hearken ' to the prophet who should be raised among the Ishmaelites, their brethren. It was the concluding but the most important portion of the Covenant.¹ In the hour of their distress the promised Prophet² appeared

¹ Deut. 18.

² v. 40.

in the person of Muhammad who reminded them of the Covenant which should again bring them under God's favour if they would but fulfil their part of it. The case of the Prophet was not a doubtful one. The Arab traditions of the Book of Deuteronomy were so clear on the point that it was not difficult to identify the subject of the prophecy, but their wilfulness and racial prejudices would not allow them to accept him, so they were his first rejectors. Moreover, they received various favours from the enemies of the Prophet—the Arab disbelievers—of whom they were afraid, and so they concealed the truth. But the Qur-án warned them that they should not accept a price for hiding the communication of God; they should rather fear Him and no one else, and should not confound truth with falsehood when reading the Book. They were also bidden to keep up their prayers and do good deeds so that the Lord may reveal to them the realities of the things. It would not become them, the Qur-án further argued, to enjoin righteousness on others while they themselves committed sin in concealing the truth in their Book.

The Israelites had doubtless read in their scriptures of the dignity and splendour of the one that was to come, while the Arabian Prophet was at that time hemmed in and hard-pressed by his foes. The people of the Book, therefore, were asked to have patience and await, with prayers, for the time when the Holy Prophet should triumph over his enemies. But this was a hard thing for them to do, and could be done only by those who were humble and understood how to get benefit from the ways of the *Rabb* (Lord).

The phrase in verse 46 is to “*meet* their Lord.” *Rabb* is the original word for the Lord under Whose providence events take place not all of a sudden, but gradually. Everything in Nature follows the same course. In the case of the Prophet’s victory, this was not to be achieved in a day or two, but it had to take time to bring the thing gradually to completion. So the Arabic expression, ‘to meet their Lord,’ means to be benefitted by the ways of God, Who perfects His works by a gradual process which naturally demands patience on our part in waiting for the result.

Section 6

Divine Favours on Israel and their Stubbornness

47. O Children of Israel! call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations.
48. And be on your guard against a day when one soul shall not avail another in the least, neither shall intercession on its behalf be accepted, nor shall any compensation be taken from it, nor shall they be helped.
49. And when We delivered you from Pharaoh’s people, who subjected you to severe torment, killing your sons and sparing your women, and in this there was a great trial from your Lord.
50. And when We parted the sea for you, so We saved you and drowned the followers of Pharaoh and you watched by.
51. And when We appointed a time of forty nights with Moses, then you took the calf (for a god) after him and you were unjust.
52. Then We pardoned you after that so that you might give thanks.

53. And when We gave Moses the Book and the Distinction that you might walk aright.
54. And when Moses said to **his** people : O my people ! you have surely been unjust to yourselves by taking the calf (for a god), therefore turn to your Creator (penitently), so kill your people, that is best for you with your Creator ; so He turned to you (mercifully), for surely He is the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.
55. And when you said : O Moses ! we will not believe in you until we see Allah manifestly, so the punishment overtook you while you looked on.
56. Then We raised you up after you stupor that you may give thanks.
57. And We made the clouds to give shade over you and We sent to you manna and quails : Eat of the good things that We have given you ; and they did not do Us any harm, but they made their own souls suffer the loss.
58. And when We said : Enter this city, then eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish, and enter the gate making obeisance, and say, Put down from us our heavy burdens, We will forgive you your wrongs and give more to those who do good (to others).
59. But those who were unjust changed it for a saying other than that which had been spoken to them, so We sent upon those who were unjust a pestilence from heaven, because they transgressed.

The same subject is dealt with as regards certain details in this Section as in the former. To begin with, the Section alludes to that Divine favour which enabled the Israelites to excel all other nations of the world in worldly possessions. From the depths of subjection and servitude under the Egyptians, they were raised

to a height of splendour that would be envied by the great powers of the present day. The kingdom of Solomon extended from Northern Syria up to Yemen and Hadhramout, including portions of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia. He had brought some of the mighty nations under his sway. The dignity of his palace showed the highest skill of the craftsman. He caused a wonderful tank to be made before his palace to receive the Queen of Sheba, the surface of which was so cunningly covered with glass as to deceive the princess who mistook the glass for water. Though a work of art it was yet made for certain high purposes mentioned elsewhere in the Qur-án.

The court of Solomon was the scene of culture, art and industry, and there were men there who cultivated both their physical and occult powers to a marvellous extent. The Queen of Sheba possessed a throne of unique beauty, but the workmen of the Court could make an imitation of it with such skill that the Queen herself could not distinguish between the original and the copy. The fabulous throne of Solomon himself that used to fly through the air was only a piece of aircraft. His proverbs as given in the Bible and his reputation for wisdom refer rather to the extent of the learning possessed by his people.

The Qur-án has detailed these things to give its readers an idea of the greatness enjoyed by the Israelites in their palmy days. But extravagance and self-indulgence, with wilful violation of the law, soon led them to exceed the limit. So, in the long run, they lost their temporal power with all other vestiges of

dignity and became scattered in different countries, where they held a subordinate position. In those days of their misery, they often remembered of the promised Prophet that was to appear among their brethern to restore to them their lost glory. The promised one appeared at this juncture in the person of Muhammad, but they would not acknowledge him on account of their pride and racial prejudices, though their own books pointed to him unmistakably. They, however, were warned of an impending calamity of a sterner sort that would come upon them to punish them for their contumacy in rejecting the Prophet. They used to pray for his coming, but when he appeared, they turned their backs on him. It was not a mere threat to serve the needs of the moment that the Qur-án spoke of, for the coming events were to prove the prophesied punishment almost in the very words of the Qur-án. The world was full of similar prophecies but not one of them, even that of the second coming of Jesus, was free from oracular mystery. The Qur-ánic prophecy, on the other hand, depicts the coming events in colours too vivid to mislead anyone. It speaks of the time when the Jews shall be doomed to wander from place to place, with no refuge anywhere. They will be imprisoned often, and there will be none to ransom them. Vicissitude and hardship will be theirs, but there will be no one to intercede on their behalf.

The Book gives a summary of the Divine favours which have from time to time been conferred on the Jews, and their continued disobedience to every law. It refers to their abject condition in their Egyptian bond-

age, how their masters even descended to killing their male children, and sparing their female, till God came to redeem them from their trouble. History records no other event of a similar nature—the deliverance of a nation from slavery in such a wonderful manner and in so short a time. In twenty-four hours the children of the bondage of generations were released for ever, and their tyrant master drowned in the sea. All this could only be through Divine agency. After the Exodus the Israelites were accorded the greatest favours. God granted Moses an audience for forty days, but his people gave themselves to idolatry in his absence and worshipped the golden calf. Still they were pardoned, and Moses was given a portion of the Book, as signs of distinction for the guidance of his people.

The word used for distinction is *Furqan*. It means anything that may distinguish between right and wrong. Some commentators take its meaning to be a matter of distinction between the people of wickedness and those on the right path.¹ Torah was in itself a distinction.

¹ The Bible writers, with their usual leanings to the bizarre, give us here a very strange story, what the Qur-án makes a common incident. (Exodus, 19:16,17.). No doubt we read of death overtaking them on seeing the sight, if we translate verse 56 literally. The word *maut* literally meaning death also means deprivation; moreover, we read of the same incident in chap. 7: 155, where it is told that a deep stupor like death overtook the companions of Moses. The verse concludes with the words "that you may give thanks." Such a calamity would be cause enough for any people to remain grateful to the Lord for ever, but the Jews remained still stubborn in wrong-doing. In the next verse, the Qur-án collects evidence to show that it was owing to their utter disregard of the Lord's favours that they came under His wrath at last. (Read verse 57).

The word also has been used as name of the Qur-án elsewhere.

Moses wanted to stamp out idolatry from among his people, and so he ordered the ringleaders to be put to death. The Qur-án does not enter into the details of the events, but the Bible speaks of sanguinary doings in words which seem to bear no relation to the Lord of Mercy. The Levites under Divine orders slew thousands of men by way of punishment and even women and children. The Jews then committed a further piece of impudence. They asked Moses to show them their God so that they might see Him with their naked eyes, but a great storm of thunder and lightning overtook them, stunning them and making them as though dead, but they afterwards regained their senses.

At the time they were travelling through the hot valley of the Hedjaz, God, of His grace, used to send clouds from day to day to protect them from the severity of the heat, since they were not used to it. The Qur-án tells of an event, well within the experience of men of saintly character, but the credulous writers of the Bible must need narrate a curious occurrence in this connection. In Exodus 13 : 21, for full forty years the Jews travelled through and about this valley, and every day a pillar of cloud appeared, which not only acted as a guide to them in their journey, but at night gave them light. For their food they were provided with quails and manna—a kind of very small corn, sweet in taste—that fell from the sky like dew-drops. Recently, a similar phenomenon was observed in the region of Durban, South Africa. The word used for

these gifts of God is very suggestive. *Salwa*, the word corresponding to quails, comes from a root meaning satisfactory. *Manna* literally means anything that comes as a gift. The very words show that these things came to the Jews as a gift of God and were sufficient to satisfy their needs, but they soon became ungrateful.

A city came in their path, which the Bible calls Shittim.¹ They were ordered to enter it with all meekness and humility of mind, asking pardon for their sins, and praying the Lord to enable them to shake off their sins from them, as is shown by the word *Hitta*, the word used in the text. The book here draws a most important moral. It says that the grace of the Lord comes only to those who are humble and righteous, but the Jews would not do as they were told, and deliberately went against the Divine instruction. The Qur-án is silent as to the nature of the wrong they did in the town, but the Bible says that they committed whoredom with the Moabite girls who lived there.²

A plague overtook them, which killed some twenty-four thousand people.

The word *hitta* used in the verse 58 is said to have been thus explained by the Holy Prophet. He said to his followers :

Say, We ask forgiveness of Allah and turn to Him penitently.

And then he added :

This is, to be sure, the *hitta-tun* which the Israelites were commanded to say.

1 Numbers 25 : 1.

2 Numbers 25 : 1—3.

In the same verse there is another Arabic idiom which means humility :

And enter the gate with obeisance.

It conveys that they should behave in the town with humility of mind and submissiveness to God as these are the ways to merit His blessings.

After referring to the pestilence the Book says that the disaster came to them on account of their transgression. The two verses, therefore, establish this universal principle that felicity and adversity do not come to any person as belonging to this or that nationality, but rather as the fruits of good and evil. After making mention of further blessings and adversities in Section 7, the golden principle is laid down in the beginning of Section 8.

Section 7

Divine Favours on Israel and their Stubbornness

60. And when Moses prayed for drink for his people, We said ! Seek with your staff a way into the mountain. So there flowed from it twelve springs ; each tribe knew its drinking-place : Eat and drink of the provisions of Allah, and do not act corruptly in the land, making mischief.
61. And when you said : O Moses ! we cannot bear with one food, therefore pray your Lord on our behalf to bring forth for us out of what the earth grows, of its herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions. He said : Will you exchange that which is better for that which is worse ? Enter a city, so you will have what you ask for. And abasement and humiliations were

brought down upon them, and they became deserving of Allah's wrath, this was so because they disbelieved in the communications of Allah and killed the prophets unjustly; this was so because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits.

The Jews, who at that time were travelling in the desert, a dry part of the valley, suffered much from want of water and asked Moses to pray to the Lord for it. He was ordered to remove a certain rock there by striking it with his rod. This he did, and the water gushed out into twelve channels according to the number of tribes. There was nothing curious in this. Springs naturally become divided into various branches, or the Jews themselves might have divided the water into streams or runnels to facilitate drinking. The Jews were a corrupt nation and have again here received further warning against doing wrong and making mischief. The Book, in verse 61, speaks of another Jewish mistake. They could not appreciate or understand the Divine object in keeping them away from city life and making them pass their days in the barren valley. They had recently emerged from the life of ignorance imposed on them by their slavery in Egypt. They had no knowledge of manners or good behaviour, so necessary for independent civic life, and, uncouth as they were, they would certainly have fallen an easy prey to a more civilized life and have become slaves again. So they were kept in the wilderness where they were gradually taught the ethics of civic life. They must have something to meet the requirements of the body, and they were given the best food available there in the form of *manna* and quails;

but they used to eat other things detailed in the verse when in Egypt. These things were available in towns, but life in towns was, at that time, dangerous to the Israelites. But their gluttony would not permit them to see how the case really stood. They persistently urged Moses to make a change. God therefore permitted them to enter any city, and have their desires satisfied. In fact, they preferred evil to good. They had entered into a city and been reduced to serfdom. But the Lord intended to raise up a martial race of kings and rulers from among these menials, so He put them in the valley as if under tuition, but they preferred the lower life and went after it.

The text uses the word *maskanat* and *dhillat* which have been translated as "abasement and humiliation." The word *maskanat* literally means dispossession of property, especially of land, and the word *dhillat* means subjection to a foreign rule, which was a natural consequence of their own conduct when the Jews went to live in a city in the then condition of their morals. The verse summarizes in two or three words their subsequent life; it was a life of absolute unrighteousness. They continually did wicked things and transgressed every law of God. They would not heed the words of the Lord, but slew the Teachers—the Prophets whom He sent. Such a life of indulgence was sure to bring them under the Divine wrath, because it is not our antecedents, racial or of the family, that can win the favour of the Lord, but our actions have to decide our fate. The next verse therefore lays down a rule before it proceeds with the history of the Jews.

Section 8.**Israelites' Degeneration**

62. Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabeans, whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.
63. And when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain above you : Take hold of what We have given you with firmness, and bear in mind what is in it, so that you may guard (against evil).
64. Then you turned back after that ; so were it not for the grace of Allah and His mercy on you, you would certainly have been among the losers.
65. And certainly you have known those among you who exceeded the limits of the Sabbath, so We said to them : Be (as) apes, despised and hated !
66. So We made them an example to those who witnessed it and those who came after it, and an admonition to those who guard (against evil).
67. And when Moses said to his people : Surely Allah commands you that you sacrifice a cow ; they said : Do you ridicule us ? He said I seek the protection of Allah from being one of the ignorant.
68. They said : Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is. (Moses) said : He says, surely she is a cow neither advanced in age nor too young, of middle age between that (and this) ; do therefore what you are commanded.
69. They said : Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what her colour is. (Moses) said : He says, Surely she is a yellow cow ; her colour is intensely yellow, giving delight to the beholders.
70. They said : Call on your Lord for our sake to make it plain to us what she is, for surely to us the cows

are all alike, and if Allah please we shall surely be guided aright.

71. (Moses) said : He says : Surely she is a cow not made submissive that she should plough the land, nor does she irrigate the tilth, sound, without a blemish in her. They said : Now you have brought the truth ; so they sacrificed her, though they had not the mind to do (it).

Before the advent of Islam every nation was proud of its superiority over others. Not only the Jews but the Hindus too thought much of their own race and unfortunately there are Muslims who cherish a similar opinion. The Qur-án made a departure from all other religions in this respect. It exposed the falsity and danger of the wrong view. It gave precedence to personal conduct, thus destroying aristocratic feelings and established the basic principle of democracy. It declared that it was immaterial in the eye of God whether a person was a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian or a Sabean.¹ It was his true belief in God and the Last Day and his own good actions that would enable him to find his reward from his *Rabb*—He Who maintains us and brings all our faculties to perfection. The best of rewards which we can have from our *Rabb* for our actions is the development of all that lies hidden within us in the shape of our capacities. The verse uses two other words full of meaning. To be free from *fear* and *grief* is the best blessing which one can have. In all our life we are beset either by fear or grief, in the course of our business we are in constant fear of some mishap,

¹ Sabean, a Zoroastrian, but some commentators say that they were people who resembled Christians and Jews in their beliefs.

and if anything goes wrong, we give way to grief. The Qur-án assures us that those who observe three things—belief in God and the Last Day and good actions will be free of both fear and grief. Good actions are the main thing, but they mean that we must lead a life according to the will of the Lord ; for we cannot live for a moment if we go against His laws. If we have to do good actions we must believe in God since all good actions come from Him. Belief in the hereafter is the natural outcome of our own strong belief in the consequences of our actions. We cannot look for the immediate result of our deeds, we must wait to see what it may be ; on the other hand, belief in a reward to come spurs mankind to act. It is belief in the hereafter, therefore, that brings all our actions into play.

After laying down this maxim for a prosperous life, the Book resumes its story. It reminds the Israelites of the covenants between God and themselves when they were standing at the foot of Mount Sinai. It is only expressing the idea in an intensified form when the Qur-án says that the mountain was raised over their heads. The covenant was given to guide them to a life of success, but they often turned their backs on the Divine injunction, while the merciful Lord forgave them over and over again. Yet their stubbornness increased. They violated every order and exulted in their sins. The observance of the Sabbath was ordained for them as a reminder of their religious duties. The Muslim institution of five daily prayers serves the same purpose in Islam, but the Jews, and the Christians after them, have made of these sacred institutions a

reductio ad absurdum. Instead of reviewing their actions of the past week on the Sabbath day, in order to see how far these had been consistent with the Divine Will, and then to make amends in case of default, they began to observe Sabbath by leading an idle life. Doubtless they would observe the ceremony of prayer as a formality, but they would do no work the whole day long. They thus lost the chance of reforming and increased in their transgressions. Their condition has been briefly referred to by the Qur-án when it says that they exceeded all the limits of the Sabbath idea. They indulged in a life of iniquity and became despised everywhere. This disgrace was the fruit of their own actions, but as it occurred under the Divine laws of causation, the Book always describes it as the action of the Lord. It is to give us a most emphatic lesson, as I said before, that no action of our own will remain without its consequences. Man contains within himself all the passions of the animal kingdom. If any of them becomes a ruling passion in him, he is a true representative of whatever brute it may be. Malice, jealousy, avarice, mimicking and adultery are the chief passions for which a monkey is notorious in the East. The Jews in their days of self-indulgence were the personification of the monkey, but curiosity would lead some people to think that the Jews of the time of which I am speaking became metamorphosed into the shape of the animal in question. But the Book clearly states that this occurred in order to serve as "an example to those who witnessed it and those who came after it, and an admonition to those who are righteous." How could

they be example to us who "came afterwards" if we fail to find any metamorphosed species?

The next five verses disclose another phase of Jewish stubbornness. They sometimes sought to evade the observance of an order by dilatoriness. They remained the slaves of the Egyptians for generations, and naturally became idolaters following the example of their masters, who worshipped their god in the shape of a cow or a cat. Cow-worship was very popular among them, and in order to destroy this sort of polytheism in them, they were commanded to slay a cow or a heifer on several occasions. But still they evinced the same evil tendency. Whenever they saw a cow of some unusual form they looked upon it with reverence, as do the Hindus. In the days of Moses, there was a beautiful heifer of a fair golden colour in the Jewish herd. They naturally began to regard it as something which one day might become an object of worship. In order to nip this inclination in the bud, Moses, under Divine inspiration, ordered the Jews to make of it a sacrifice. They knew well what Moses had in mind, but they tried to evade the order, and made several excuses as to the identity of the calf. Ultimately they had to kill it as verse 71 shows, but they did so unwillingly.

Section 9**They grow in Hard-heartedness**

72. And when you (almost) killed a man, then you disagreed with respect to that, and Allah was to bring forth that which you were going to hide.
73. So We said : Strike him with somewhat of it ; thus Allah brings the dead to life, and He shows you His signs that you may understand.
74. Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness ; and surely there are some rocks from which streams burst forth, and surely there are some of them which split asunder so water issues out of them, and surely there are some of them which fall down for fear of Allah, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do.
75. Do you then hope that they would believe in you, and a party from among them indeed used to hear the word of Allah, then altered it after they had understood it, and they know (this).
76. And when they meet those who believe they say, We believe, and when they are alone one with another they say : Do you talk to them of what Allah has disclosed to you that they may contend with you by this before your Lord ? Do you not then understand ?
77. Do they not know that Allah knows what they keep secret and what they make known ?
78. And there are among them illiterates who know not the Book but only lies, and they do but conjecture.
79. Woe, then, to those who write the book with their hands and then say, This is from Allah, so that they may take for it a small price ; therefore woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn.
80. And they say : Fire shall not touch us but for a few

- days. Say : Have you received a promise from Allah, then Allah will not fail to perform His promise, or do you speak against Allah what you do not know ?
81. Yea ! whoever earns evil and his sins beset him on every side, these are the inmates of the fire : in it they shall abide.
82. And (as for) those who believe and do good deeds, these are the dwellers of the garden, in it they shall abide.

To complete the list of their misdeeds, the Holy Qur-án speaks here of a murder which they committed either in the days of Moses, or shortly afterwards. But the event, by reason of remarkable circumstances attending it, was well within the memory of the Jews. We need not particularize either the date of the crime or the personality of the deceased. They do not assist the object for which the story has been told. First, the event has been mentioned to show that there remained nothing in the Law that was not violated by the Jews, including the ordinances against the capital offence. Secondly, the Holy Book intended to teach us another great lesson. The Book now and then refers to certain events in history that smack of the miraculous, but explains their nature in such a way as to show us how their performance may come within our own reach. They are only extraordinary feats, miracles of knowledge. Man possesses wonderful capacities, which were taken for miracles in the days of ignorance, but they are explainable things now. I do not say, as I remarked before, that the Almighty Lord has not power to grant us an ability to work wonders. He placed certain high faculties in us, He would not teach us things that

were of no use to us in this life, but He would explain to us the nature of what used to pass as impossible. I have referred to this when mentioning the getting of water by the removal of a rock by Moses¹ and his crossing the Red Sea.² We also read some of the marvellous things in the glory of Solomon. There again the Book speaks of human capabilities of the highest order, yet within the reach of men of advanced culture.

In verse 72, reference has been made to a murder where the culprit was generally unknown, except to a few. Some of his friends wanted to conceal him, others, to give him up to justice. The matter was referred to the then prophet among the Jews, whether Moses or another, matters not. God intended to bring the conspiracy to light, and He ordered the prophet either to touch the corpse of the dead or to strike it with pieces of the flesh of the cow, with the suspected murderer standing by. Some sort of movement was observed in the corpse, and the murderer was discovered.

This has been variously explained. Some of the theories being too ridiculous to repeat here. Others have corroborated the episode in a way unwarranted by the text, but there is a third explanation that seems to me reasonable; besides serving the purpose for which such events are narrated in the Qur-án.

Man has rightly been described by Muslim Divines as the universe in miniature. This is, to-day, a scientific verity. Everything in Nature finds representa-

¹ See Section 7.

² See Section 6.

tion in our system, it may be used with great advantage by skilful people. Here, I speak of one important thing, *i.e.*, electricity. Electrons pervade man's body in every form, as they do the universe. Electricity is doing wonders in our own days, which could be done by us if we could make use of the electricity existing in us. This may be accomplished by those well versed in occultism, for, by cultivating will-power in accordance with that science, we can collect all the electricity in our body and apply it to gain the object in view. An inanimate object like a block of wood can make any movement under the electric current when worked by an expert hand. A dead body will stand on its feet if it is subjected to the same current. We could do the same thing without using any galvanic battery, if we knew how to convert our electrons into a strong current and apply it to the body of a dead person. What occurred on the occasion under discussion was, that the suspected person was asked to stand near the body of the murdered man. Then the body was touched by the prophet, or struck by pieces of the body of the cow killed on that occasion, according to the directions of the Jewish Law, while the prophet exercised his will-power with a view to the body of the deceased making certain movements if the suspected person was the murderer. So it was a wonderful work, but done in accordance with certain human powers which the Holy words suggest that we, too, should cultivate. I do not think that the act performed by the prophet was that of a practised hand. The blessed do not cultivate such powers. They have enough to keep them fully

occupied as teachers of humanity, but these powers come to them as a gift from God on the required occasion. They do it to meet an emergency, and also to teach us that we too possess like faculties and should develop them. But the possession of these powers is not without its dangers, for they may be used with evil motives. The Muslim Divines knew the art, but kept it secret. They taught it only to such pupils who would, they knew, exercise control over their low passions, so the secret science gradually became extinct. Now it has fallen into the hands of the hypnotist, who uses it as a trade, and not always a scrupulous one. This is a Muslim heritage, but they lost it, like other good things once in their possession. This episode has been mentioned to explain the phenomenon of resurrection as referred to in verse 73. It is after all the working of the human mind which can make a dead body move. It is only a figment of the Supreme Mind, and the event may give us an insight into the working of the Lord, Whose mind can restore the whole word of the dead, just as an advanced soul did in a very humble way in the case of the murdered Israelite.

Verse 74.—The inevitable result of the Jews infringing the Divine Laws is that their hearts became hardened. Elsewhere in the Qur-án God speaks of this very phenomenon as the setting of a seal on their hearts. The significance of God's not giving them the power of doing anything good is, that their own hearts, of their own accord, became gradually indifferent to any sort of virtuous action. Thus, just as here

in these four sections, after describing the excesses and transgressions of the Jews, He says that their hearts are hardened, so in the chapter headed "The Woman"—v. 153-155—after reference to the national crimes of the Jews, it is said, "Nay, Allah set a seal upon them owing to their unbelief," that is, God sealed up their hearts on account of their unbelief. Thus the concluding portion of the verse has, quite unambiguously, cleared up this apparently insoluble question. To put the matter in plain words—God, by Himself, never sets any seal on any one's heart. It is man who first perpetrates acts of unbelief in consequence of which his capacity for doing good gradually vanishes away until he reaches a state wherein the committing of sin becomes second nature with him. But since all these things happen in accordance with His laws, God has said that He sets a seal on the heart of such a person, and it is this process which is described in the beginning of the verse. But along with the statement of this fact a hint is thrown out with regard to some who are destined to be reformed. It is said that, without doubt, their hearts will be hard as stones or even harder, but that there are stones, again, from which great streams gush forth, many that split into pieces, and yet others that roll down for fear of God, that is to say, that, although these people have become hard as stones, there are still some among them who will repent, and prostrate themselves before God through fear of Him. The concluding portion of the verse—"Allah is not at all heedless of what you do"—puts this hint in a still clearer light, for it means just

this that if such persons will but make a little effort towards good, attempt a good deed, however small, it will not be ignored by God. The simple fact is that while we are involved in active sin, the guidance of God ceases to have any effect on us at all, but as soon as ever we detach ourselves, even a little, from the evil path and incline towards virtue, the grace and favours of God begin to flow in upon us again.

Verse 75.—Now, when the condition of the Jews has reached such a state, how can the Muslims expect from them that they should have any faith left in the Truth that has been vouchsafed to them, particularly when some of these former deliberately manipulate, as it were, and tamper with the word of God? We know that, in these days, it has been proved by men of authority that the Jews and their progeny, the Christians, have, in many places, altered and adapted the words of God; but this allegation of such a practice was advanced by the Qur-án against the Jews 1350 years ago. Some 25 years back Bishop Gore was disputing this charge of the Holy Qur-án, but to-day he himself has been constrained to admit that what the Qur-án asserted centuries ago is but the plain truth. Some shallow-thinking persons put forward a strange logic. They hold that when the Qur-án says that it “verifies what is in your hand,” it is admitting that there has been no interpolation in the Old and New Testaments. These people fail to understand that this statement relates, as is evident from the verses before and after, to one particular event, which is also described there. This event is that foretold by both Testaments, to wit, the

coming of a Prophet and, according to the Qur-án, that prophecy has been fulfilled in the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. In other words, his coming confirmed what was written in the Torah and in the Gospels, the sacred books, respectively, of the Jews and the Christians. Thus it is mere ignorance of the rules of interpretation that seek to read into a detached verse a meaning in harmony with its own desires, and that without any reference to other verses bearing on the same subject. The rule is that the whole of the book should be taken into consideration when dealing with the interpretation of any particular part of it. Moreover, the Qur-án does not once assert that the two Testaments have been changed wholesale. On the contrary, it simply says that they have been altered in places. It also affirms that the Testaments, in their original revealed state, were fountains of light and guidance to mankind but that later followers of these books have made certain alterations in certain places.

Verse 76.—Having pointed out in the previous verse that Muslims should not, in any way, place reliance on the Jews the Qur-án puts forward, in confirmation of its statement, yet another fact concerning that people, to wit, that although some of them may profess their faith in Islam while in the presence of the believers, yet when they meet in their own assemblies, these same persons reprimand the less clever among them for admitting in the presence of Muslims what is contained in the Torah, one of such admissions being the prophecy about the coming of a Prophet which had not yet seen fulfilment. They enter a

protest against these brothers of theirs, pointing out that by telling the Muslims all about the contents of the Torah, they put them in an advantageous position for debating with them in matters religious.

Verse 77.—Such persons do not realise that God, in His invisibility, is aware of all these facts.

Verse 78.—Some of these people have no knowledge of the Book. They have certain predilections of their own, and on the basis of these they proceed to indulge in guess-work.

Verse 79.—It is, indeed, a thousand pities that men should, with their own hands, write a book, and ascribe it to God, and all this for the sake of monetary gain.

Verse 80.—These people are under the impression that Hell-fire will not touch them. Even to this day, according to Sale, the Jews hold to the belief that none of them will remain in Hell for more than a year. But if they were asked if there is any promise of God to them on this subject, it is obvious what the reply would be.

Verse 81.—There is only one way to Hell. When a man is inclined towards evil and treads the path of sin until he is surrounded with nothing but evil, he becomes, there and then, deserving of prolonged torture in Hell. The future will take care of itself, but as for the present he is already in a most palpable Hell-fire.

Verse 82.—Of course, such of the Jews as accept and practise the good principles of life will have eternal comfort here as well as in the hereafter; and this comfort, in Qur-ánic terminology, is called the "Jannat" (Paradise is the English equivalent). In what way this comfort will manifest itself after death is a

thing we cannot comprehend while in this world. This much, however, can be said, that if our life continues after death, then one or the other of the two conditions discussed above must cling to us in our life to come. As for the life after death, modern researches have made it a comprehensible verity, and we are not required to plead its cause any longer. In verse 81, the term used in connection with sin is the Arabic word *Kasab*, which means "earn." This word really defines the view of the Holy Qur-án on the nature of man. Clearly, the Book holds first that there is no sin in the nature of man and secondly, that the acquires it from outside. As we all know, what we earn does not exist with us from the beginning, but has to come from without : thus sin is an effect of evil doing, that is to say, the evil grows in us only when we have committed a misdeed,—sin is, so to say, earned by us ; otherwise our nature *per se* would be free from evil.

Section 10

Their Covenant and its Violation

83. And when We made a covenant with the children of Israel : You shall not serve any but Allah and (you shall do) good to (your) parents, and to the near of kin, and to the orphans and the needy, and you shall speak to men good words and keep up prayer and pay the poor rate. Then you turned back except a few of you and (now too) you turn aside.
84. And when We made a covenant with you : You shall not shed your blood and you shall not turn your people out of your cities ; then you gave a promise while you witnessed.

85. Yet you it is who slay your people and turn a party from among you out of their homes, backing each other up against them unlawfully and exceeding the limits; and if they should come to you as captives you would ransom them—while their very turning out was unlawful for you. Do you then believe in a part of the Book and disbelieve in the other? What then is the reward of such among you as do this but disgrace in the life of this world, and on the day of Resurrection they shall be sent back to the most grievous chastisement, and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do.
86. These are they who buy the life of this world for the hereafter, so their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be helped.

Verses 83 and 84.—In this section the Holy Qur-án makes mention of some of those commandments of God which were given to the Jews. These are the same commandments as are contained in the Bible, in the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. They are not all given here, first because they are mentioned in the Qur-án on other and different occasions and in a seemly and befitting way, and, secondly, because among those various commandments only such are here as are vitally mentioned necessary for any organised society. These verse were revealed at a time when the Jews were living in Madina.

Verse 85.—Thus we find that in Verse 85 allusion has been made to events which took place in those days. One such event is that two tribes of Jews, Banu Nadzir and Banu Quraidza, then living in Madina, entered into alliance, respectively, with other two non-Jewish tribes of Madina—*Aus* and *Khazraj*. It so

happened that Aus and Khazraj fell out and had come to fighting. Consequently, the Jewish tribes siding with their respective allies, had each to fight against their own people on the other side. But when some of them were taken prisoners, the Jews subscribed among themselves to a fund for the ransom of these prisoners on the ground that they were commanded so to do by their Law. Thus in the first place they fought against their own people for the simple reason that these latter were the allies of a hostile tribe, and then again when they became prisoners they collected subscriptions to purchase their freedom on the plea of a Divine Commandment. The inevitable conclusion would seem to be that these people obeyed parts of the Book and disobeyed other parts, according as it suited their desires. The consequence of such haphazard obedience to the Book, will surely be that they will be disgraced here in this world as well as in the hereafter.

Verse 86.—It is a pity that these people, engrossed in the trivial affairs of their present life, give up the great things of the future.

Section 11

Their Rejection of the Prophet

87. And most certainly We gave Moses the Book and We sent apostles after him one after another: and We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear arguments and strengthened him with the holy revelation. What! whenever then an apostle came to you with that which your souls did not desire, you were insolent so you called some liars and some you slay.
88. And they say: Our hearts are covered. Nay, Allah

- has cursed them on account of their unbelief; so little it is that they believe.
89. And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have, and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved, but when there came to them that which they recognised, they disbelieved in it, so Allah's curse is on the unbelievers.
90. Evil is that for which they have sold their souls—that they should deny what Allah has revealed, out of envy that Allah should send down of His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases; so they have made themselves deserving of wrath upon wrath, and there is a disgraceful chastisement for the unbelievers.
91. And when it is said to them, Believe in what Allah has revealed, they say; We believe in that which was revealed to us; and they deny what is besides that, while it is the truth verifying that which they have. Say: Why then did you kill Allah's prophets before (this) if you were indeed believers?
92. And most certainly Moses came to you with clear arguments, then you took the calf (for a god) in his absence and you were unjust.
93. And when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain above you: Take hold of what We have given you with firmness and be obedient. They said: we hear and disobey. And they were made to imbibe (the love of) the calf into their hearts on account of their unbelief. Say: Evil is that which your belief bids you if you are believers.
94. Say: if the future abode with Allah is specially for you to the exclusion of the people, then invoke death if you are truthful.
95. And they will never invoke it on account of what

their hands have sent on before, and Allah knows the unjust.

96. And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life, (greedier) than even those who are polytheists; one of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand years, and his being granted a long life will in no way remove him further off from the chastisement, and Allah sees what they do.

Verse 87.—In brief, many a prophet came after Moses for the guidance of the Jews. And last of all came the Prophet Jesus. But in their arrogance the Israelites called some of these Prophets liars and some they killed. Here the tense used in the case of “Qatal” (kill) is not the past but the present hinting, most probably, at the secret plots, which the Jews were hatching, at that time, against the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

While speaking of Prophet Jesus, the Holy Qur-án also makes mention of the *Holy Spirit*. For the Christians to suggest that the third person in the Christian Trinity is meant here, is an indication of their ignorance of the Qur-án. According to the Qur-án the *Holy Spirit* is not the monopoly of Jesus; for, in verse 22, chapter *Al-Mujádilah*, the companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad are spoken of as being aided by this kind of *rúh* or spirit from God. The word *rúh* has a very comprehensive sense. Anything that causes movement in subtler objects of creation is termed *rúh* in the Arabic language. Thus, the wind is *rúh*. But primarily *rúh* means that subtle power which infuses life into dead things and creates a stir in them. The word has also

been used in the sense of the human soul, and indeed it has, as I have said, a very wide range of meaning. Nevertheless, everywhere it is used for the subtlest essence of things, even for that elementary substance in a thing inanimate on which its existence depends. But the meaning which is specially attached to the word is the human soul, in that particular condition when it is free from all taint of earthly desire and animal tendency. So long as such a condition of mind is not created in man, he cannot, according to the teachings of the Qur-án, enter into Paradise.¹ The preliminary stage of this condition is termed in the Holy Qur-án *Nafsi-mutmainnah*² (the soul at rest). But beyond this there are three more stages in the perfection of the human soul, which are called *the pleased*, *the pleasing* and *the serving* soul, respectively. At this last stage, man, freed at last from all animal desires, becomes, as it were, a lifeless thing in the hands of God. His wishes are identically those of God's. He is transformed consequently into a shadow of the Divine Will. It is to the soul in such a purified condition that the Qur-ánic word *Rúh-ul-Qudus* (the Holy Spirit) is applicable, and it is this thing which was granted to Jesus and nothing else or more than this, and this condition has its origin, as I have pointed out, in *Nafsi-mutmainnah*.

We can see from the life of Jesus that he was in the fourth stage of spiritual evolution, that is, the stage of *pleased* (with God), *i.e.*, in a stage where a man is pleased with every dispensation with regard to his own

1 & 2 See Preface, the chapter entitled : 'Our Evolutionary Journey.'

self that comes from God, and accepts with a sense of pleasure whatever befalls him. Thus it will be seen that, while living in Jerusalem, and approaching his fateful end, he was all the while, exhibiting this particular condition of the soul. He prayed with all the earnestness he could command, to be saved from the calamity that was ahead. But the concluding words in that momentous prayer were these :

O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy Will be done.¹

The Holy Prophet Muhammad's description of his *Mi'raj* (Ascension) corroborates this view of ours, namely, that the Prophet Jesus was in the fourth stage of spiritual evolution when he left this world. According to a tradition, the Holy Prophet Muhammad saw different prophets in different heavens on the night of his Ascension. He saw the Son of Mary, however, in the fourth heaven. The Arabic word *samá*, which is generally taken to be the equivalent of "sky," originally means *height*. The spiritual elevation to which a particular prophet attained while leaving this earth, determined the sky of the heaven which he would enter after his translation, and this is where our Holy Prophet found him on the night of Ascension. Thus, whereas Jesus was in the fourth "sky," our Prophet passed through the seventh and came even to the Throne of God, which fact gives us an estimate of his spiritual evolution.

¹ Mathew 26: 42.

This is, nevertheless, a matter of faith ; but still, when we come to make a comparative study of the conditions of life of these two Great Personages, we find that that stage in the spiritual evolution which was attained by our Holy Prophet, could not have been reached by one who, in the the course of life's bitterest trial, uttered the cry "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani"—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" As contrasted with this, see the Holy Prophet Muhammad, on the day of his flight to Madina. When he was hiding in the cave of *Thaur*, his enemies had overtaken him and had advanced as far as the mouth of the cave. There was no way of escape. His sole companion in the cave, in a state of utter panic, asked him if there was any way out of the danger. The Holy Prophet, however, with perfect equanimity, replied "Innailáha Ma'aná"—surely God is with us.

In brief, the conduct of the Jews had reached the utmost limit of disobedience, inasmuch as they could deliberately think themselves above all commandments. The phrase "upon whom wrath is brought down" was perfectly applicable to their conduct which was such that whenever they were addressed with any word of guidance or admonition they would proudly retort, saying that they were above the necessity of such advice and that their hearts had become "ghulf." *Ghulf* has two meanings. Firstly it means "screen." According to this meaning, the assertion of the Jews would amount to saying—"Our hearts have been screened from everything right." Secondly, it has the meaning of "depository". In this sense, it would mean "Our

hearts have become such treasures of knowledge that there is no room in them for any other thing, and there is no further necessity for us to acquire any knowledge from others." This presumption of theirs brought them to that spiritual degradation which, in Qur-ánic terminology, is called "curse." Thus in the verse under discussion, their unbelief is spoken of as the cause of their being accursed. So once more it is proved that the punishment of God or His chastisement, which are only other names for being removed from His mercy, befalls only those who first reject His guidance. In other words, the action of God follows our doings as a consequence. "La'nat" (curse) in its lexicographical sense, means "to be away from," *i.e.*, to reach a position which is far removed from the grace and bounties of God. Let the Bible curse others in any way it likes, but the word which is used for "curse" in the Arabic language has this one sense and no other. Of course, the position signified by the Qur-ánic "curse" is one where a man is deprived of everything good and beautiful. This same truth is pointed out again at the end of the next verse. Thus when, on account of their misdeeds, they became deprived of the bounties of God, they were found under the curse of God.

Verse 89.—There was a covenant of God with the Jews, in regard to a great victory, the fulfilment of which was conditional upon the appearance of the promised Prophet referred to in Deuteronomy, ch. 18, v. 18. This prophecy is alluded to in the verse under discussion, and in certain other preceding verses in the clearest possible words. The Jews had all along been expecting the

appearance of three personages, to wit, the Messiah, the second advent of Elias and one whom they in their own parlance were wont to call "the Prophet", as will be seen from *John* 1, v. 25. In brief, the Jews, according to Deuteronomy, were in daily expectation of a Prophet who would be the cause of much good and of blessings coming to them from God. God, on the other hand, had commanded them to obey this prophet (*Deut.* 18 : 25). It is to this fact that reference is made here, namely, that while these people had been all along praying for the appearance of this great personality, they opposed him virulently when he actually appeared on the scene. It cannot be contended that they could not recognise him ; they must surely have recognized him, since it was he alone who corresponded with the description given in Deuteronomy of the promised Prophet. It is for this reason that the Qur-án states elsewhere that these people recognized the Holy Prophet just as they recognised their own brethren and children, but that their pride and jealousy prevented them from accepting his claims. Looking at history no one can deny that the followers of this great man were crowned with the glory of success and victory wherever they went. Now, if the Jews had believed in him along with the other believers, they too would have shared in the glory. But they remained deprived of this reward of God because of their rejection of him, and it is this deprivation which is meant here by the word "curse," and, indeed, there is nothing conceivably worse than that God should bestow any gift on a man and that man should refuse to accept it. Such a one is, surely, far removed from the grace of the Lord.

Verse 90.—Whereas verse 87 indicates the pride of the Jews as the source of all their misdeeds, this verse points to their jealousy. At bottom, jealousy is the product of pride, and pride, again, arises from anger and indignation. It is anger that produces pride and arrogance and makes a man think that there is none to equal him. But when he finds that there are others as well who are favoured with the bounties of the Lord, his pride naturally turns into jealousy, which, in course of time, develops into feelings of malice and spite. He burns with rage to think that God should have given to others what He has given him. He forgets that God's bounties cannot be the monopoly of any one, and that it is of His own will only that God grants favours to any one. But man persists in his feeling of jealousy, and this brings upon him curse after curse. So when the Holy Qur-án speaks of such men as "those on whom wrath has been brought down," it points to a very deep truth, because it is these men that become the object of God's wrath, that is to say, are deprived of His favours, and this fact is the cause of their abasement. It is a matter of common knowledge that the Jews have reached a stage of the utmost humiliation and are despised by all the nations of the world. Of late, however, they have been showing some signs of improvement, and the reason for this can be traced to the fact that their angry and jealous attitude has, to a great extent, left them. While discussing the abject condition of the poor Jews we should not lose sight of the fact that God's setting of a seal on hearts is not any specific feature of that particular race, but one which will appear in any nation or individual that chooses to behave in that particular

way, as is indicated by the word "kafirin" (unbelievers)—a general term, used at the end of the verse. Now, because God presents the case of this people as an example of "those on whom wrath has been brought down"—and, as a matter of fact, there is no other race which presents the perfect example of a favoured nation on the one hand and of an accursed nation on the other—reference to them occurs repeatedly in these sections. Thus an aspect of their jealousy is discussed in the following verse.

Verse 91.—When they are called to the paths revealed in the Qur-án, they say that they will follow only that guidance which was already with them and was revealed to their people, in spite of the fact that the new revelation was a confirmation of the Book that was with them. How scathing is the reply vouchsafed by the Holy Qur-án to this argument of theirs. If they did actually and truly believe in the revelations that had been vouchsafed to their race from time to time, why, then, the Qur-án asks, did they kill their prophets?

Verse 92.—Among their prophets was Moses, a pre-eminently strong personality. He made them promise that they would not worship anyone but the One God. He showed them various signs. And yet as soon as he went up the mountain to stand before the Divine presence, these people began worshipping the calf. It is this occasion which is narrated in some detail in the following verse.

The Arabic word *haqq*, generally translated as "truth" and used in verse 91, has a far deeper meaning

than is generally understood. In the Arabic language *haqq* indicates a thing which is not only in its proper place and quite in accordance with the need of the time, but one also that fulfils the demands of justice and equity. The Holy Qur-án has used this word to describe its own revelation, because justice has pronounced in favour of the Holy Prophet's claim to have fulfilled the prophecy contained in the Bible. The promised Prophet was to appear from among the brothers of the Israelites, and who else but the Ishmaelites should be their brothers? Then this Prophet had to be one bringing Law, and not one of the Israelitish prophets that followed Moses or had brought any Law with him. Even Jesus did nothing further than place certain interpretations on the Law of Moses, make certain additions to it by way of explanation, and modify the Law of retribution. Among other signs of the promised Prophet was that he should be required to fight. This condition was also fulfilled by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who was compelled to wage war after war in self-defence against his enemies. As another sign of the promised prophet, the Bible said that he would be a living and successful man. History tells us how the Holy Prophet had to encounter all kinds of dangerous and powerful enemies—the Jews among them—and how, in spite of these enemies, he was successful at the end and died a natural death. Thus justice demanded that he should be accepted as the promised Prophet. Moreover, his appearance fulfilled a great and timely need. The revelation of God had become practically extinct all over the human world. The whole world, reeking with vice and sin, was in utmost need of a call

to virtue and purity. To all these facts the Holy Qur-án has pointed by the use of a single word—"haqq." The word "truth" which is made to stand in its place, is surely not capable of comprehending all these different aspects of the situation.

Verse 93. I have already shown what is meant by me the mountain being made to stand above them, but let repeat it. It simply means that they were at the foot of a mountain, and that, naturally, the mountain was towering high above their heads. From what we read in the 32nd chapter of Exodus it is clear that these people were extremely prone to Devil-worship, and it was this obsession which was responsible for the making of the golden calf. Although they professed a faith in the One Invisible God, their hearts were inclined to the worship of a god made with hands. In other words, idol-worship had become an essential feature of their character, so much so that even while they listened to the commandment of God, in their hearts they were thinking of honouring that commandment rather in the breach than the observance, and it is this fact which the Qur-án discloses in its use of the phrase "asainá"—"we disobey."

Verse 94. These Jews also believed that the after life was a monopoly of their own, and that none but themselves would enter paradise. Now if the life to come be so far more desirable than the life on earth, as they also believe, with others, surely they should be eager to depart from this inferior existence as soon as may be. By way of rebuttal, the Qur-án puts forward the argument that if they actually believe what they profess, and are

right in doing so, why do they not long for death ?

Verse 95. But the Qur-án, aware of their inward nature, says that it is impossible for them to entertain any such desire. The good or ill of the life to come depends on the nature of a man's actions in this life, and these people know their own misdeeds full well and consequently know also that they will not be entitled to any measure of happiness in that other life ; which being so, it is altogether out of the question that they should cherish any desire for death. It is a pity that they do not realise the fact that God is aware of the misdeeds of wrong-doers.

Verse 96. Far from cherishing any preference for death, their desire for the continuance of the earthly life is so intense that they surpass all other nations of the earth in this particular passion. Indeed, compared with their's the love of the things of this world common among polytheists dwindles into insignificance. A people, believing in a revealed scripture, and having faith in God and the hereafter, may be expected to be somewhat indifferent towards this life, and comparatively fearless in respect of death ; whereas a polytheist or a materialist should, in the nature of things, go in fear of death, seeing that to him it means the end of all things. But in the case of such Jews as these, human expectations are baffled, and the followers of the Book are found to be even more covetous of a long life on this earth than are the worshippers of many gods or none. They fail to perceive that even the longest life on earth will not avail to free a man from the consequence of his actions, and that God will ultimately take all account

of their misdeeds. Here the adjective used in connection with God is "Basír" which is generally translated as "seeing." "Basír" is one who sees not only the things that are in sight, but also those that do not come within the range of mortal vision. In other words, "Basír" sees both the disclosed and the hidden. "Basírat" not only indicates the faculty of sight, but also the power of observation which looks to the why and wherefor of things, within which is included experience and the lessons to be drawn from it. When God is spoken of as "Basír" with regard to the actions of men, it is not only meant that He sees them, but that He is aware of the motives behind them. He knows full well what is intended by a particular action of a particular man, and what its result will be. All this is included in the meaning of the word "Basír."

Section 12

Their Enmity towards the Prophet

97. Say: Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel—for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allah's command, verifying that which is before it and a guidance and good news for the believers.
98. Whoever is the enemy of Allah and His angels and His apostle and Gabriel and Michael, so surely Allah is the enemy of the unbelievers.
99. And certainly We have revealed to you clear communications and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors.
100. What! whenever they make a covenant, a party of them cast it aside! Nay, most of them do not believe.

101. And when there came to them an Apostle from Allah verifying that which they have, a party of those who were given the Book threw the Book of Allah behind their backs as if they knew nothing.
102. And they follow what the devils fabricated against the prophethood of Solomon, and Solomon did not disbelieve, but the devils disbelieved, teaching men enchantment, and it was not revealed to the two angels Harut and Marut at Babel, nor did they teach (it to) any one. So that they should have said, we are only a trial, therefore do not disbelieve; so they learn from these two (sources) that by which they make a distinction between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allah's permission, and they learn what harms them and does not profit them, and certainly they know that he who buys it shall have no share of good in the hereafter, and certainly evil is the price for which they have sold their souls: had they but known (this)!
103. And if they had believed and guarded themselves (against evil), reward from Allah would certainly have been better: had they but known (this)!

Verse 97. The revelation that came to Muhammad was through an angel of God named Jibráíl (Gabriel). The word, like Mikáíl (Michael) in the next verse, is of Arabic origin, being derived from *jabr* and *il*, meaning "servant" and "Allah," respectively. Similarly, Mikáíl comes from *Mik*, *i.e.*, servant and *il* meaning Allah. But the enmity of the Jews against Muhammad passed all limits; and they even began to hate Gabriel as well, simply because he was sent to reveal to Muhammad that he was the Prophet foretold in the Book of Deuteronomy, while they did not trouble themselves to under-

stand the nature of the message. In the first place, this message confirmed the statements of their own Books, and in the second, the message which the angel brought contained both a gospel and teachings for the guidance of men. It declared that a severer punishment was awaiting the Jews, but that if they mended their ways they might yet obtain an ample reward. It brought good tidings for them, and contained nothing that should have excited their malice. The word "guidance," the main object of the revelation of the Qur-án, is pregnant with a mighty truth, concerning not the Jews only but other races also who look askance at the Qur-án. If the injunctions in the Qur-án do really put us on the straight path and show us the way to lead a godly life why should anyone be opposed to it? The Qur-án does not deal in fairy tales. Let this be the test of its truth. People need not go so far as to embrace Islam, but they can at least accept the Qur-án as truth, if its teachings provide true guidance.

Hudá means that particular guidance which makes him who adopts it successful in his worldly affairs. Every man is desirous of succeeding in life. A single wrong step at times may mean ruin, or disaster in a greater or less degree. We are earnestly in search of a way to success, which is, in the Arabic language, called *hudan*. Now if any Book contains injunctions with regard to this way to success, no reasonable man could possibly go against it. The Holy Qur-án has emphasised this one truth on many occasions in proving its claim. To whatever religious denomination a man may belong, he will still be seeking for this guide to success. There can be no better test for the truth of

a Book than that it should, keeping in view the various occupations and activities of man, do full justice to all of these in its instructions. It is possible that the scripture of a particular religious community contains certain instructions that throw light on certain human activities, but it will be found, on comparison, that a comprehensive dealing with all of them is the achievement of the Qur-án alone. If so, how can one cavil at the teachings of this Book? It is a mighty proof which the Qur-án has put forward in vindicating its claims—this question of *huda* or a guide to success. It is, so to say, the supreme miracle of the Book, comprising in its significance the thousands of its other miracles—a miracle, above all, which is of vital necessity to our everyday life. It is this argument which we shall find repeated in another way in verse 99.

Verse 98. The various angels of God are different functionaries appointed by God to make clear His will for our benefit. Those, therefore, who would go against any angel are, as a matter of fact, not the enemies of that particular angel, or of the angels in general, but of God, seeing that they are opposing themselves His beneficent will, and thereby forfeiting His grace and blessings. This is what is meant by God becoming their enemy, for it is, after all, only through His angels that God showers His blessings on man.

Verse 99. Here it is stated that the Qur-án contains within itself clear signs of its claims to give guidance. Nevertheless, the transgressors are those who would forsake the right way, and would have none of it. I have several times emphasised this point that if Divine revelation has any function, it is to guide mankind to

the right way and to save it from destruction. Any teaching on these lines is in itself a great sign. In certain books, for which revelation from God is claimed, there are teachings that go counter to the interest and welfare of mankind. Such books do not help the fulfilment of the object of human life; and the great proof as to a Book being from God, is that it should clearly set forth the purpose of man's birth into this world. Nevertheless, the breakers of Divine laws are unable to appreciate or accept the propositions of a Book that puts forward such a clear argument.

Verse 100. Indeed, there are many among the Jews, who, in effect, will make a covenant with God on a certain occasion, which is broken as soon as made, because the majority of them have no faith in the Divine words.

Verse 101. When their Book did contain a prophecy concerning some great prophet, and when there came before them a claimant to that same prophethood, in circumstances and conditions corresponding in all respects with those set forth in the prophecy, their rejection of him was tantamount to the rejection of their own Book.

They were acting as if they had never heard of these circumstances and conditions. The least they could have done would have been to ponder over the arguments advanced by the claimant, or examine the teachings propounded by him. But no. They made certain strange things pass for Religion instead.

Verse 102. For example, they thought that the secret of Solomon's power and glory lay in his skill in

magical charms and incantations. They also believed that in a certain well at Babel, there were suspended two angels with their heads downwards as a punishment for some grave crime; that these two used to teach sorcery to men, and that they would remonstrate with those who would try to approach them. In the same way they were wont, in the name of Religion, to indulge in other practices in which they would not allow their womenfolk to take part. With these, they believed, they were able to bring harm on others. The Holy Qur-án, however, will have none of these mischievous notions, for first it says, there is no truth in sorcery, and, secondly, to ascribe this sorcery to the Prophet Solomon, or to the two angels, is nonsense. Why then, it may be asked, does the Qur-án refer to these stories at all? The reply is that its purpose is to show to what depth of degradation in the matter of religious belief the Jews had sunk in the days of the Holy Prophet.

Verse 103.—How much better would it have been for them, if they had renounced all these baneful beliefs and practices, and had accepted instead lofty principles of life and had acted upon them, for only by so doing could they be saved from the disastrous result of their actions.

As usual these last two verses throw light on more things than one. Apart from the charge of sorcery, there were certain other accusations made against Solomon, some of them imputing to him the sin of unbelief. These charges were framed by no less authorities than the writers of the Old Testament, and one of them was that the Prophet Solomon had been so much under the

influence of his wives that his own heart had become inclined towards idols¹ with a resultant indifference towards God². Such an allegation is not only rejected by the Holy Qur-án but also disproved by the researches of modern scholarship. True, the harem of Solomon contained non-Israelite women, but it is wrong to allege that he was either indifferent towards his God, or that he built temples for idol-worship at one time under their influence. The Holy Qur-án by denying that Solomon ever manifested any unbelief, disposes, at one stroke, of all the allegations against that great Prophet.

What we term sorcery is called in Arabic *síhr*. This language is so expressive and philosophical in its vocabulary that the word used in it for a particular thing will express even the real nature of that thing, a fact, which is, in itself, a proof that the language is of God. The particular word *síhr*, according to *Táj-ul-‘Arús*, signifies the changing of the original appearance of a thing to make it resemble something else. Lane, also, supports this meaning in his Arabic Lexicon. The idea is that the thing itself will not change, but will appear in a different form. Now this meaning expounds the reality of *síhr* or magic. Whether call it mesmerism or the secret powers of will-force, the fact is that no one can change the reality of anything through these processes. The rods of the sorcerers might have appeared to change into serpents, but they remained none the less rods and only seemed to the onlookers to be serpents, under the influence of hypnotism. Now, although the word *síhr* is used in a bad sense nowadays, it has its use in a good

1. Kings I, 11 : 14.

2. Kings I, 11 : 9.

sense as well. The Holy Prophet, for example, has spoken of the gift of eloquence as *sahr*. To be brief, *sahr* signifies the changing of a thing in its outward appearance and not in its inward nature ; and if that change is brought about by a good man for a good purpose, no harm is done. According to Imam Ghazzali the prophet and the magician perform the same sort of, work so far as the nature of it is concerned. But, having regard to their respective motives and teachings, if we call the one Prophet, to the other we must give the name of magician. But we must not forget that the word *sahr* is not a new word, nor is this particular meaning attached to it a new one. From the very beginning it has always indicated an action which changes the appearance of anything. It is as a result of modern investigations that we come to know that the reality behind the magic is nothing else but this. One who had used this word *sahr* to express the idea of magic in the days of ignorance, must have been aware of the reality of magic even in those days. But herein is no peculiarity of this particular word ; every other word of the Arabic language carries with it similar deep significances, and in face of this, is it too much to ascribe the formation of the language to God who alone knows the realities of the things mostly hidden from our knowledge ?

There is one other question which demands our attention in the discussion of this verse, that is to say, the exclusion of women from participation in certain activities of the Jews, which aimed at bringing harm to their enemies. Some think that reference here is to the Society of Freemasons, and this is not improbable. It

is a fact that the Freemasons do not permit women to take part in their ceremonies ; it is also true that they think they can cause harm to their enemies, and there is a strong presumption in favour of the existence of an active Society of Freemasons in the days of the Prophet Solomon. It is, moreover, an admitted fact that the origin of this society goes back to very early times. There are other commentators, again, who think that the reference is to the plots which the Jews had been hatching for the murder of the Holy Prophet.

Section 13

Former Scriptures are abrogated

104. O you who believe! do not say *ra'ina* and say *unzurna*, and listen, and for the unbelievers there is a painful chastisement.
105. Those who disbelieve from among the followers of the Book do not like, nor do the polytheists, that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord, and Allah chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy, and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.
106. Whatever communications We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?
107. Do you not know that Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that beside, Allah you have no guardian or helper?
108. Rather you wish to put questions to your Apostle, as Moses was questioned before; and whoever adopts unbelief instead of faith, he indeed has lost the right direction of the way.

109. Many of the followers of the Book wish that they could turn you back into unbelievers after your faith, out of envy from themselves, (even) after the truth has become manifest to them; but pardon and forgive, so that Allah should bring about His command; surely Allah has power over all things.
110. And keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, and whatever good you send before for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah; surely Allah sees what you do.
111. And they say: None shall enter the garden (of paradise) except he who is a Jew or the Christians. These are their vain desires. Say: Bring you proof if you are truthful.
112. Yea! whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for him nor shall he grieve.

Verse 104.—The opposition and insolence of the Jews had now reached such a pitch that when they came to the meetings convened by the Prophet, they would, by way of sarcasm, use words in addressing him which would, with but little tongue-twisting, convey a very insolent meaning. Even when speaking formally to the Prophet, they would pronounce the words necessary for that purpose in such a way as to change their meanings from noble to base.¹ One such word was *rá'iná*, with long sounds of both the a's, meaning "Please listen to us." But pronounced in a different way with the a's short it will mean "This man is foolish and devoid of wisdom and intellect." In citing this instance, the

¹ Ch. IV, v. 46.

Holy Qur-án intends to point out the extent to which the insolence of the Jews had risen. The Holy Qur-án deemed it undesirable that the faithful companions of the Prophet should use words in addressing him which could be twisted by others into abuse, so it has laid down that the companions should not use the word *ráiná* on such occasions but *unzurna* which means “wait for us” or “pay some attention to what we say,” and is a safer substitute for the former word. A very ennobling lesson is imparted in this verse—namely, that the believers should avoid using any such words in their conversations as might even distantly hint at a bad meaning. This is one of the noblest precepts of the Qur-án with regard to behaviour in society.

Verse. 105.—Finally after reviewing the conduct of the unbelieving Jews, the Qur-án goes on to say that at bottom they abhor the idea that any blessing should be sent to the Holy Prophet and his followers. In their fanaticism these people lose sight of the supreme fact that Divine favours and blessings are not limited to any one person or race. God sends down His blessings to whomsoever He will, and among His blessings the best is His revealed Word, of which also the recipient is he who pleases Him. The perplexity of the Jews on this score was for two reasons: first, that any one outside their fold should be the recipient of Divine message, and, secondly, that there should be a new Dispensation in the very presence of the Torah.

Verse. 106.—The reply to the first of these objections has been already given in the previous verse. With regard to the second the Qur-án draws man’s attention

to the laws of Nature. How every day innumerable things come to an end, but in their place other things are brought into being. Many a time people forget certain facts of existence which are repeated again to refresh their memory. Sometimes these new things or new facts are the same as the old ones, but often they are better. Similarly in this particular matter of revelation, the Jews had forgotten a large part of the original Torah, and whatever remained of the Law was not sufficient to meet the demands of future ages.

The Torah was, after all, a law for a particular time. We may see for ourselves how unsuitable are its provisions for our own day. So it was necessary that a better teaching should replace it at some period or other in history. It is this argument which the Qur-án advances in its own support, namely, that its bringing the new Law was quite in accordance with the process of Nature prevailing everywhere else. For a homelier instance of this process of Nature we may take the coming of the season of spring. With the advent of spring Nature on all sides makes a thorough replacement of the old foliage by a new one. The season demands this substitution and Nature has to respond to it. It may be objected here, why should this principle not apply as well to the Qur-ánic Dispensation, and why, as the Muslims believe, should the lapse of time not necessitate its replacement by a new Dispensation. But such an objection will not stand, if we consider the fact that only such things are replaced in Nature which are temporary, and are not permanent in their functions. But things such as the sun, the moon and other planets of the firmament, which have a per-

manence, in the very nature of their existence, never change or give place to new substitutes. Before the revelation of the Qur-án, every nation was passing through a stage that made it stand in need of a provisional law or one adapted only for local application. Moreover, seeing that it was in the knowledge of God that the day was at hand when all nations would be united as a single people, it was not proper that a law should be given, before the time was ripe for it, which would be of a permanent and universal nature. But when that time did arrive, it was natural and quite in the fitness of things that such a law should be revealed to the end that it might create uniformity among different sections of humanity; and this era was ushered in at the Revelation of the Qur-án and all the nations were united in a very short time. It was then that a comprehensive book of a permanent nature should have been revealed, and it was revealed, in the form of the Holy Qur-án. What we have to determine is, whether this is a book to satisfy the needs, not only of the present age but of those that may come afterwards as well. For myself, I can confidently assert, on the basis of my own convictions, that it does contain comprehensive teachings and broad principles of conduct and belief applicable to every phase of human life.

Towards the end of the verse there is a hint at another fact, namely, that nothing in the world can prevent God from taking this disputed step seeing that He is Supreme over all things. *Qádir* and *Qadir* are both words indicating the attributes of God and express almost the same sense. They do not imply, however, power used at random or without discrimination.

Wisdom and intelligence are conditions precedent to their manifestations or, in other words, *Qadir* possesses the power of doing such things only as are dictated by wisdom and intelligence, and it is also essential that the measure of the power applied should neither exceed nor fall short of the needs of the situation. Hence it is for *Qadir* to manifest His power as soon as there is any shortage anywhere in what is needful and to make up the deficiency at once. Now, if revelation be sent only for the guidance of man, it is but just that the whole of mankind should receive the benefit of the Divine intention. The use of word *Qadir* is thus an argument in itself. In the first place, the Torah had certainly not penetrated to every corner of the world, and, in the second, from the point of view both of the New and the Old Testaments, their commandments were intended for a particular nation only. If so, how could the wisdom of that Being, Whose purpose is to make up for the deficiency and shortcoming of every needful thing, remain satisfied with the Torah? It would be a monstrous injustice, if, while on the one hand the Jews would not allow the rest of the world to benefit by the blessed teachings of the Torah, on the other, God, being *Qadir*, should be watching the situation so created with indifference! Thus, we find, incidentally, that the words that come at the end of a verse indicating any attribute of God, often constitute by themselves arguments on the point under discussion. Thus as *Qadir*, it is the purpose of God, when He finds the whole of humanity united, to make such an arrangement as will convey His revealed message to all its different sections and parts.

Certain prejudiced critics, especially among non-Muslims, have drawn a wrong conclusion from this verse, namely, that because God is *Qadir*, He has abrogated certain verses of the Qur-án itself, as a matter of necessity. In support of this view it is their habit to cite a verse from the chapter entitled "The Bee," and to infer therefrom that God, in the exercise of His power as *Qadir*, has actually abrogated certain verses. These people fail to grasp the elementary truth that *Qadir* exercises His powers only where such exercise is demanded by wisdom, and wisdom it was that demanded the abrogation of the Torah. But where is the wisdom in abrogating the verses of the Qur-án? It is true that the particular verse of the chapter "The Bee" speaks of the abrogation of some Divine revelation. But there is no reference here to the Holy Qur-án at all. It is a general statement to the effect that God can abrogate any of his revelations if He so chooses. Now, it is an admitted fact, that the chapter "The Bee" was revealed at Makka, and among those that have enumerated the verses supposed to be abrogated, not one has included therein any Makkan revelation; hence it is clear that the verse in question never implied the abrogation of any Qur-ánic verses. The truth behind the dispute over this theory of abrogation is that whenever it appeared to one of these critics that a certain verse was in conflict with another, he at once jumped to the conclusion that one of them must be abrogating the other, rather than ascribe this apparent conflict to his own lack of understanding. At one time the number of such abrogated verses was believed to be

more than one hundred, since when it began to diminish, until by the 12th or the 13th century, it came down to the minimum of four or five. Still later, more erudite scholars have succeeded in eliminating all save two. Any how, there is no other verse besides that in the chapter "The Bee,"² and the one under discussion in this chapter, which refers in a general way to any act of abrogation by God, and as for the latter verse the context clearly shows that it refers to the Torah.

The preceding sections have recounted the objections raised by the Jews. The first of these is that there was no need for any revelation while the Torah existed. The second is that while the Jews were there revelation could not have been sent to a person belonging to another race. The preceding verse has put forward the laws of nature as an argument in refuting the objection of the Jews. But that which follows deals a smashing blow at this conception of the "Chosen people."

Verse 107.—God is the Master of the heaven and the earth. Now, if the Jews have no other Helper and Supporter but He, to whom else are the other nations to turn for help and support? And if He is equally the master of all the nations, why should one particular nation be favoured with a blessing to the exclusion of all the others? In fact these people have no reasonable argument to bring forward.

Vesre 108.—Even in the days of Moses they used to tease that Prophet with all manners of meaningless questions, and the same conduct was now being pursued by them in their dealings with the Prophet

Muhammad. This surely was departing from the path of rectitude, the truth of the matter being that they were quite carried away by their feelings of jealousy.

Verse 109.—More than this, they tried to induce the Muslims to forsake the right path, and this in spite of the fact that the coming of the Prophet was in accordance with the demands of truth and justice. So the Qur-án asks the Prophet to go on forgiving them till the kingdom of God is finally established in the world. Here again reference is made to God as the All-Powerful Being—*Qadir*,—and even if the word were to be taken in its ordinary sense, it would be quite understandable to any one that God, as such, could at His own pleasure have given the Muslims power over the Jews. But, as I have already pointed out, the word has a deeper significance and requires to be associated with the quality of wisdom which quality demands that whatever comes to pass should take place in accordance with the fitness of things.

Verse 110.—It is to fulfil this requirement that the Muslims are asked to be mindful of their prayers and alms, in other words, to try their utmost to qualify themselves for Divine blessing by virtuous deeds, since no good deed is ever wasted. God is *Basir* (Seeing), and, as such, it is for Him to see to the recompense of actions. He will surely take notice of the fact that while one nation is striving to do good, another on the basis of that utterly false theory that paradise is exclusively its own in whatever manner it may act, is bent on making mischief. These people are foolish inasmuch as they do not realise that God is *Basir*, i.e., observer of human actions.

Verse 111.—The Jews have the false idea, and the Christians also, that they will enter paradise, in any case. If you ask them, however, what reasonable ground they possess for so believing, they cannot answer you.

Verse 112.—In fact, there is only one way of attaining the heavenly life, the life of eternal bliss and happiness, and that is by the surrender of one's self to God and by doing His will and striving to perform acts of kindness. And when a man has done all this, there is no reason why the outcome of his works should be anything but good, and why he should not be kept safe from all fear and grief. The greatest blessing in heaven of which the Qur-án speaks, is the safety from fear and grief, and if we ponder over the matter it will at once appear that there can be no greater blessing than such a state of the human mind. So long as the consequence of an action is not yet manifest, and there is a chance that some loss or misfortune may follow, the resulting condition of mind is what we call "Fear." But when the apprehended consequence does come to pass, it creates what we call "Grief" or "Sorrow." Thus the best description of paradise that the Qur-án could give was that there would be no fear or grief in it.

Section 14

Perfect Guidance is only in Islam

113. And the Jews say, The Christians do not follow anything (good), and the Christians say, The Jews do not follow anything (good), while they recite the (same) Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say; so Allah shall

judge between them on the day of resurrection in what they differ.

114. And who is more unjust than he who prevents (men) from the mosques of Allah, that His name should be remembered in them, and strives to ruin them? (As for) these, it was not proper for them that they should have entered them except in fear; they shall meet with disgrace in this world, and they shall have great chastisement in the hereafter.
115. And Allah's is the East and the West, therefore whither you turn, thither is Allah's purpose; surely Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.
116. And they say: Allah has taken to Himself a son. Glory be to Him; rather, whatever is in the heaven and the earth is His, all are obedient to Him.
117. Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth, and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, Be, so there it is.
118. And those who have no knowledge say: Why does not Allah speak to us or a sign come to us? Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. Indeed We have made the communications clear for a people who are sure.
119. Surely We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner, and you shall not be called upon to answer for the companions of the flaming fire.
120. And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians until you follow their religion. Say: Surely Allah's guidance, that is the (true) guidance. And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from Allah, nor any helper.

121. Those to whom We have given the Book follow it as it ought to be followed. These believe in it ; and whoever disbelieves in it, these it is that are the losers.

Verse. 113.—The Jews and Christians agree in believing that the heavenly life is exclusively theirs, but at the same time they do not recognise any good, each in the other. An attitude like this is simply foolish on the face of it. One could understand it if there were any such thing in religion as distinction of race. But with God there is only one religion, namely, to acknowledge His Holy Existence and to follow the line of virtuous action in accordance with His beneficent Will. Whosoever will seek to order his life in this manner will be close to God.

Verse. 114.—The outward sign of this closeness to God is to attend the Mosque, the House of God, for His remembrance. But, on the contrary, these people prevent one another from attending the sacred House for prayer and strain every nerve to decorate it outwardly. In the natural course of things, however it is the duty of every man to respect such places and to show reverence towards them, but in no case to seek their decoration. Thus it will be seen that theirs is a perverted nature whereby they must inevitably meet with disappointment in this life and also in the life to come. That this is so is borne out by the facts of history.

Verse. 115.—As a matter of fact, the sacred houses dedicated to God are not the exclusive property of any particular nation or country. God's presence is everywhere whether it be in the East or the West. Every-

where His Will is found in the process of being carried out.

Verse. 116.—It is a pity that people should ever have regarded any of their fellow-men as the veritable son of God. In doing this they forget that God is free from all blemishes¹ and defects, and that to stand in need of a son is a blemish, inasmuch as the son is a sort of possession of the father, whom the father requires as an obedient agent for the carrying out of his wishes more faithfully than might be possible in the case of another. But God is the Master of earth and heaven, and everything in them pays complete and unreserved homage to Him, so that there is no lack of obedience anywhere and no need of any son for that purpose. In the next verse, verse 117, the Qur-án advances another and a subtler proof of the fact that God cannot be the father of any one.

Verse 117.—It says that He is *Badi'*, which means "Originator." To possess this quality means that He should not create anything in conjunction with or in pursuance of any other person or power,—in other words, His work must be without parallel or precedent. It is obvious that the phenomenon of fatherhood is to be found everywhere. Take the earliest instance in history when any group of polytheists have ascribed Divine sonship to any person, there must have been

¹ Here the Arabic word is *subhan*. Just as the word *hamd* indicates that God gathers in His own person all the different attributes of perfection, so the word *Subhan* indicates that He is free from all attributes of weakness and imperfection. It is for this reason that whenever any occasion like that under discussion arises, the Qur-án uses this particular word.

innumerable fathers and sons existing before it. Thus the assumption or the ascription of fatherhood is always to follow the example of others, and is consequently derogatory to the position of God, Who must be the Originator in everything that concerns Him. This argument is followed by the assertion that when God wishes to do anything, His very Will itself takes the shape of actuality. In the mode of expression peculiar to the Qur-án, this idea is expressed by the phrase: "Be, and it is." Now this characteristic is to be found in no other being who is capable of fatherhood. To be a father, one has to be connected with someone else, especially with a wife, and such a connection precludes the existence of the attribute expressed in the phrase: "Be, and it is."

Verse 118.—Another point is raised here and is illustrated by the reference to the Jews of those days. The Jews used to express their surprise at the fact that whereas the Prophet claimed to have received so much revelation, they themselves received none. This surprise implied a doubt as to whether the Prophet had actually received any revelation from God, and a feeling that if any revelation had come at all it ought to have come to them also. In reply it is stated that there may be other proofs, than the one required, for the revelation coming to the Prophet.

Verse 119.—One such proof is that the Prophet claimed to be a bringer of good news and a warner. In other words, he asserted that those who followed him would achieve victory and receive Divine help and that their opponents would meet with ruin—

an announcement made at a time when there was not the slightest sign of any coming victory or Divine help at hand. On the contrary, his enemies were so strong at that time that it seemed as if they could and would wipe away the name of Islam from the face of the earth. Various other difficulties made their appearance immediately after the revelation contained in this verse, and they were in themselves sufficient to crush Islam out of existence. At a critical time such as this, to tell of his own victory and of Divine support and of the humiliation of his enemies, was surely a bold prophecy on the part of the Prophet and a proof positive of the fact that God actually spoke to him.

Verse. 120.—All those predictions, no doubt, came true ; but what the Jews and the Christians wanted was that the Prophet should adopt the religion which either of them professed. God says in reply that real guidance, which is the purpose of religion, comes from Him alone, and that that guidance had already appeared in the shape of the Qur-án. And to renounce this guidance, after it has come, will certainly lead to destruction.

Verse. 121.—So those to whom this guidance has been vouchsafed, namely, the Muslims, follow it and they shall as a consequence receive Divine succour ; whereas those who refuse it, will, surely, meet with loss.

Section 15

Covenant with Islam.

122. O childern of Israel ! call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations.

123. And be on your guard against a day when no soul shall avail another in the least neither shall any compensation be accepted from it, nor shall intercession profit it, nor shall they be helped.
124. And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain words, he fulfilled them. He said: Surely I will make you a leader of men. (Abraham) said: And of my offspring? My covenant does not include the unjust, said He.
125. And when We made the House a resort for andnme a (place of) security, and: Appoint for yourselves a place of prayer on the standing-place of Abraham. And We enjoined Abraham and Ishmael, saying: Purify My House for those who visit (it) and those who abide (in it) for devotion and those who bow down (and) those who prostrate themselves.
126. And when Abraham said, My Lord, make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the last day, He said: And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a short while, then I will drive him to the chastisement of the fire and it is an evil destination.
127. And when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House: Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, and Knowing.
128. Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee, and (raise) from our offspring a nation submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us (mercifully), surely Thou art the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful
129. Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among them who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise

Verse. 122.—Two things are to be noted in the history of the Jews. The first is that they are the perfect example of those who have been blessed with Divine favours. In other words, they had been the recipients of every kind of Divine gift and had been given superiority in this respect over all other nations of the world. But side by side with this, on account of their evil deeds, they also present an example of those on whom descends the Divine curse ; and since they persistently broke the commandments of God in their obstinacy, their excellence also began to disappear from them. It was at this transitional period of their history that the Holy Prophet appeared in Arabia. They had, however, not yet reached the last stages of their humiliation which is described in the next verse.

Verse. 123.—As I have shown in the foregoing pages, whatever has been asserted in this verse has literally been fulfilled ; so much so that a time actually came upon them when in the whole world they had no friend and helper. True, they always remained a wealthy nation, but even their wealth could not save them from the misery and ignominy with which they were beset.

Verse. 124.—Now both these conditions of theirs, namely, the state of being blessed and that of being cursed, are bound up with those covenants of God which were made with Abraham, a reference to which is contained in this verse. Although the state of complete accursedness had yet to be reached, the superiority which they still possessed over others and of which they were so proud had no other basis than the words of the

Prophet Abraham. It is obvious that the blessings of God come to that man alone who exhibits a firm determination and constancy of purpose. There are times when God causes to appear events in the life of a person which make for determination and perseverance. He is thrown in the midst of difficulties just to bring into play the real genius that lies hidden in him. Such a process is called *Imtihán* or *Ibtílá* in the Arabic language. Both of these words have the meaning of "asking for difficulties." Sometimes they signify "examination" or "trial," whereby the fitness or competence of a man is tested. But, since God is the Knower of the unseen, He does not need to resort to such examination. So whenever these two words are used as indicating the action of God, they mean nothing more than that He makes the quality of perseverance in a man shine out when he is passing through difficulties. As the Prophet Abraham had to be commissioned with the performance of very great tasks—debating with Kings, breaking down the houses of idol-worship, bringing the world over from polytheism to monotheism, and the like—he was made to pass through various tribulations so that these might develop in him the requisite qualities of perseverance and determination. The greatest of these trials was that he was commanded by God to sacrifice his son Ishmael at the altar of the Divine Will. Obviously it would have served no useful purpose to take an innocent life. On the other hand, the purpose was to create in both father and son that spirit which would enable them to perform even the most difficult task in the way of Allah. When the Prophet Abraham made ready his knife for the purpose of actually slaugh-

tering the son, who in his turn willingly yielded to the intended operation, they had already developed in them that spirit under the dictates of which the sentiments of fatherhood and sonship will offer themselves as willing sacrifices. So it was immaterial now whether Ishmael was slaughtered or not. Thus, when the emotions of perfect devotion to God were roused both in the father and the son, the Divine message came announcing that they had fulfilled the purpose of the trial. It is to this that the reference is made by the word "*Kalimátin*" meaning "certain words." These trials over, the Prophet Abraham proved competent to be the leader of nations, and the doors of Divine blessings were opened to him. When Abraham was informed of this favour of God, he naturally sought to include his progeny also in this blessing. The reply, however, which comes to him from God in this connection is very instructive.

God said that He promised nothing to the unjust, meaning that no one merely on the ground of his being the descendant of a great man is held righteous in the eyes of God. The Holy Qur-án referred to this incident because the Jews boasted of their descent from Abraham. True, God has promised to send blessings on the descendants of Abraham, but this promise was not confined to one particular branch. To both Isaac and Ishmael was vouchsafed the blessing of fruitfulness, but when the Israelites chose the ways of transgression and sin, it was but proper that they should be cut off from the promised blessing. Moreover, the promise which was given to the Ishmaelites, as recorded in the

Book of Genesis, had yet to see its fulfilment ; and it is significant that God's first promise of a blessing was given to Abraham at a time when neither of the two sons was born. There is, therefore, no warrant at all for assuming that it was intended for one of his sons only. Moreover, the promise which was given to Abraham, was also given to Hagar, the mother of Ishmael,¹ and Ishmael himself had received a separate promise, which was the same in effect as that given to Abraham.² Furthermore, the condition of circumcision³ was observed by the Ishmaelites as well as by the Israelites. Again, the prophecy which is contained in Genesis (xvii, 8) related to the land of Canaan. I admit that this land remained in the possession of the Israelites for a considerable period of time, but after that it certainly passed on to the Ishmaelites. It is surely wrong for the Jews and Christians to say that the covenant that was made with Ishmael was simply with regard to a worldly kingdom, when we find that the words of the promise given to Ishmael were the same as those of the promise given to Abraham.

These prophecies are, in fact, altogether sufficient to silence even an atheist. The promises were given to the Prophet Abraham, thousands of years before they saw their fulfilment, when there was nothing to indicate such a phenomenon. It was to a man holding a position no higher than that of a village headman that the promise came that his descendants would become

1 Genesis xvi : 10.

2 *Ibid* xvii : 20.

3 *Ibid* xvii : 10.

the masters of kingdoms. It may, however, be objected here that these prophecies were written down at a time when the Jews had attained some power, and that it is possible that they were fabricated in view of the growing prosperity of the race; but we should not forget that among these prophecies were also those that related to Ishmael, which were preserved in writing long before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. These last named prophecies are to be found in the Book of Genesis, which was written when the rest of the Old Testament was written, so that the objection referred to above cannot at any rate apply to the prophecies that concerned Ishmael. Keeping the facts of history in view, Europeans, it seems, could not conscientiously reject these prophecies altogether, so they contended that this message had reference only to the worldly prosperity of the Ishmaelites, and that they contained no promise of spiritual glory. But, as I have shown, the wording of the respective prophecies about Isaac and Ishmael is almost identical, and further in the Books of Habakkuk (iii, 3), and Deuteronomy (xxxiii, 2), it is clearly written that a prophet was to be born in the land of Arabia, and we find no person in the land of Arabia other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who ever laid any claim to prophethood. It is written in Deuteronomy that the appearance of the Lord will take place from Sinai, Seir and the Mount of Paran—nay, more, the sun which was to rise in Mount Sinai, was to shine forth in all its brilliance from the Mount of Paran. It is admitted on all hands that Sinai and Seir stand

for the prophethoods, respectively, of Moses and of Jesus. But where can we find that hill "Paran" if we do not take it to mean the one in the valley adjacent to which the town of Makka stands? In face of these facts, is it not in the interest both of wisdom and justice that we should readily accept the claims of the Prophet Muhammad?

Verses 125-126. Now I am going to refer to the event which has been recorded in these verses. In these days certain popular traditions are considered to be of much more weight than the written words of history, and quite rightly so. The history, in black and white, is the work, at best, only of a man or two, whereas the repository of popular traditions is the memory of a whole nation, continued through the ages. It is but just that the evidence of these millions of people should be accorded a larger measure of credence than that of one or two persons who sit down to write a history. That there was an ancient house of worship in Makka has been a well-established Arabian tradition from times immemorial, and the currency of such a tradition has been admitted even by the most hostile Western writers on Islam. The Holy Qur-án describes it as the First House of God,¹ and again, as the most Ancient House,² Historians of the pre-Christian era, too, have admitted the existence of such a house in Makka.³ It is also related that the Prophet Abraham arrived at this very place when he banished Hagar and

1 Holy Qur-án 3 : 95.

2 *Ibid*, 22 : 29.

3 Vide *Diodorus Siculus*.

her child Ishmael. The fact that Ishmael settled here is quite evident, inasmuch as the whole race of Arabs is descended from him. On the other hand, the coming of Abraham, in the company of Hagar and Ishmael, to the country of Arabia is actually recorded in the Book of Genesis itself, and there is yet another tradition which says that when the Prophet Abraham came to this House, *i.e.*, Ka'ba, he found it being used as a temple of idol-worship and in sore need of repair. It is at this fact that the Holy Qur-án hints in the words "Purify My House." Again in verse 127 a clear statement is made with regard to the erection of its walls; while the last of this series of traditions states that the Prophet Abraham, together with Ishmael, stood by this House and prayed to God that He might raise up among that people a Prophet, on whose account the House should become a point of attraction for the whole world; and in a reliable tradition it is stated that the Holy Prophet said to his brothers of the Arab race that it was through him that the prayers of Abraham were fulfilled. Nay, we have his actual words with us, and they are these: "I am the prayer of Abraham." This should not be taken to mean that the promise of God in this respect had been accomplished in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. Actually a considerable portion of it had to see its fulfilment in times to come. The fact remains, however, that the fulfilment came through him and through no other person in history. Over and above all this, hard by the boundary walls of the Sacred House of Ka'ba, there is even a spot, which is called the "Place of

Abraham.” In the course of my pilgrimage to Makka I had the privilege of standing on that sacred spot and addressing prayers to God which mostly concerned the success of the Woking Muslim Mission.

It is also learnt, from reliable traditions, that it is here that Abraham and Ishmael stood together and addressed their aforesaid prayer to God. But, apart from these proofs of theories, there is a proof of practice available in this connection, namely, that the Arabs, from very ancient times, have been known to run between *Safa* and *Marwa*, and this is called *Sa‘y* in the terminology of pilgrimage rituals. The rite known as ‘*Umra* also consists of this. Now, keeping in view all these practices and traditions on the one hand, and on the other considering the fact that it was only the Holy Prophet Muhammad, in the whole race of Ismaelites, who laid any claim to prophethood—does it appear in any way difficult to a man of common-sense to understand that his claims were just and right? It is to emphasize this aspect of the situation that the Holy Qur-án, as I have already explained, uses the word “*Haqq*” in speaking of the advent of the Holy Prophet, and repeatedly asserts that both his appearance and his claims were completely in accordance with the needs of the moment. A portion of the prayer of Abraham, however, was fulfilled before the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. People used to make pilgrimage to the Ka‘ba from Syria and Egypt, from Yemen and Hadzramaut, and even from the distant country of Persia. But the other part of it which is referred to in v. 128, was to see its fulfilment after the Holy

Prophet's time. I cannot understand why this part of Abraham's prayer should not be taken to be a very great prophecy in itself. One passage from the prayer is this: "My Lord! Make it a town of safety and provide such of its people as are believers with fruits as subsistence." But the other portion of it speaks of the place being made a place of prostration and bending low before God—things that could hardly have entered the imagination of men living in the days of the Holy Prophet, yet they are seeing its fulfilment to-day in a truly astonishing manner. While on this subject, I take the liberty of bringing into the discussion that part of Abraham's prayer also which is mentioned in section 6 of the chapter entitled "Abraham." The prayer is to the effect not only that the House should be made a place of safety, but also that idols should be cast out of it, never to be reinstated. It also prays that the heart of the world's people be so inclined towards it that all may come running to it. I admit that even before the time of the Holy Prophet this House was the centre of attraction for people round-about. But till that time there was nothing so significant in it as to tempt others to take possession of it. The Prophet Abraham himself had purged it of idols, but after a time the idols occupied the House once more. I again emphasize the fact that a considerable part of the prayer of the Prophet Abraham had not been fulfilled at the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Both the Holy Qur-án and the Prophet Muhammad, after referring to this prayer, laid emphasis upon certain words therein. These words were of such a kind

that their fulfilment would appear impossible at the time, but the Holy Prophet declared, by way of challenge, that the time for their fulfilment had actually arrived, and that that fulfilment was to be accomplished through him. The world's events have since so brought it about that Arabia is now actually fit to be the dominion of the greatest rulers of the earth ; and, strangely enough, whichever of the outside nations has become its ruler, has declared itself to be the guardian of this Sacred House. The word "security," which the prayer contains, has also the implied meaning that no non-Muslim power will ever rule over this land ; and this prophecy also has been fulfilled in spirit as well as in letter. So much for the physical safety of the country. But, as we have seen, where the Prophet Abraham prayed for the physical protection of its inhabitants he also mentioned their spiritual welfare—namely, that they should for ever remain free from the contamination of idol-worship,¹ and it actually so happened that although the House of Ka'ba had been the centre of idolatry for centuries before Muhammad, that son of Abraham so freed it from this pollution that it is now well over 1,300 years that it has been maintaining its prayed for purity in a wonderful manner. It is, indeed, a miraculous fulfilment of that prayer for the safety of the House that whereas the places of birth of other religions are, one and all, in the hands of unbelievers, the birthplace of Islam has never passed from the keeping of its followers. Benares, Hardwar, Pataliputra, Palestine and Jerusalem : none of these are in the hands

¹ The Holy Qur-án, 14 : 35.

of the followers respectively of Ram Chandra, Sri Krishna, Buddha, Moses and Jesus, who were born in one or other of these celebrated places. Such a contrast of events does certainly enhance the force of this prophecy relating to the Sacred House of Ka'ba.

In verse 125 there is the further prayer that the place of Abraham be made a place of prayers, so that the generations to come may gather in this place to do their prostrations and make obeisance before God. It is noteworthy that at the time of the revelation of this verse there was not the slightest chance of any such thing taking place on this spot. But since the advent of the Holy Prophet this has been the only House of Worship in the whole world which is used by devotees all the 24 hours, of the day bowing and prostrating themselves before the Lord. The churches and temples are open only at specified times during the week—even the Mosque of the Prophet in Madina has its doors closed from 11 or 12 o'clock at night until 3 in the morning, but if there is any house open for all the 24 hours of the day, and which is never without devotees in prostration, it is the House of God in Makka only. During my stay in Makka, I used to go to this House, at various times, both during the day and night, I often sat for hours at that place, but I always found in it persons bending and prostrating themselves before God. Now, if such a thing be the exclusive privilege of the Ka'ba, is any other house in the world entitled to contend with it for the title of "the House of God?" To a man of insight this fact alone should constitute a mighty proof of the truth of Islam. It will, indeed, so

appear when one considers further that when this verse was revealed, the Prophet himself had been turned out of Makka by the hostile section of its population who were given to rank superstitions and idolatry.

In verse 126 there is yet another astonishing prayer. The Qur-án here calls—and very rightly—Makka and its environs “a valley unproductive of fruits,” that is to say, a place absolutely unfit for any cultivation. I have travelled from Madina to Makka and thence to Jeddah, and have carefully marked every place on my way. To say nothing of cultivation, excepting in one or two places, I could not find even grass anywhere thereabout ; and although Makka has become a great centre of world attraction and there is a vast body of people who have gone and settled there, yet the barrenness of the land, as depicted in the Qur-án, is as evident to-day as it had ever been before. Yet it was at this place that Abraham settled his son and prayed to God that his descendants might be provided with fruits for their subsistence. Apparently there seemed to be no possibility of this prayer ever being fulfilled, in view of the situation of Makka, but it is a fact that the shops of Makka are to-day packed with fruits in all seasons of the year. Indeed, the people of Makka may be said to be living on fruit.

As I have already observed, there is nothing in Makka to attract outsiders. As it is, it cannot be a health resort, nor can it offer any temptation to an invader ; and yet, thousands of years ago, a sage stood on its soil and prayed that God might create such an attraction in it as would make the people of the world

come running eagerly thither.

As already pointed out, leaving aside the time of the Prophet Abraham, even in the days of our Holy Prophet there was nothing in Makka which could have any attraction for the outside world, and so these words should be taken as constituting a prophecy of the Holy Prophet, although announced by him on the basis of the revelation that came to the Prophet Abraham. The word "*Tahwi*," meaning "yearning," as used in the 37th verse of the chapter entitled "*Abraham*" points to a passionate feeling in the minds of the pilgrims assembling at Makka; and if a man happens to visit the Sacred Place at the time of Hajj, he will see with his own eyes how people from all over the world do actually assemble there with a fervour verging on madness. We note that there is no nation mentioned particularly in this prayer, rather is there a general reference to humanity under the term *An-Nás*. And (may God be glorified!) we have now the privilege of witnessing a time when this yearning for a visit to the Sacred House of Ka'ba is evidenced even in European hearts.

Now¹ turn to that part of this prayer which begins at verse 127 and ends with verse 129; but before doing so we should try to understand what prayer actually is.

Prayer is meant to create such a state in ourselves as will enable us to attract and absorb the Divine favours. The literal meaning of *Do'a* or prayer is "to ask," "to call for" or "to seek." When we are out to achieve anything and ask for the assistance of

¹ The Holy Qur-án, 14: 37.

God in that way, we are, what is called, praying. People have frequently stumbled at the real significance of prayer, so the Holy Qur-án throws light on this subject in the same way as it has clarified all other religious problems. It defines the position of prayer even in the opening chapter "*Fátiha*," and gives a full exposition thereof in other places. Thus the prayer "Thee do we beseech for help" in the "*Fátiha*" is preceded by the words—"Thee do we serve." True, prayer means a petition for help, but it has its own time and place. Its occasion arises when we have done everything that we are capable of, and then can proceed no further owing to our inability to discern the way ahead. It comes to this, that, on the one hand, we should be whole-heartedly engrossed in our attempts and struggles, and on the other, resort to prayer, so that the vision of the right way may become clearly vouchsafed to us as we proceed in our efforts. The prayers of the prophets are of special importance, inasmuch as there are invariably present in them all those factors which assure the acceptance of prayer. Moreover, these holy men use such words in their prayers as all but guarantee the outpouring of Divine grace. It is for this reason that a Muslim is asked generally to use the Qur-ánic prayers as his own. The Prophet Abraham and his son, while erecting the walls of the Ka'ba in the course of repairing the House, prayed in the first place for certain things that concerned the House itself.

Verse 127.—The very first sentence of that prayer is that which we also repeat in our prayers, and which is

something to this effect—"O God, accept from us our prayers and other things that we do. It is Thou Who really seest and knowest everything." Of the two words used here with relation to God, *Samí* or "Hearing" indicates one Who hears every kind of sound; and the *‘Alim*, meaning "knowing" signifies one Whose power of knowing is a personal attribute, which can never be separated from Him. There are other attributes of God that are of the same cadence as the two already discussed—as, for example, *Khabir*, *Latif*, *Karim*, and so on; and all of them have the characteristic of being present in their Possessor as properties inseparable from Him. It should be noted in this connection that the Qur-ánic prayers all end in some attribute of God. These attributes are not only appropriate to the nature and demands of the prayer, but they also point out those conditions that should precede the fulfilment of the prayer, and the observance of which is necessary on the part of him who offers the prayer.

Elsewhere a verse of the Qur-án itself tells us that we should strive to make our condition correspond to the Attributes of Allah at the time of our praying for anything. Here the word "‘Alím" (Knowing) as following the word "Samí" (Hearing) indicates that we should not merely call upon Allah in His capacity of the Hearer, but also as the Knower, that thereby we may show Him that our own condition is fit for the reception of His mercy. For in His capacity of "‘Alím," (Knowing), Allah knows our condition, within as well as without, and we practically

give the lie to this Attribute of His when we pray to Him for a certain thing and do not at the same time strive to make ourselves worthy to receive it. In fact these two words make it clear that we should ask for a blessing from God only when we have made our personal condition fit to be presented before Him and that if we neglect to do so, no prayer of ours will be accepted. "And the prayers of the unbelievers are but in transgression." Whatever a man may call himself he is nothing but an unbeliever if he does not strive to make his condition correspond to the will of God. In the prayer of Abraham there is a hint as to the life which a man should be living when he prays for anything.

Verse 128. In this verse there is an exposition of the life referred to above. "Our Lord! make us Muslims and make our progeny Muslims too!" The word "Muslim" means a person who orders his life on the lines of the Divine Commandments; and "Rabb" is that Holy Being who moulds the character of a man. The prayer beseeches Him to give us the character of Muslims, but, as I have said above, we need to make a full-hearted effort to become Muslims before we pray thus. I do not know of any person, whatever his religion, who does not become a Muslim before he achieves any kind of success. Even an atheist, in trying to accomplish his purpose, uses the natural course of cause and effect leading thereto. It is immaterial whether he knows or not that this natural course of cause and effect constitutes the Divine Law; but as soon as he adopts this course he *ipso facto* becomes a Muslim

and is bound to succeed. The subsequent part of the prayer throws some light on this, for it is prayed therein that we should be shown the ways of our devotion. By the word "manásik"—(devotional practices)—as used here, is meant the prayers to and worship of Almighty; but according to the teachings of the Qur-án, the customary prayers are only indications of the fact that the condition of the worshipper is in consonance with the form of the prayer. Thus to conduct oneself in accordance with the Will of God is the real devotional practice or prayer. The prayer under discussion, therefore, amounts to this, that God should show us the paths whereby we may come to do His Pleasure.

It is the law of God that the favours of God come to such persons as comport themselves on the lines of his Will. But as soon as a person forsakes the ways appointed by Him, His help to that person ceases and again, when that man relinquishes his evil courses and returns to the right way Divine favour visits Him as before. In Quranic terminology to forsake the right way of life is called "Sin", and to return thereto is called "Tauba" which is usually translated "repentance." And the acceptance of "Tauba" on the part of God is His revisiting a person with His favour, when that person has sincerely repented and mended his ways. The literal meaning of "Tauba" is "returning," and "Tawwáb" is one who is a great "returner". These words as a matter of fact present us with a keynote to the successful life as shown in the clause contained in the prayer of Abraham asking for His return. We may wander

from the right way owing to negligence but we have to shake off this negligence somehow before we can hope to be successful. The return of God with His favours depends on our retracing our footsteps from the wrong path; so we cannot reasonably offer the aforesaid prayers so long as we persist in treading the path of error.

If we are always in need of the favours of God, and are at the same time liable to lapses of negligence we should, at all hours of the day, resort to what is called "Tauba," that is to say, the forsaking of all those things that have been involving us in wrongdoing; and it is impossible for a person so acting ever to fail in achieving the object of life. That this is the meaning of the verse is also shown by the words with which it concludes. Here God is invoked in the words—" *Tawwáb* " and " *Rahim* ". As has been seen in the course of my comments on the " *Fátíha*," the mercy of " *Rahim*," descends only on a person who has first done something to deserve it. The Qur-án customarily uses these words together, a fact which shows that God, as " *Tawwáb* " accepts our " *Tauba* " when we forsake the path of error and come back to that of virtue. Let Muslims consider for themselves, how far their " *Tauba* " is in consonance with these conditions and accordingly how far their prayers are worthy of acceptance before God.

Verse 129. Now comes the last part of the prayer. It is God alone Who possesses the knowledge of what a Muslim, who desires to live a life of resignation, should

do and what he should not ; and, according to a verse of the chapter entitled " The Bee " God has taken upon Himself to impart this knowledge to man. It is for this purpose that He raised inspired holy men among them from time to time and it is they who are called *Nabi*, *Rasul* or Prophet. Accordingly, the Prophet Abraham, in order to assure his people's life in Islam, that is their resignation to the Divine Will, prays that God may raise up among them a Prophet, who shall receive revelation from God, for the needful guidance which he, in his turn, shall deliver to the people, codified in a book full of wisdom, and who shall himself act upon the principles laid down therein and inspire and direct others to do the same, so that their souls also may be purified. This verse not only points to the necessity for the appearance of persons called Prophets, but also tells us of the concomitants of Prophethood, that is to say, what peculiarity a man is required to possess in order to be called a Prophet. Since those alone who have talked with God can receive any directions of guidance from God, the most essential point in Prophethood is that persons with any claim to it should have the honour of talking with God. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the privilege of listening to the Divine Words will of itself suffice to make a man a Prophet. To attain to that exalted position, the revelation vouchsafed to him must present a complete chart for a life in God—a programme for a complete purification of the soul ; for, indeed, the purpose of revelation is nothing else than this and it is to this truth that reference is

made in the following verse of the chapter entitled *The Sun* :

And the soul and its perfection, so He intimated to it, by inspiration, its deviating from truth and its guarding (against evil), he will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it.¹

This short chapter begins with the enumeration of certain phenomena of Nature, namely, the sun and the moon, the night and the day, and the sky and the earth. Each one of these, conforming to certain specified laws of Nature, becomes a source of benefit to other objects of creation, and manifests its own latent faculties thereby. On the same lines has been the creation of the human soul, which is also called the rationality of man. When the soul attains its fullest development, it acquires the power of reflecting over all the phenomena of external Nature.

In his capacity of the Dispenser of benefits to others he plays the parts, so to say, of the Sun, the Moon and like objects of Nature ; but to attain this perfection of the soul one must be given revealed knowledge of the ways of piety and sin, through the medium of some Prophet. By "Sin" is meant those things which a man has to avoid, while "Piety" signifies all those things which it is incumbent on him to do. So, that man alone can be called a Prophet whose revelations deal with the distinction between "Piety" and "Sin" which in religious terminology is called "The Law," or the Book, establishes the truth of its assertions with wise arguments and experiences the purification of his own soul through the guidance furnished by it.

1. The Holy Qur-án, 91 : 7-10.

I have already stated that the very first condition of Prophethood is the state of being spoken to by God, which, given other necessary adjuncts, turns into Prophethood, because it is the gateway of Prophethood. Now, because Prophethood is a matter of internal experience and has no external shape to present, it is necessary for the maintenance of man's faith in the fact of Prophethood, that persons other than the Prophets would also have the privilege of being spoken to by God, so that they may, on the basis of their personal experience, bear witness to the fact of God's actually speaking to man. Since the revelation of the Qur-án was the final word of God on the subject of Law, and was to remain a guidance to mankind for all ages to come as distinguished from other revelations of its kind which had almost been lost, it was necessary that among the followers of Muhammad there should be a class of persons blessed with the spoken words of God, if the Holy Prophet was to bear testimony to the fact of God speaking to man from time to time. God has been gracious to this blessed religious community of the Muslims, in as much as not only has He shown the way that enables man to become the recipient of the Divine words, but has also made such recipients actually appear in the community? thereby, distinguishing it from other religious communities who being less fortunate in this respect, possess no such blessed tradition. As a result of this we find that whereas Muslims are for the most part believers in the phenomenon of Prophethood, the followers of other religions do not believe even in the possibility of God's speaking to man, to say

nothing of Prophethood, the reason for this unbelief being the fact that no recipient of Divine words had ever appeared among them. This rejection of the theory of Prophethood has gone to such a length that even the champions of religions that take their stand on revelation have begun to allege and incline to the view that those books which they claim to be revealed books are really only reflections of the Divine Will cast on the minds of certain holy persons, and that the actual words which are before us are not from God but are merely the words of the holy persons to whom the Will had been revealed ; and such a notion naturally has led the less-instructed of people in general to a condition of mind where the very reality of revelation is denied. As a consequence many of them have begun actually to disbelieve those books, which were once regarded as the revealed Will of God. Nowadays one comes across, though rarely, such persons even in the Muslim community—persons who deny that the Qur-án is a verbal revelation from God. Such an idea is tantamount to holding that the words of the Holy Qur-án are the words of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who no doubt, received the ideas from God. Now, since the Qur-án is the last Book of God, and the door of Prophethood has been closed for ever with the appearance of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the growth of false beliefs like the one mentioned above can only be checked if the first essential of Prophethood, namely, communication with God, continued to show itself from time to time. And as a matter of fact not a century has passed, since the passing of the Holy Prophet, that

has not witnessed the appearance of persons receiving the revealed words of God. Such a person in Islamic terminology is called a *Muhaddath*, i.e., being a person who has the privilege of receiving messages from God in abundance. The words of God come to such an one like a shower of rain; but even this abundance of Divine Messages does not make him a Prophet. Such a person is not a common phenomenon, and only a selected few are deserving of this honour which in the first generation of Muslims fell to the lot of 'Umar. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said of him that if there could be any Prophet after him, it would be 'Umar; but that since no Prophet could appear after him, 'Umar was certainly a *Muhaddath*, though he could not be raised to the position of Prophethood. And as I have already said, the revelation of Prophethood has been very clearly defined in the chapter, *The Sun* :

So He intimated to it by inspiration its deviating from truth and its guarding (against evil).¹

Indeed, this is the very purpose of revelation. It is revelation that tells us what should be done and what should not. If such a revelation is not forthcoming, there could be no need for any revelation. But since revelation, being a matter of personal experience, runs the risk of being denied as a reality, as has happened in our own day, it is necessary that its elementary form—that is the phenomenon of God's speaking to man—should continue in human society. In short, revelation is inseparably bound up with the purification of the soul, as is stated in the final portion of the Prayer of Prophet Abraham.

1. The Holy Qur-án, 91 : 8.

Tazkiyya, or purification, is of three kinds, and the idea of all these three is contained in the meaning of the word. First, it means the growth of a thing; secondly, it means its being cleansed from all impurities; thirdly, it means the manifestation of that essential quality in a thing which forms its *raison d'être*. It is this last mentioned purification which is called *Faláh* in Arabic. Indeed, the very purpose of revelation is *Faláh*, as is mentioned in the fifth verse of the chapter entitled "The Cow." *Faláh* is attainable by such as have experienced *Tazkiyya*, or purification, as has been stated in the chapter called "Al-Shams"—"He indeed has attained *Faláh*, who has purified himself." Take any fruit-bearing tree; it will furnish you with a very good example of *Tazkiyya*. When its seed is sown in the ground, it experiences the first stage of *Tazkiyya*; it starts growing from day to day. The appearance of the sprout, and of branches therefrom, the formation of wood in them, the growing of the leaves, giving further birth to flowers and fruits—all these are included in the first stage of *Tazkiyya*. Apart from this, the tree rejects, in its every stage of growth, all that is no longer needed. For example, the seed sown in the ground, assimilates many earthly ingredients necessary for its existence, but these ingredients invariably consist of elements superfluous at the sprouting stage of its growth, when they have to be rejected. Similarly in the wood stage some more unneeded elements are further rejected in the interest of the healthy growth of the tree. In the same way in the leaf stage, when much that goes to make up the constitution of the wood has again to be left behind. And through all

these processes of transformation the real essence of the thing manifests itself in a systematic course of gradual development. After this, the leaves draw aside and the real essence manifests itself in the shape of a flower. But there are some crude elements even in flowers, which are discarded in the fruit stage. This is the second meaning of the word *Tazkiyya*. In ordinary language it may be called "freedom from dross." It is, as we know, the crude and refuse materials that are called "dross." To conclude, when the essence of a thing manifests itself in its last stage of evolution, it fulfils the third meaning of *Tazkiyya*. In the same way, the real and final object of "Prophethood" is the purification of consciousness. According to the prayer of Abraham there are four functions of "Prophethood." First, there should be revelation from God; secondly, this revelation should finally take the form of a Book; thirdly, the distinguishing feature of man being the reasoning faculty, whatever this Book or revelation should teach must be based on wisdom.

Passing on to the fourth function of "Prophethood," it states that it should be instrumental in bringing about the purification of consciousness. In other words, coming in the form of a voice from outside the human consciousness it should teach us what we should do and what we should not, in order that the real essence may finally emerge out of our consciousness. This is what is known in religious circles as Dispensation or Law. In Arabic it is called "Sharí'ah."

The human species is a branch of the animal world. When plant life experiences the more evolved

stage of flesh and emotion, it attains to what is called animal life. Further, when these animal emotions feel the urge of more refined possibilities, animal consciousness assumes the form of human consciousness and, in the language of the Qur-án, is called *Nafs*. For the sake of facility of discussion, I have used the expression "animal consciousness" with regard to the emotions as they are, and I shall use the expression "human consciousness" with regard to the emotions when they are found to exhibit certain special features and higher possibilities. It may be mentioned at the outset that all the possible emotions are not to be found in animal consciousness, whereas all those emotions, which are possessed by animals severally, can be seen existing together in human consciousness. For example, the sense of cleanliness, which is noticed in a cat, is not present in a pig. In the same way, the humility that characterises a cow, cannot be seen in a wolf. In man, however, both the spirits of humility and aggression are seen existing side by side. One cannot find in a dog the fellow-feeling of a cow; a dog as we know, is hostile to every other dog. In man, however, we find the quality of sympathy as well as antipathy. In the same way, every animal manifests one or other of various emotions, but, in man, all these are found existing together. To speak metaphorically, the consciousness of man is like a zoo, in which there are a dog, a cat, a pig, a wolf, a cow, a tiger, a monkey and all the other animals. The perfection of human consciousness can be a reality only when man can use these various animals, or animal impulses, in their proper places—which faculty is

another characteristic of human consciousness. In human stage, the emotions feel the urge of certain new impulses. First, the expansion of emotions. For instance, our knowledge expands from day to day, whereas purely animal knowledge does not expand. Human emotions assume some such forms as have no parallels in the purely animal. The emotion of anger is found both in the man and in the animal, but in man it expands into justice, fair dealing and courage. This phenomenon, however, is not seen in animals. Similarly, our knowledge of yesterday becomes the basis of, or the datum for, our experiences to-day. Both these things, however, are absent in an animal. The monkey often sees travellers passing their nights in forests, and kindling fire for their necessity with fire-sticks. By nature the monkey is a lover of fire. When the travellers stop anywhere in a forest, the monkey comes and sits by their fire. Then again the monkey has a strong tendency for imitation. With all this, however, it lacks the logic necessary for lighting fire itself with fire-sticks. Apart from the extension of knowledge, man has also the capacity of refining his emotion. He knows the occasion for the proper display of a particular emotion and avails himself of it accordingly. An animal does not know the right occasion for the use of anger; but a fully developed man does. He knows, moreover, in what measure it should be used for a certain purpose. It is on the development of this capacity that the real essence of man appears on the surface and he experiences what we call the "purification of consciousness." Under the

guidance of prophethood, the animal emotions of man, cleansed of their impurities, finally reach this stage, where they are used in the proper way and measure. This is exactly the function of the revelation or the law as vouchsafed to a prophet. If, however, the revelation of a person does not furnish these requisites, that person cannot be called a *Nabi*.

There can be no doubt about the recipient of such a revelation being a God-realised person. It is inconceivable that one should receive messages from God, while he has not attained His nearness. Below the Position of a prophet, there is a lower stage, which, however, is itself above the mere reception of Divine communication. This lower stage is the stage of *Muhaddathiyya*. Every recipient of Divine communication cannot be called a *Muhaddath*. He alone can be called a *Muhaddath* who receives these communications copiously and frequently. One may call such a person "one having the semblance of a prophet." A *Muhaddath*, nevertheless, can be a *Nabi* only when his revelations contain instructions for the refinement of animal emotions. In order that faith in the phenomenon of prophethood does not suffer deterioration, the door of revelation as such has been left open for the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. The law, however, having reached completion, no *Muhaddath*, coming after Muhammad, can attain to the position of prophethood. We believe in the finality of prophethood with the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, because our Holy Prophet says so and because it is so written in the Holy Qur-án. Unfortunately, there

are people, not equipped with proper knowledge of the subject, who would make unwarranted interpretations of these sayings of the Prophet and the verses of the Qur-án that bear on the subject. We hold to this idea of the finality of prophethood because we do not find materials for the purification of our consciousness or the refinement of all the animal emotions reposed in us, in the revelation granted to any recipient of revelation appearing after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Applying this standard, we are not prepared to accept even the prophethood of previous prophets, relying merely on the remnants of their teaching, as extant to-day. Our acceptance of these prophets is based on two considerations ; firstly, that the Holy Qur-án itself calls them prophets ; and, secondly, the Book also persistently refers to the loss or interpolation of the books associated with these holy names—an allegation which has become a proven fact in these days. Consequently, we acknowledge that any one, whom the Holy Qur-án calls by the name of “Prophet,” must have come with the teachings essential to the function of the prophethood, but that these teachings are now lost to the world. This loss, however, does not affect the prophethood of those prophets and so the Holy Qur-án insists on calling them “Prophets.”

Moreover, there are certain instincts in man of which no traces can be found in other animals. And, strictly speaking, the special function of prophethood is the education of these instincts. Here I propose to name two such instincts. One is the instinct of worship and the other that of corporate social life.

No other animal excepting man has ever worshipped any power greater than itself. It is only man who has bowed his head in worship before stones, trees, stars, etc., considering some or all of them to be possessing higher powers than himself. It is this very instinct, we should not forget, which manifests itself in a refined form in the worship of God, the Invisible Creator. Similarly, in the world of animals, it is man alone who lives a corporate social life. Both these instincts are of such a nature that their proper use alone can assure a safe civilisation and culture for us. If we fail to make proper use of the instinct of worship and social life, we cannot achieve any success in our life. It is to refine these two instincts that God speaks to man. If, therefore, materials for their refinement are missing in the revelations of a person, no real benefit can accrue from them to others. Hence it is that the term "revelation of prophethood" can apply only to such revelations as have instructions for worship and social life.

Although prophethood is co-existent with humanity yet the Prophet Moses is the only person in the whole history of prophethood who is found to purify in a perfect manner the idea of God, from all kinds of embodiment and representation, and who taught man to bow before the One Invisible Creator of the Universe. The details of this subject have already been given. Other prophets besides the Prophet Moses had also been giving the same lessons respecting the unity of the Godhead. But, unfortunately, their followers all, in course of time, became polytheists.

Even among the Hindus, unitarianism was the original religious principle, but this gradually gave way to incarnation worship. All the elements of nature and their combinations in thousands and millions of different forms became objects of worship. Evidently, it was the manifestation of this very instinct of worship which was finally corrected and refined by the Holy Qur-án. This Book uprooted the tendency of polytheism in such a manner that, since its revelation, its followers never betrayed the weakness of idol-worship. This is not the proper place to discuss how far polytheism has played havoc with human culture. It is a fact, nevertheless, that this curse of polytheism has deprived humanity of every kind of real progress and prosperity. It is evident from this that the proper training of this instinct of worship is of surpassing importance.

Next to the instinct of worship comes the instinct of social existence. It is undeniable that provisions for the refinement of this instinct were not wanting in the times before the Prophet Moses. Civilisations like those of the Egyptians and Phœnicians existed before the revelation of the Torah. The instructions for social existence, however, that can be seen in a systematic form in the pages of the Torah, have no parallel anywhere else. The Ten Commandments of the Prophet Moses and the Law of Retaliation are only different forms of the principles of social existence. To make a mighty ruling nation out of a people that had spent generations in the servitude of the Egyptians, certainly needed a very effective system of instruction

in social life. Since the instinct of resistance, without which there could be no defence, had altogether died in this race, they were given the Law of Retaliation. The same people, who had not spirit enough to raise their heads against the most destructive onslaughts, became, under the training of the Mosaic Dispensation, objects of fear to other nations, as is seen from the last chapters of Deuteronomy.

The Israelite Prophets, that followed Moses, so perfected the civilisation with the help of revelation, that a magnificent King like Solomon came to be born in this line. As compared with this, if one looks at the teachings of the Holy Qur-án, this last revelation will be found to have kindled the light of civilisation in a form surpassingly resplendent.

There seems to be no aspect of civilised existence on which the Holy Qur-án has not thrown sufficient light. Leaving aside other parts of the Book, if one examines the short opening chapter, called *Fátíha*, one will find it covering each and every aspect of civilisation—the physical, the moral, the economic, the political and the spiritual. Above all, this last prophetic mission has instituted such a comprehensive series of Divine attributes, that it covers not only the instincts of worship and civilised life, but every other instinct that belongs to man.

Now, as I have already said, if we do not find in the revelation of a great man provisions for the proper training of these two instincts (of worship and civilisation) not to speak of other things, we cannot, by reason of this very deficiency, call that

person a "prophet." As, after all, prophethood is the outcome of God's attribute of *Rabubiyyah* or "nourishing;" the kind of nourishment which prophethood affords is that of the emotions or impulses. It may be of interest to mention here that Abdul Baha, the great Bahai propagandist, has tried to prove the prophethood of Bahauallah, and this again on the authority of certain verses of the Holy Qur-án. He refers, among other verses, to the following :

"So whenever there will come to you from Me any guidance, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve" (2 : 38).

Abdul Baha has tried to substantiate with this verse his theory of the continuation of prophethood. He, however, does not seem to make allowance for the fact that the pronoun in "from Me" has as its noun in the previous verse the word *Rabb*. So we are constrained to see whether this subsequent claimant to prophethood has got any teachings reflecting God's attribute of *Rabubiyyah*; in other words, whether he has any guidance to offer in the refinement of the emotions or the purification of the consciousness. No doubt, Hazrat Bahauallah has framed a so-called "Law." He has changed the order of prayers, introduced modifications in fasting and effected other similar minor changes. But there is no provision in his teachings for any purification of the consciousness, which the Qur-án has omitted. I, therefore, fail to acknowledge Hazrat Bahauallah as a prophet on the mere grounds of his having introduced certain modifications in institutions like those of prayer and fasting.

Section 16**The Religion of Abraham.**

130. And who forsakes the religion of Abraham but he who makes himself a fool, and most certainly We made him pure in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the righteous.
131. When his Lord said to him, Submit, he said : I submit myself to the Lord of the Worlds.
132. And the same did Abraham enjoin on his sons and (so did) Jacob : O my sons ! Surely Allah has chosen for you (this) faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims,
133. Nay ! were you witnesses when death visited Jacob, when he said to his sons : What will you serve after me ? They said : We will serve your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, one God only, and to Him do we submit.
134. This is a people that have passed away ; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did.
135. And they say : Be Jews or Christians, you will be on the right course. Say : Nay ! (we follow) the religion of Abraham, the upright one, and he was not one of the polytheists.
136. Say : We believe in Allah and (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 (in) 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, and to Him do we submit.
137. If then they believe as you believe in Him, they are indeed on the right course, and if they turn back,

then they are only in great opposition, so Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

138. (Receive) the baptism of Allah, and who is better than Allah in baptizing? and Him do we serve.
139. Say : Do you dispute with us about Allah, and He is our Lord and your Lord, and we shall have our deeds and you shall have your deeds, and we are sincere to Him?
140. Nay ; do you say that Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes were Jews or Christians? Say : Are you better knowing or Allah? and who is unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allah? and Allah is not at all heedless of what you do.
141. This is a people that have passed away : they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did.

The prayer just discussed gives, indeed, a very clear picture of Abraham's religion ; but the substance of the whole position has been given in two brief words in the Verse 130. When God commanded Abraham to bow before His will, his reply was, as the verse says, that he would bow before any command that could come from the "Lord of the Creation." It is this religious attitude, indeed, which is of the purest form—freed, as it is, from every kind of narrowness—national, racial or ritualistic. The phrase "Lord of the Creation" refers to the desirability of a religious man acknowledging and acting upon such principles alone as fulfil the aims of the up bringing of the whole creation.

It is not religion that a man should act exclusively

for himself. He should rather keep the good of God's creatures in view. This was the religion of Abraham; hence his precedence before God among the members of the human family.

132.—It was this religion which Abraham taught his children—that is to say, that they should obey the commandments of the Lord or the Nourisher of the Universe.

133.—The Prophet Jacob also, while taking leave of this world, said the same thing to his children. They similarly replied, saying that they did submit themselves to God. They also said that they would obey his God as well as the God of Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac. This particularisation is on one ground only. The same God is the Creator of all. And yet there are wide differences between the various conceptions of God with reference to the attributes ascribed to Him. From this point of view, one may say that the God of the Christians is not the same as the God of the Muslims. It was on this account that the sons of Jacob said that they would worship the God of Abraham.

134.—These people have passed away and have carried the effects of their actions with them. The whole affair, in reality, revolves round the worship of God. Hence, to say that unless one becomes, for example, a Jew or a Christian, one will not be given guidance, is not correct.

135.—The proper attitude for any one to adopt in matters of religion is to say that he follows the religion of Abraham, who remained, throughout his whole life, a *Hanif*, *i. e.*, one dedicated to God. The word 'Hanif'

literally means "to be inclined in one particular direction." With reference to Abraham, it only means that he was solely inclined towards God. In other words, he did not turn in any other direction. And the right religion is that one should obey the commandments of God, through whomsoever they may be communicated.

136.—Now in this verse a Muslim is commanded to announce to people that he does not make any distinction between any two messengers of God, in whatsoever part of the world they may happen to appear; that he is not concerned with personalities, but with the commandments of God, which have to be obeyed; it being immaterial through whom they are delivered.

137.—Now, if others also follow this line of conduct, they must also be in the right course. But if any one is opposed to it, he is evidently actuated by a feeling of obstinacy. And if such a person adopts an aggressive attitude in his hostility, God will support the believers, —and He hears and sees everything.

138.—Thus true religion is that we should be saturated with Divine grace, and this is the highest possible form of religious life. In fact, the object of our human birth, as the *Qur-án* rightly points out, is nothing but that we should base our conduct on His behests. And the truth about our life is that we carry the effect of our actions with us into the other life. Now, when we are all subject to the law of righteousness of action, and the God which we worship is also the God of others, there is no room left for any quarrel on religious matters. At this point, for the Jews and the Christians to say that the prophets Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob

were Jews or Christians is a mere assertion opposed to facts. These people, unfortunately, do not stop to think that the personalities in question had departed from this world long before the appearance of the founders of those two religions. How, on earth, can they be conceived of as belonging to any or both of these two religions? Such assertions are, in fact, attempts to hide the very evidences which are to be found in their scriptures.

139.—These sacred personalities have departed with the record of their own conduct clinging to them, and no one else will ever be called upon to account for how they behaved.

In this last section of its first part, the Holy Qur-án has preached a perfect religion of peace, the like of which is not to be met with in any other religion of the world. Of course, I have to admit with regret that, reacting to the narrow-mindedness of others some Muslims, contrary to the teachings of the Book, have become rather narrow-minded of late. If, however, the world adopts the religious attitude outlined by the Qur-án, there will be no possibility left of any disturbance in the field of religion. True religion is that one should do deeds of virtue, the instructions for which are to be found in the commandments of God, Who is the common Lord of all peoples. Through whomsoever His voice may come, one should bow before it. It is a well-known fact that, commanded by the Qur-án, Muslims pay unqualified homage to the leaders of all the religions of the world. If the followers of other religions, acting upon the example of the Muslims, begin respecting the leaders of faiths other than their

own, in the same way as they revere their own leaders, the days of religious dissension will soon be over.

It should be remembered that, so far as the question of good deeds is concerned, one finds a uniform teaching given by all teachers of religion. Ritualism, as introduced into religion, has not only deformed religion, but has also become the fruitful source of inter-religious bickerings. If all followers of religion can set aside the ritualistic parts of religion, and concentrate on the worship of God and righteous acts, there will be no occasion left for any quarrel. This is, in essence, the connotation of Islam, as I have explained above. When the literal as well as the implied meaning of the term 'Islam' is the carrying out of God's commandments, it is inconceivable that one should not like to be called a Muslim. However much one may call himself Hindu or Christian or Jew, it is, after all, a case of associating oneself with a person or a race; but, so far as the question of righteous actions is concerned, one must, more or less, be a Muslim. To say this is merely to state a fact. After all, if, on the one hand, previous revelations have not retained their original shape and form, being distorted almost beyond recognition by the influence of human mind and hand, while, on the other hand, the Qur-án is proved to be the only Book that has maintained its purity from the beginning until now, and again, if the injunctions contained in this Book are such as are acceptable to the unsophisticated intelligence of man, and further, if there are no two opinions on the question of its being beneficial to man, why should not obedience be given to this Book alongside with God? And this is Islam in its recognised sense.

In the last section of its first part, the Holy Qur-án laid the world of humanity under a great weight of benefaction by separating real religion from the rituals of any system of religion. It taught, in very clear language, that religion, first and foremost, consists of faith in God and the Day of Judgment and of good deeds—things which have nothing exclusively to do with a particular people or country or person.

In every religion prayer is an institution, which inclines to be the embodiment of religion. Then there is the further possibility of the direction towards which the votaries turn in their prayers, becoming a substitute for the religion itself. The literal meaning of the term 'Qibla,' the symbolical pivot of Muslim prayer life, is the direction towards which a person turns. In the religious sense, however, it signifies the direction towards which a religious community turns in times of prayers. After all, the *Qibla*, or the sacred direction of every man, is the symbol of his religion. For instance, in olden days, the Zoroastrians used to face the sun in their prayers. But to-day a person facing the sun in prayers can pass for a Christian. In the same way, those who turn towards Jerusalem in prayers are called Jews.

At the time of the advent of the Prophet Muhammad different religious communities had different *Qiblas*. Although Arab traditions spoke of the religion of Abraham, his sojourn in Makka and his erecting the walls of the Ka'ba in Makka, and although the Arabs remembered the prayers of Abraham, yet there was no mention, in Makkan revelations, of the prayer of Abraham or its occasion.

There was, no doubt, a reference in it to the religion of Abraham, but there was nothing to indicate that our Holy Prophet was the prophet promised in it. Further, because of all the existing points of devotional turning, the temple of Jerusalem was the only one whose adherents were believers in the Unity of God to some extent, and also because, unless there was any clear commandment from God on any particular religious matter, the Prophet used to follow the sensible part of the traditions of the followers of the Scriptures, so until the time of the revelation upon the matter, he kept the Temple of Jerusalem as the *Qibla* or point of turning. But on his immigration to Madina, the revelation of the chapter entitled 'The Cow,' made it clear first that he himself was the subject-matter of the prayer of Abraham ; secondly that the Jews and Christians had deviated greatly from the Unity of God, which forms the corner-stone of the teachings of the religion of Islam, and thirdly that if that perfect Unity of the Divinity could be found anywhere it was in his teachings alone. Hence, if there was any suitable *Qibla* for him to adopt it would be the Ka'ba, the *Qibla* of Abraham, towards which he was naturally inclined now.

A FEW SALIENT FEATURES OF THE RELIGION OF ISLAM WHICH ARE NOT GENERALLY KNOWN

(a) It is absolutely monotheistic—no division in the Godhead—prayers are addressed directly to the Invisible God. Muhammad is as much a Prophet of God as Jesus, Moses, etc., upon whom all be the blessings of God, but like all other prophets before him, he is every bit a human being. Islam has neither ritual nor priesthood.

(b) It abhors warfare except in extreme cases of self-defence.

(c) The position it has given to woman is still unapproached by the laws of the most progressive nations of the modern world. According to Islam, there is no difference between man and woman—materially, spiritually, morally.

(d) It is the only religious outlook on life which can grapple with the disruptive forces at work in the world to-day.

(e) It is a widely admitted and unparalleled achievement of Islam, that it has created a world-wide brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God.

(f) Islam alone has succeeded in abolishing all unconscionable barriers of distinction, based on nationality, colour and language.

ATTITUDE OF ISLAM TOWARDS OTHER RELIGIONS

“Every nation had an apostle” (The Qur’án, ch. 10, v. 47).
No religion other than Islam recognizes this truth.

SOME POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ISLAM

It is wrong to think :

- that Islam was spread by the sword ;
- that Islam is synonymous with polygamy ;
- that, according to Islam, woman has no soul ;
- and that the Islamic conception of Paradise is sensual.