

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER AL-FĀTIḤAH (The Opening)

Quranic Lesson No. 1

Attributes of Allah	11
The human soul	13
Knowledge of the Holy Quran	13

Quranic Lesson No. 2

The wisdom of <i>Al-Fātiḥah</i>	15
Man's quest after God	17
All praise is for Allah	17
Proof of existence of the Divine Being	18

Quranic Lesson No. 3

Undeniable proof of Divine existence	19
Modern age of Atheism	20
Recognition of Divine Being through His attributes	21
Purpose of man's creation	21
Divine guidance to all nations	22

Quranic Lesson No. 4

Attributes of Allah are infinite	23
Four basic attributes of Allah	24
Lord of the worlds	24
The Beneficent, the Merciful	26

Quranic Lesson No. 5

Master of the Day of Requital	27
Concept of Paradise and Hell	28
Only Allah is to be served with humility	29
Asking for Divine assistance	30

Quranic Lesson No. 6

Man created for a higher objective	32
The path of the righteous	33
Testimony of a righteous servant of Allah	34

Quranic Lesson No. 7

Closeness to God achieved through the Religion of Islam	36
The Perfect Model of righteousness	37
Those who did not benefit from Divine guidance	39
A comprehensive prayer	40

CHAPTER *AL-BAQARAH* (The Cow)**Quranic Lesson No. 8**

Answer to the prayer of <i>Al-Fātiḥah</i>	42
Lessons to be learned from previous nations	42
Significance of the name <i>Al-Baqarah</i> (The Cow)	43
Allah is the Author of this Book	44
The Book of Guidance	45

Quranic Lesson No. 9

Authenticity of the Holy Quran	47
Meaning of the word <i>Taqwa</i>	49
Guidance for the dutiful	50

Quranic Lesson No. 10

Belief in the Unseen	52
Limitations of human vision	54
Vision of the truthful	56

Quranic Lesson No. 11

Proof of Divine existence	57
Basis of all human development	59
The spiritual eye	60

Quranic Lesson No. 12

Prayer the means of Divine realization	62
God is Omnipresent	62
The true spirit of prayer	63
Rules of prayer	64

Quranic Lesson No. 13

Prayer as a means of guarding against evil	66
Spiritual sustenance	67
Spiritual Ascension	68

Quranic Lesson No. 14

Broad concept of charity	71
Universality of Divine Revelation	74
Belief in Life After Death	75

Quranic Lesson No. 15

Message of the Quran is for all nations	77
Service with humility	78
Freedom of will	79

Quranic Lesson No. 16

Guidance for all nations	82
Purpose of Divine guidance	82
Uniqueness of man's physical and spiritual faculties	84
Man's tendency to follow the religion of his forefathers	85
The consequences of following and ignoring Divine guidance	85

Quranic Lesson No. 17

Purpose of man's creation	87
The metaphor of spiritual sustenance	88
Seven realms of spiritual development	88
Revelation a source of life for the spirit	89
A challenge for the critics of Divine Revelation	90

Quranic Lesson No. 18

Quranic teachings are practical for all times	93
A challenge and a prophecy	95
Stones as fuel of fire	95
The concept of Hell and Heaven	96
Spirit - the real sensor of pain and pleasure	97
Addendum to Lesson No.18	98

Quranic Lesson No. 19

Weakness of false deities	102
Guidance of the Holy Quran	103
The transgressors	104
Quranic debate with the Atheists	105

Quranic Lesson No. 20

The incident of Adam and Eve	107
Incident of Adam and Eve applicable to all of humanity	111

Quranic Lesson No. 21

Summary of previous discussion	113
Divine knowledge given through Revelation	114
Purpose of creation of Angels	117
Divine purpose of giving man freedom of will	118

Quranic Lesson No. 22

How Divine knowledge is given to mankind	120
Adam being taught all the names	121
Submission of the angels to man	122
The Devil and his refusal to submit	122
Concept of Paradise and the forbidden tree	123
Salvation of mankind in following the Quran	124

Quranic Lesson No. 23

Divine blessings on the Israelites	127
The cause of Divine wrath	128
Muslims warned	128
Covenant of the Prophet	129
Objective of prayer	131
Keeping up prayer with humility	132

Quranic Lesson No. 24

Muslims warned not to follow the ways of the Jews	135
Divine warning not heeded by Muslims of the present age	136
Spread of Islam in the West prophesied	138

Quranic Lesson No. 25

Quranic Philosophy of trials and tribulations	140
Prayers in adversity strengthen bond between man and God . .	141
Patience, a Divine attribute	142
Adversity a means of spiritual development	143
The Greatest blessing achieved by those who are patient	144

Quranic Lesson No. 26

The true meaning of worship of One God	145
Signs of the existence and Unity of the Divine Being in the universe	146

Quranic Lesson No. 27

Nature's testimony towards Divine unity	150
Submission to Allah appealing to man's intellect	151
Association with God, the greatest inequity	152
False deities unable to assist in time of real need	153

Quranic Lesson No. 28

Dietary laws in Islam	155
Why certain foods are forbidden	156
Dietary laws relaxed in times of necessity	158
Hadith relating to dietary prohibitions	158

Quranic Lesson No. 29

The true meaning of East and West	160
Condition of the Muslim religious leaders during the 19 th century	162
Minor degrees of righteousness exist in all man made cultures .	162
True righteousness lies in higher moral values	163
Quranic code of higher moral values	163

Quranic Lesson No. 30

Belief in the Day of Judgment, a highly effective deterrent against evil	166
Belief in the angels involves listening to the inner voices of guidance	167
Divine Scripture, a guidance in black and white	167
A human role model essential for the teaching of righteousness	168

Quranic Lesson No. 31

Islam discourages asceticism	170
Quranic philosophy of wealth	171

Quranic Lesson No. 32

Quranic Philosophy of wealth (cont. from the previous Lesson) .	174
Prayer and obligatory charity	175
Keeping up promises	175
Patience the greatest virtue	176

Quranic Lesson No. 33

Unbridled passions the cause of spiritual decline of a nation . . .	178
Islamic teachings suited to human nature	179
Fasting the means to regulate human passions	179
Those exempted from fasting	181

Quranic Lesson No. 34.

Control of the animal within self leads to spiritual progress . . .	183
Guidance for all nations	185
A practical demonstration of the truth of the Holy Quran	186

Quranic Lesson No. 35

Summary of the previous lesson	188
Purpose of man's spiritual journey	189

Quranic Lesson No. 36

Quranic expression an example of true eloquence	192
Divine philosophy of the creation of wealth	193
False means of accumulating wealth	193
Injunctions regarding bribery	195

Quranic Lesson No. 37

Condition of women in Arabia and the world before Islam	197
Holy Quran predicts resurgence of women's rights in the modern age	197
Status of women in Islam	198

Quranic Lesson No. 38

Quranic charter of women liberation	201
Criticism of the charter answered	201
Why men are given a degree above women	203
Public discussions on the subject	204

Quranic Lesson No. 39

An example of the purity of speech and eloquence	206
Disruption of family order	207
Quranic remedy for women who desert their husbands	208
Testimony of a woman in Islam	210
The marriage of a Muslim woman to a follower of the Book . . .	211

Quranic Lesson No. 40

Purpose of warfare	214
Similarities between leaders of Israelite nation and modern politicians	214

Divine criteria for selection of leaders	215
Trial of the Israelite forces	217
Divine criteria for granting victory	218
Quranic Lesson No. 41	
Monetary sacrifice required for striving in the way of Allah . . .	219
Spiritual development is the purpose of spending in Allah's way	221
The true meaning of intercession	222
The meaning of 'Allah'—there is no God (Ilaha) but He	223
Wrongdoing of the disbelievers	224
Quranic Lesson No. 42	
Why Islam discourages monasticism as a way of life	227
Wealth as a means of spiritual development of mankind	228
The purpose of man's creation in the words of a righteous servant of Allah	229
Quranic Lesson No. 43	
Concept of the Divine Being in other religions	
Concept of the Divine Being in Islam	231
Quranic Lesson No. 44	
Fighting with the sword lawful only in defensive wars	237
Death is not the punishment of apostasy in Islam	238
Holy Prophet's life—a magnificent example of religious tolerance	239
Freedom of will essential for spiritual development	239
Divine guidance necessary to save mankind	240
Holy Quran—a guidance with clear proofs	241
Quranic Lesson No. 45	
Truth clearly distinguished from error	242
Disbelief in the devil	243
Service of Allah the right way	244
Low desires and the devil	245
Belief in Allah the firmest handle	246
Allah listens and responds to the cries of the believer	247
Quranic Lesson No. 46	
Questions about the creation of the universe	249
Mankind's reformation possible only through reformation of the heart	251
Quranic Lesson No. 47	
Philosophy of accountability of the self	253
The human soul and its stages of development	255
Quranic Lesson No. 48	
Human soul the trust of God	258

The heart of man capable of manifesting Divine presence259
 Why man is capable of bearing the trust of the Divine spirit . . .259
 Allah’s mercy takes precedence261
Quranic Lesson No. 49
 Progress of the human soul262
 Belief with practice essential for human spiritual development .263
 Belief through Divine revelation264
Quranic Lesson No. 50
 How to achieve the objective of belief267
 The example of the Holy Prophet and his companions268
 Burden laid down upon the soul in proportion to its capacity . . .269
Quranic Lesson No. 51
 Limitations in religious law not to exceed those of Allah
 and His Prophet272
 Burdens in accordance with the Law of Divine Measure272
 Burden laid down to increase the capacity of the soul273
 Burden of man’s own sins274
 The prayer of one lost in the love of God276

CHAPTER AL-IMRAN (The Family of Amran)

Quranic Lesson No. 52
 Significance of the name *Āl-‘Imrān*277
 The usage of abbreviations in the Holy Quran278
 Allah, (there is) no God (*Ilāha*) but He280
 The Ever-living281
 The Self-subsisting, by Whom all subsist281
 Verification of previous scriptures by the Holy Quran282
 The Holy Quran discriminates between truth and falsehood . . .283
Quranic Lesson No. 53
 Misinterpretations of allegorical verses by previous nations . . .284
 Definition of decisive and allegorical285
 Divine objective behind allegorical verses286
 Difference between the Divine and human perception of time . .288
 Relationship of the decisive verse to the allegorical289
 Those firmly rooted in knowledge290
 Perversity of the heart291
Quranic Lesson No. 54
 Summary of the previous lesson293
 Consequences of going astray293
 Similarities between Pharaoh and the Christian nations295
 Accountability in this life not on basis of belief296
 A sign in the Battle of Badr297

Quranic Lesson No. 55

Holy Quran prophesied the dominance of Christian nations . . .	300
Scheme to convert the colonies to Christianity	301
Christian onslaught against Islam	301
Defense of Islam by the Reformer (Mujaddid) of the 14 th century Hijra	302
Different elements employed in the conversion scheme	302
The fall of the empire	303
Higher goal of man's creation	303
The nature of Paradise	304
The path of spiritual development	306
Stages of the spiritual journey of those, "who guard against evil"	307
The doctrine of Divine Unity to prevail	308

Quranic Lesson No. 56

Allah, the real Source of All Power	311
Allah, the Source of Life and Sustenance	313

Quranic Lesson No. 57

Western domination prophesied by the Holy Quran	316
Scope and objective of western domination	316

Quranic Lesson No. 58

The tribulation of the <i>Dajjāl</i>	320
The crumbling of the cross and the prayer of the Promised Messiah	321

Quranic Lesson No. 59

Relations amongst sovereign Muslims and non-Muslim nations .	324
Muslims suffer as a consequence of not heeding the Quran . . .	325
Rules of conduct for Muslims	326

Quranic Lesson No. 60

Islam the religion of humanity	329
Muslims warned against disunity	330
Holding fast to the covenant of Allah	331
The lesson of history	332
Organization of the purpose of propagation	332

Quranic Lesson No. 61

The true meaning of trust in Allah	334
Example of the Holy Prophet and his companions in the Battle of Uhud	335
Action of the hypocrites and its consequences	336
Actions of the Holy Prophet and his companions	337
Action and patience, essential components of trust in Allah . . .	337

Quranic Lesson No. 62

Forgiveness of the Lord and the Garden of Paradise 339

Quranic Lesson No. 63

Summary of the previous lesson 343

The paradise of the heart and the Hereafter only for the dutiful . 344

Time for reformation is limited 345

The Garden of Paradise achieved through spending of wealth . 345

Islamic teachings regarding wealth, unique means
of spiritual development 346

Quranic Lesson No. 64

Summary of the previous lesson 348

Suppression of anger the key to serenity 349

Consequences of uncontrolled anger 349

Forgiveness and doing of good complement suppression
of anger 351

Suppression of anger, a Divine attribute 351

Āl-‘Imrān (Ch.3)

(Quranic Lesson 56)

I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

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

Say : O Allah, Owner of the Kingdom, Thou givest the kingdom to whom Thou pleasest, and takest away the kingdom from whom Thou pleasest, and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleasest. In Thine hand is the good. Surely, Thou art Possessor of power over all things.

Thou makest the night to pass into the day and Thou makest the day to pass into the night; and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living; and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest without measure.

Ch.3:26,27

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ
مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ
مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِرَبِّكَ
الْحَكِيمِ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

تُؤَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُؤَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي
اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ
الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ
بِعَبْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

Allah the Real Source of All Power

The Creator of the heavens and the earth is obviously their Owner, and is therefore in reality their ruler. Man comes into the world empty handed and departs to his grave without any material possessions. The question that comes to mind is why is it that apparently man seems to be the ruler while Allah, the Most High, appears to be in the background? The Holy Quran, which is truly an amazing book, provides the answer to this important question in the following verse, “ And when thy Lord said to the angels, I am going to place a ruler in the earth” (2:30). This of course is a reference to mankind. Man should therefore not forget that he is only the delegate of the

real Sovereign — Allah. A delegate who does not act according to the directions, or proves himself incompetent, is liable to be removed by the true Master, Who can deprive him of his power in the land. History bears testimony to this that many a great emperor, president or prime-minister who loses his political power, certainly does so reluctantly, thus proving that there is a Higher Power in control Who brings this about. The real proof of Allah The Most High being the, “Owner of the Kingdom,” is this, that He can give power to rule the land to whom He wants, when He wants and likewise deprive him of it.

It is then stated in the next verse, “And Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleasest.” The greatest attraction in power and government is that of fame and honor. The Holy Quran, however, tells us that attaining a position of power does not guarantee honor and respect for you. I have personally observed this, that a well respected person when he becomes a prime minister etc., is initially paid homage by the people and they turn out to celebrate his presence with colorful processions and loud proclamations. Very soon, however, he becomes the target of their criticism, falls from his position of grace and quite frequently is either forced to give up his power or returns home abased after losing badly in an election. Some of them are imprisoned or even end up on the gallows. Those who perform good deeds while in office and instead of working for their own selfish motives work selflessly for their nation do, however, receive respect and honor. Thus in the verse under discussion besides saying that Allah The Most High exalts whom He pleases and abases whom He pleases, it is stated, “In Thine hand is the good.” When Allah, the Most High, gives power to an individual or a nation, it is for their own good, if however they become involved in vice and rebel against Allah, they are deprived of their power. He does this also for the benefit of His subjects, for a wicked and cruel ruler brings his nation to great grief.

In the Quranic text that follows, it is stated, “Thou art Possessor of power over all things.” When a person or a nation is in power, they presume that they are in total control. In reality they do not possess the ability to either maintain their power or safeguard their honor. We witnessed the truth of this verse, that Allah is the Possessor of power over all things, in the creation of Pakistan. The Muslims were not only in minority, but also weak and lacking in material strength. The Hindus who were in great majority, were against the creation of Pakistan, and had declared their willingness to lay down their lives to prevent this from happening. The Sikhs who were a strong, warrior nation also had their swords drawn in resistance to this idea. Even the British, who were the rulers at the time were against this. In fact the whole world opinion under the influence of British and Hindu propaganda was not in favor of this idea. A group from amongst the

Muslims called the nationalists were also against the creation of Pakistan. Allah the Most High in Whose hand is all the goodness, did what He had willed for the benefit of Islam and the Muslims in the subcontinent. He informed His righteous servants of this ahead of time, and Pakistan came into being despite severe opposition. No doubt Allah is Possessor of Power over all things.

Allah the Source of Life and Sustenance

The next verse is, “Thou makest the night to pass into the day and Thou makest the day to pass into the night ; and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living; and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest without measure.” The incidents mentioned in this verse occur everyday before our eyes, but we seldom think in terms of Whose intervention and handiwork they clearly signify. Who can remove the deepest darkness of the night besides Allah and bring forth the brightness of daylight? The night makes a man either totally useless, or at least affects his performance. In the bright light of the day when he is working efficiently and earning wealth, he may not wish for the night to come, but Who can prevent this from happening? Similarly human beings, animals and plants evolve from a state of nothingness to living organisms while at the same time living things die. All of this being quite essential although mankind is totally helpless in the face of these events. While discussing life and death, I am reminded of the scientific truth that cells within the human body are constantly undergoing a cycle of death and regeneration. In fact within a period of three years, major portion of the cells within the human body are regenerated. Thus the process of life and death is itself being carried out every moment within the human body. Similarly the whole human race is making a constant effort to find abundant and better sources of food, which man cannot improve or increase with his own effort or authority. I would like to mention over here that the Arabic word for sustenance (*rizq*), does not only stand for food items, in fact all that is given to man by Allah is included, and wealth is at the top of this list. Who can earn whatever he desires? It is my lifelong experience and observation that those given wealth in abundance are frequently not superior in capabilities or intellect to those who are not. In fact it is true that Allah gives abundance of sustenance to whom He desires.

This external physical cycle of life and death has been described to explain inner and spiritual matters. You might remember that in the previous verse, it was stated that Allah, the Most High, Who is the Real Owner of the Kingdom, can give it to whomsoever He pleases. Like individuals, nations that become independent are able to govern themselves. In this

verse they are cautioned not to forget God on receiving independence and sovereignty. Not only can they lose such liberties once again, but the outbreak and the mitigation of difficulties, which has been allegorically likened to the night and the day, is also in the hands of Allah. He can bring such difficulties upon them in order to chastise them or to test their abilities. They should show repentance, remain patient and steadfast, and ask for Divine protection, in the face of such difficulties, for He not only brings in the darkness of the night but also replaces it with the brightness of the day. Similarly, after remaining in bondage for centuries, when a nation becomes dead, it is advised not to despair but instead to work hard and beseech Allah's assistance for only He can bring the dead back to life. On the other hand, although a nation may have gained its freedom and the dark night of difficulties and hardships may have dissipated, life may still become miserable if the means of one's sustenance are constrained. Sustenance (*rizq*) does not only signify food and drink, but stands for wealth and all the blessings which are given to man by Allah, the Most High. One can only enjoy liberty and self rule when he gets all of this. However, on being given all of this i.e., freedom, independence, respect, a living nation and abundance of sustenance, man has a tendency to lose awareness of the Divine. This, despite the fact that nations who received such blessings in the past, were deprived of them because of ingratitude, misdeeds and rebellion against God. The history of human race bears witness to this fact. If upon being blessed with similar favors, we, as Muslims also lose awareness of the Divine, commit evil deeds and manifest rebellion towards God then we stand to face a similar fate. There is another aspect of the meaning of these verses which is closely linked to our times. This if Allah pleases, I will discuss in the next lesson.

Āl-‘Imrān (Ch. 3)

(Quranic Lesson 57)

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Thou makest the night to pass into the day and Thou makest the day to pass into the night; and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living; and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest without measure.

(Ch.3:26,27)

In my previous lesson on these verses I had mentioned that the heavens and earth obviously belong to One Who has created them, and He Who owns them is indeed their real Ruler. Man who comes to this world empty handed from his mother’s womb and leaves it in a similar state, is in fact a vicegerent of the real Master. From amongst mankind He gives power to whom he wants, and takes away power from whom he wants, despite the fact that man may exert his utmost effort to stay in power. The Quranic words, “In Thine hand is the good,” indicate that Allah gives power to someone for the sake of goodness and if that person loses it, it is his own fault.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ۝

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ
مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَ
تُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۗ بِيَدِكَ
الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝

تُؤَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُؤَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي
اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ
الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ
بِعَذْرِ حِسَابٍ ۝

Western domination prophesied by the Holy Quran

Power can belong to an individual or a nation. In the last few centuries, on an inter-national level, one cannot cite a global historical example similar in scope to the worldwide western domination. A case in point is that of the British who rose as a small island nation and eventually dominated the whole world. They would proudly remark that the sun never sets on the British empire. The British empire was marked in red on the world maps of the era and one could see the red color everywhere on the map. Besides the British, other western nations had their own colonies spread throughout Africa, Asia and the West Indies. Was such international domination achieved by these nations on their own? This was certainly not the case. The Quranic verses under discussion tell us that the giving of the kingdom is in the hands of Allah The Most High. This was a manifestation of His Will and was prophesied in the Holy Quran ahead of time in the verse, “Even when *Gog* and *Magog* are let loose and they sally forth from every elevated place” (21:96). The commentators of the Holy Quran and the preachers had conceptualized the *Gog* and *Magog* as a strange creation. This opinion did not change until the *Imam* and the *Mujjadid* (Reformer) of the 14th century, *Hijra* Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, upon receiving revelation from Allah, the Most High, pointed out that *Gog and Magog* were the western Christian nations who were let loose in this age. Not only did he identify them, but also pointed out that their letting loose meant their coming out of their small nation states, where they were confined, and gaining world dominance. Their sallying forth from every elevated place, which the Holy Quran mentions, indicates that they will take possession of all the places of importance that were worth taking.

People at the time did not understand or appreciate this exposition of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed. Now, however, they all seem to understand. For example, the famous poet and philosopher of the East, Doctor Sir Muhammad Iqbal, has written,

“All the armies of the Gog and Magog have been let loose
The eye of the Muslim should behold this explanation of the
(Quranic) word *yansilūn*” (See above verse 21: 96).

Scope and objective of Western domination

Maulana Muhammad Ali, the famous commentator of the Holy Quran, has also given a unique explanation of the sallying forth of Gog and Magog from every elevated place. In his book, the History of the Ahmadiyya Movement, on page 114 he states, “This can have only one meaning, that Europe will dominate the world. In fact, by using the phrase *kulli hadabin* (every elevated place), it is indicated that this domination will include not

only the land and the physical elements, but will also be inclusive of their influence over the human psyche and their superiority in scientific knowledge, for the word *hadab* (elevated place) signifies all of this. The dominant influence of Europe over the rest of the world and its way of thinking provides truthful testimony in support of the Quranic statement, “and they sally forth from every elevated place” (21:96). Thus the matter, which at present has become the apparent means of weakness and domination of Islam is itself also a clear proof of its truth.”

For what purpose did the European colonialist powers use their political and military might and the effect of their scientific development over the thought process of the subject nations? It was obviously utilized to hold and establish their power in the colonies, in fact to perpetuate it forever. To accomplish this, they evolved a premeditated scheme to convert the subject nations to their own religion, Christianity. According to this scheme, hordes of missionaries, doctors with Christian evangelistic fervor and teachers of missionary schools, belonging to both genders, were let loose in the towns and villages of the colonies. They received support from the local European officials who in those days were in charge of every district and branch of Government. The power of government was used to influence people to convert to Christianity. The colonial subjects of the backward African nations could only receive education, employment and medical assistance if they converted to Christianity. The people of the Indian sub-continent which had not yet divided into the countries of Pakistan and India, were somewhat more sophisticated. They were, however, also enticed to accept Christianity by the offer of educational opportunities and medical assistance through missionary schools, colleges and medical dispensaries. In addition to this, employment opportunities, land grants, favorable business contracts and all other forms of facilities were offered.

Historical and documentary evidence can be cited in support of this statement, that it was the official policy of the British Government to encourage conversion of its colonial subjects to Christianity. In the Urdu publication *Ulama-i-haq aur unke mujahiddana kar-namay* translated by Syed Muhammad Mian Sahib (administrator of Jamiat-ul-ulema-i- Hind) on page 25 it is stated, that a member of the British parliament, Mr. Inglis, while speaking on this subject remarked, “The Lord God this day has made us witness to the British sovereign rule over the Indian empire so that the banner of Jesus the Messiah may fly from its one end to the other. Every individual should spend all of his strength to accomplish the glorious task of converting India to Christianity and should not show any apathy in this matter.”

Mr. Charles Wood, the minister for India, who was in charge of the affairs of the Indian Government, remarked in his conversation with a

delegation which had met with him on this matter in 1862, "It is my firm belief that every new convert to Christianity in India, becomes a new link of unity with England and is a new source of strength for the empire." The British prime-minister stated in his speech to the parliament, " It is my understanding that we are all united in our purpose. Not only is it our duty, but our own interest lies in this matter that we encourage propagation of Christianity as much as possible and spread it all over India."

Of note also is the opinion of the high ranking British officials in India. For example, the Governor of India Sir Henry Lawrence who said, " Nothing can strengthen our rule more then this that we spread Christianity through out India." Sir Donald McLoed who was the Governor of the Punjab remarked, " I want to express my firm belief that if we want to safeguard our rule in India, we should strive our utmost to convert this country to Christianity."

When the British Prime minister, the Minister for India and the Governor were all articulating this policy, it becomes quite obvious that instructions in this matter were also given to the British officers in India who were in charge of all the key positions in the Indian districts and subdivisions. These blatant pressure tactics led to the rebellion of 1857 in India. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who was considered a friend and Well-wisher of the British, wrote in his book, "The causes of the Indian Mutiny", that the prime reason for the mutiny of 1857 was the blatant pressure of the British officials upon the people to convert to Christianity. The mutiny of 1857 was crushed by the British with their military might in such a manner that the people did not dare to rise again.

I will *inshallah* (if Allah please) in the next lesson elaborate further on the relationship of these historical events with the Quranic verses I quoted earlier in this lesson.

Āl-‘Imrān (Ch. 3)

(Quranic Lesson 58)

I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

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

Say: O Allah, Owner of the Kingdom, Thou givest the kingdom to whom Thou pleasest, and takest away the kingdom from whom Thou pleasest, and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleasest. In Thine hand is the good. Surely, Thou art Possessor of power over all things.

Thou makest the night to pass into the day and Thou makest the day to pass into the night; and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living; and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest without measure.

(Ch.3:26,27)

In the two previous lessons on these verses, I pointed out that one cannot find a precedence in the annals of world history which matches the universal dominance given by Allah to the European nations. In order to perpetuate this dominance, they attempted to convert the subject nations to Christianity. To achieve this purpose, they worked hard and utilized all their resources on a large scale, including their monetary and political strength. It is worth noting that these nations achieved political power and kingdom first, and used it later on to spread their faith. The Holy Quran fourteen hundred years earlier foretold a similar sequence of events in the verses under discussion, which point out that if Allah The Most High gives kingdom and rule, he can also take it away. In the verses that follow, the principles of Christianity are discussed. To predict these events fourteen

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ۝

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ
مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَ
تُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۗ بِرِجْهِ
الْحَيْرُطِ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝

تُؤَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُؤَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي
اللَّيْلِ ۗ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ
الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ۗ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۗ
بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ۝

hundred years ago in the exact sequence they occurred in this age, provides a clear proof that the Holy Quran is from Allah — the Knower of the Unseen.

The tribulation of the dajjal

Since the rule of the European nations extended over subjects of different faiths, Christianity had to challenge their religious beliefs in order to convert them. In this matter the Christian missionary movement did not feel imperiled by, or face a strong opposition from any other faith besides Islam. The reason for this was that association with God had permeated all these other religions on a scale larger than Christianity, thus facilitating the acceptance of its principles amongst the followers of those faiths. The missionaries, however, felt a grave threat from the pure monotheism of Islam, for falsehood is always intimidated by the truth. The offensive launched against Islam was therefore not only extremely powerful in comparison with other religions, but was also unique in that never before in its history had such a strong assault been launched against the faith of Islam. The spiritual eye of Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), after receiving knowledge of the unseen from Allah, the Most High, had perceived this danger thirteen hundred years earlier. Calling it the tribulation of the *dajjāl*, he made several prophecies which are safely preserved in the books of Hadith. As I have mentioned, in the annals of Islamic history never before was Islam in such danger or under such a powerful attack. I am going to relate only a few of the Holy Prophet's many truthfully revealed prophecies. In *Mishkāt* (272) he is quoted as saying, "From the day of Adams birth till the day of Judgment, there has never been a greater tribulation than that of the *dajjāl*."

As I have mentioned earlier, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), called the attack of Christianity on Islam as the tribulation of the *dajjāl* and he said on more than one occasion, "O men ever since the creation of the human race by Allah, the Most High, there has been no greater tribulation than that of the *dajjāl* on the face of the earth." The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), called it a tribulation or trial because the European nations, employed their worldwide political and international dominance and made use of their economic and scientific progress to impose their religion upon others. The prophecies of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), mention how the European nations will extract treasures (oil and other minerals) out of the wilderness and will control the energy resources of the earth. Calling these nations by the name of *dajjāl*, he said, "He shall come upon a nation, and invite them (into his faith), and they will believe in him. The heavens will bring

down rain upon his command, and the earth will produce on his behest. He will then come upon a nation and they will disobey him, he will be offended, and as a result they will face famine and none of their wealth will remain in their hands.” In another hadith, after a similar prophecy, he states, “The rivers of the earth and its fruits will be made subservient to the *dajjāl* and whosoever will follow him, he will feed him and turn him into a disbeliever. He will deprive whosoever disobeys him and hold forth his sustenance.” The Holy Prophet also mentioned those people who will try to obtain worldly benefits by ingratiating these European nations. He particularly warned against the instigations of the *dajjāl* in these words “Whosoever hears of the *dajjāl*, should stay away from him; for a person considering himself to be a believer, will come to him and the *dajjāl* will create such doubts in his heart that he will become his follower.” That is exactly what happened in the nineteenth and the earlier part of the twentieth centuries. Hundreds and thousands of Muslim youth thus turned towards atheism, lost their faith and became worshippers of materialism and worldly gain. The hundreds of thousands who converted to Christianity were besides these. Their ranks included well educated persons, lawyers, barristers, landlords and other reputable persons including religious scholars.

The crumbling of the Cross and the prayer of the Promised Messiah

The Muslims were in such dire straits during the nineteenth century of the Christian era that Allah appointed the *Mujaddid* (Reformer) of the 14th century Hijra Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed also as the Promised Messiah. The task of crumbling the cross i.e., effectively counteracting the Christian religious propaganda and manifesting the fallacy of Christian doctrinal beliefs (was according to the prophecy of the Holy Prophet), to be done by the Promised Messiah who was to be (as the hadith of Bukhari states), “Your *imam* from amongst yourself,” that is, a spiritual leader from amongst the followers of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Hazrat Mirza, in accordance with the prophecies of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), accomplished this task so well that it was appreciated by the enlightened Muslim minds of the age. Even the flag bearers of Christianity accepted their defeat by prohibiting their followers from entering into debate with members of the Ahmadiyya Movement. The literature produced by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed and the organization he formed for this purpose, The Ahmadiyya movement, provides written testimony of how well the task of crumbling the cross was accomplished. At a time when Christianity was at its zenith, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed also predicted that Christianity as

a religion will be finished before the turn of the 14th century Hijra. Thus in the last few years, the enlightened scholars of Europe and America, professors of Christianity in institutions of learning, and members of the clergy have openly admitted, in fact have written books, that Jesus was neither god nor son of god nor did he make any such claim, and the doctrine of trinity is a later innovation and an erroneous belief. Some have even confirmed the declaration of the Promised Messiah that Jesus did not die on the cross, but escaped alive to Kashmir (where he died at an age of hundred and twenty years - in accordance with the saying of the Holy Prophet), and the grave located on *Khan Yar* street bearing the inscription, 'Prophet *Yuz Asaf*,' is in fact the grave of Jesus. These, however, are later developments.

A hundred years earlier the European nations and their religion were at the peak of their dominance. I have discussed in my previous lesson by submitting written and historical evidence, that they were using this material superiority to convert people to their faith. It was not therefore possible to neutralize this danger without severing their worldly dominance. Their pre-dominance and military might was such that as the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had predicted, "No one would have the power to fight them." The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), had also made this wonderful prophecy that the Promised Messiah will overwhelm these nations by means of his prayer. This has been stated in the Hadith collection *Kanz-ul-Amal* (vol.7, page 3021) as, "I have created some of my servants, such that no one has the power to do away with them, except myself." It was thus the command of Allah and His messenger that the worldly dominance and kingdom of the European nations will be brought to an end by the prayers of the Promised Messiah. This is the reason why the verses that I quoted in the beginning of this lesson open with the Arabic word '*qul*,' which means 'Say.' The subject matter of the prayer that follows can be applied thus: O Allah You are the Owner of the Kingdom, You can give it to whom you please, and take it away from whom you please, You have given dominance to these European nations over the world, only You can take it away. Because these nations are using their world wide dominance in a wrongful manner to corrupt the faith and religion of people, take it away from them. For the purpose of carrying out this magnificent and historical prayer, the Promised Messiah had a separate room constructed, wherein he supplicated for many years. His prayer was accepted, and he was given the knowledge by Allah that world wars will break this dominance of the European nations, and the Muslims and other enslaved nations will gain freedom. I have discussed the details of this in the issues of the Urdu newspaper *Paigham Sulah* dated 17th-24th May 1978, 21st May 1980 and 20th-27th August 1980 and also in the English newspaper 'The Light,' dated 24th May 1978.

The remaining verses of this lesson can also be very appropriately applied to the events of this age in the following manner. While there is the supplication to remove the great tribulation created by the misuse of their worldly dominance by the European nations, there also is prayer for the freedom of the Muslims and other enslaved nations. For the verses state : O Allah You are The Owner of The Kingdom, You can give it to whom You please, and take it away from whom You please. You can exalt whom You please and abase whom You please. In Your hands is all good and You have power over all things. This is followed by the prayer that as, You change the night into the day and daylight into darkness in the material world, You can convert the darkness enveloping the Muslims and other subjugated nations into daylight. Just as You bring life to the dead and death to the living, give life to these dead nations, and bring death to the political power of the nations whose political dominance has brought death to the liberty of others. The Muslim nations at the time were mostly in the desert regions of the world. In response to the prayers of the Promised Messiah, deposits of oil were discovered in those desert regions. Today, these Muslim nations are the richest nations of the world, and there is no material comfort beyond their reach. All Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

Āl-‘Imrān (Ch. 3)

(Quranic Lesson 59)

I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

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

Let not the believers take the disbelievers for friends rather than believers. And whoever does this has no connection with Allah — except that you guard yourselves against them, guarding carefully. And Allah cautions you against His retribution. And to Allah is the eventual coming.

Say: Whether you hide what is in your hearts or manifest it, Allah knows it. And He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. And Allah is Possessor of power over all things.

On the day when every soul will find present that which it has done of good ; and that which it has done of evil— it will wish that between it and that (evil) there were a long distance. And Allah cautions you against His retribution. And Allah is Compassionate to the servants.

(Ch. 3:28-30)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ۝

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۗ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فِيْ شَيْءٍ ۗ اِلَّا اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ تُقٰتًا ۗ وَيَحْذَرُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهُ ۗ وَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ۝

قُلْ اِنْ تُحِبُّوْا مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ اَوْ تُنۡبِئُوْهُ يَعْلَمُهٗ اللّٰهُ ۗ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا ۗ وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ ۗ تَوَدُّ كُوۡدًا اَنْ بَيِّنَهَا وَاَبۡيَنۡتَهَا ۗ اَمۡدًا بَعِيۡدًا ۗ وَيَحْذَرُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ سَرِيۡرٌۢ بِاَلۡعِبَادِ ۝

Relations amongst sovereign Muslims and Non-Muslim Nations

It has been discussed earlier that in the Quranic verses preceding this lesson there is a prophecy indicating Allah, the Most High, will give sovereignty

to the Muslims. In this lesson, they are warned of a matter of prime importance when they receive such domain. It is enjoined thus, "Let not the believers take the disbelievers for friends rather than believers." This discussion is about sovereign nations and their dominion, does it therefore imply that friendly relations with the disbelievers are not feasible at all? This most certainly cannot be true, for the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did himself periodically establish alliances with the Jews, the Christians and the Polytheists of Arabia. These included agreements to live together in peace, not to commit aggression against each other and in fact to assist each other in case of outside aggression. The words of the Holy Quran clearly point out that what's forbidden is to make friends with the disbelievers, "rather than believers."

Polytheists fear of Islam

In this verse the Muslims are first exhorted that unlike their fellow believers, they will not find fear of God as the motivating force in the hearts of most disbelievers. Thus they will find lack of congruity between what they say and what's on their mind and will find them not firm in their commitments. Historical evidence supports the argument that disbelievers frequently made efforts and covert schemes to destroy the Muslims. The underlying reason for this hostility was the pure monotheism of Islam and the fear of those possessing false beliefs of being annihilated by the truth. All other religions were involved in associating with God. The polytheists, which includes all disbelievers were thus united together in their objectives against the Muslims because of this common bond. They believed that if the Muslims were destroyed, Islam would also be eliminated along with them.

Muslims suffer as a consequence of not heeding the Quran

It is thus essential that the believers, whenever possible, should form agreements of mutual friend-ship and assistance amongst themselves. There are, however, non Muslim nations in the world today and they were also in plurality during the time of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). All kinds of agreements including trade, finance and military pacts have to be concluded with them. Only one word of caution is urged for the Muslims in such matters, and that is not to enter into any covenant with these nations which is against another Muslim state. By not heeding this warning, Muslims have always suffered loss. In fact, in some cases they even lost their independence, as witnessed in recent times by the creation of Israel. During the First World war the British, through the offices

of the world renown Lawrence of Arabia, made all kinds of promises to the Arabs. They urged them to rebel and bear arms against the Muslim State of Turkey, under whose administration the Arabs were at the time. Very few of those promises were kept and the British ended up settling the Jews right in the heart of the Arab lands. The Palestinians numbering in the hundreds of thousands had to abandon their homes, lands, possessions and businesses and were displaced to other lands, where they live in great difficulty in a state of homelessness and destitution. God only knows what consequences ultimately this tribulation of Israel is to bring. The Muslims, however, have still not learned their lesson and I can quote quite a few recent examples of this which are well known to those familiar with the state of world affairs.

Rules of conduct for Muslims

The Holy Quran is a wonderful book of Divine wisdom, a few simple words of which engulf a vast depth of insight and perception. For example over here are the words, “— except that you guard yourselves against them (*minhum*), guarding carefully.” The Arabic word **from them** (*minhum*) in this context can apply both to the believers and the disbelievers, and thus lead one to appropriately deduce the following different meanings, all of which are correct.

- 1) Instead of establishing friendship with the disbelievers, you should fully guard yourselves against them — The reasons for which I have discussed in detail earlier.
- 2) After safeguarding your own rights, and those of other concerned Muslim states, it is appropriate to establish friendly relations with the disbelievers.
- 3) If you have been defeated by a disbelieving nation and are under their domination, for sake of your protection, you may appropriately form an agreement with them where you have no other choice.
- 4) If a situation arises where you perceive a threat from a Muslim state, then to safeguard yourself from such danger you may enter into an alliance with a non Muslim state against your enemy even though he is a Muslim. These sort of situations are conceivable and have actually occurred.

Aside from these special circumstances, if you form an agreement with a non Muslim which is against another Muslim state, then Allah sends you a strong warning of His chastisement in the words, “And Allah cautions you against His retribution.” In such matters do not have fear of other non Muslim nations or of danger itself, but have fear of Allah in your hearts Whose chastisement can overtake you in this world. In another chapter

grave warning against such a grievous sin which leads to the loss or death of fellow Muslims is given in these words, "O you who believe, take not the disbelievers for friends rather than the believers. Do you desire to give Allah a manifest proof against yourselves?" (4:144). In the lesson today we are also told, "And to Allah is the eventual coming," you have inevitably to return before His Divine Majesty, if He does not chastise you in this world, you will definitely be subjected to it in the Hereafter.

The subsequent verse states thus, "Say: Whether you hide what is in your hearts or manifest it, Allah knows it." In the field of international relations secret agreements are made all the time, which the concerned parties at times even try to conceal from their own people. Most of the time treaties are made as tactical decisions based upon deceit and as transitory measures by one of the parties, to be discarded at the opportune moment. Adolph Hitler was notorious for concluding treaties with his neighbors, to lull them into a sense of false security and to attack and swallow them into his domain at the earliest opportune moment. In matters of state and politics, with the exception of a believer who keeps his duty to Allah, deceit and deception is a common practice, whether it be false promises made with the people or by politicians amongst themselves. That is why the famous Chancellor Bismarck of Germany said, "Don't believe a thing until it is officially denied." Because lies, deception, fraud and breaking of promises in international dealings are quite common, the Holy Quran has warned the Muslims not to manifest such behavior, for Allah is aware of what is in their hearts. Not only is this the case, but it is stated that He is also aware of what is in the heavens and the earth. By the heavens is meant the existential states of life after death, the nature of which is all unknown. What is beneficial for mankind in the Hereafter is known only to Allah. If you as Muslims listen to what He enjoins, even if it means bearing some loss in this earthly life, it is to your advantage in the eternal life hereafter. What is going to happen in the future is known only to Him, it therefore behooves you to benefit from His knowledge and act upon His injunctions. In my career of public service, I have observed that political leaders practice all kinds of strategic maneuvering and intrigue to further their own advantage. Despite being in power and in apparent possession of all the strengths and advantages, their plans failed in the face of concurrent events. That is why this Quranic verse ends with the words, "And Allah is Possessor of power over all things." He can dismantle the greatest of human powers and machinations in a split of a second. In any case they are sooner or later terminated by the event of death.

The Quranic words that follow thus move the heart, "On the day when every soul will find present that which it has done of good ; and that which it has done of evil — it will wish that between it and that (evil) there were

a long distance. And Allah cautions you against His retribution. And Allah is Compassionate to the servants.” This verse has wonderful wisdom in it. In my public service career, I frequently observed that very often in case of a president, a prime minister or a political leader who served his people, his services were not appreciated, and he was deprived of his authority, cursed and downgraded by the very same people whom he served. Such leaders would then become heartbroken and despondent. The Holy Quran tells them not to grieve, for although their nation did not appreciate their services, their acts of goodness were not a waste and they will receive credit for them in the everlasting life hereafter. The applause and appreciation of this worldly life being temporary and short lived. Although those in position of power may be able to do a lot of good for the welfare and benefit of the people, they may also be responsible for committing a great deal of inequity and oppression against the people. When they will witness the chastisement for these sins in the Hereafter, they will regretfully wish for there to be a wide distance between themselves and their evil deeds. I have witnessed remorse even in this worldly life when such chastisement overtakes these people. That is why it is stated that if Allah warns you of His chastisement, it is out of His mercy for He does not want you to suffer the consequences. All Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

Āl-‘Imrān (Ch. 3)

(Quranic Lesson 60)

I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

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

O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah (ita-qullah), as it ought to be kept, and die not unless you are Muslims.

And hold fast by the covenant (*ḥablillāh*) of Allah all together and be not disunited. And remember Allah’s favour to you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favour you became brethren. And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes clear to you His messages that you may be guided.

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful.

(Ch. 3:102-104)

Islam the religion of humanity

These are the first three verses of the eleventh section of chapter Al-Imran. In several sections prior to this, the People of the Book are repeatedly invited to Islam with the following arguments.

- 1) Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the very same promised prophet about whom all the earlier prophets had taken a covenant of acceptance from their followers.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ
وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١﴾

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا
وَأذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً
فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ
إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ
النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ
لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢﴾

وَلْيَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ
وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ
الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣﴾

- 2) The spiritual center of the Holy Prophet i.e., the *Kā'bah* (House Of God at Mecca) is the very same House of God built by prophet Adam, patriarch of the human race. This unique position therefore makes it possible for all the different nations to abandon their spiritual centers and unite together in facing the *Kā'bah*.
- 3) From this House Of God was raised the last of the Prophets, Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, for whose advent the great patriarch Abraham had prayed. Prophet Abraham is accepted as a prophet by all nations. People should therefore, also accept Islam, which recognizes the prophets of all nations and their scriptures, to be from God. This recognition is granted despite the fact that these scriptures may have been lost altogether or altered by interpolation.
- 4) In the Holy Quran is gathered and preserved all those righteous teachings of these scriptures which needed to be saved for posterity.

In the light of these arguments, one can conclude that the Holy Quran and Holy Prophet Muhammad are in the unique position of uniting all of humanity. This was the sum and substance of the discussion in the few sections prior to this one.

Muslims warned against disunity

In this section, the Muslims are informed that if they are unable to maintain unity amongst themselves, and there is dissension amongst their ranks, they would be committing a grave sin and inequity not worthy of forgiveness by Allah, the Most High. That is why the first verse of this section states, “O you who believe, keep your duty (*taqwa*) to Allah, as it ought to be kept.” In a previous lesson I have explained that in the Holy Quran wherever the word *taqwa* is mentioned by itself, it means guarding one’s soul from evil, for it is only through evil action that man suffers spiritual distress and affliction. Where, however, the words *taqwa Allāh* are mentioned, it means guarding oneself against the accountability and chastisement of Allah, for nothing can be more grievous than these. The words *ittaqu Allāh* (meaning the *taqwa* of Allah) precedes all those injunctions and commandments for which there is a greater degree of accountability and therefore a proportionally higher degree of chastisement. In this verse the words, “as it ought to be kept (*ḥaqqā tuqāti hi*)” have been added on to specially emphasize this point that in the matter which follows there is a particular need for *taqwa Allahi* (i.e., guarding oneself against the accountability and chastisement of Allah). This is further underscored by stating, “and die not unless you are Muslims (i.e., of those who submit)”. The time of death is uncertain and it can overtake a person of any age at any time without prior knowledge. It is therefore, enjoined that your lives should be such that you

are in a state of submission to Allah at all times, so that in case of sudden death you are not caught unprepared.

Holding fast to the Covenant of Allah

Now follows the commandment for which all of this was a prelude, “And hold fast by the covenant (*ḥabli-Allāhi*) of Allah all together and be not dis-united.” Arabic word *ḥabli-Allāhi* also means the *rope of Allah*. The Holy Prophet himself has explained the *rope of Allah* as being the Book of Allah, the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran allegorically being likened to the rope that Allah has made to descend from the heavens, so that by holding on firmly to it Muslims can save themselves from losing their footing while facing the spiritual dangers that lurk in their earthly passage. By holding on to this rope they can also evolve beyond their earthly pursuits and ascend to spiritual heights, i.e., discard their earthly trappings for a higher and heavenly state. Like the group which stays together by holding on to a rope, Muslims should take firm hold of the Holy Quran and save themselves from discord. The Divine words that follow therefore state, “and be not dis-united.” Another great wisdom underlies the use of the Arabic word *ḥabl*, for besides the meaning of a rope, it also means a covenant. It thus also means that Allah, the Most High has taken a covenant from the Muslims, that they will remain united on the Holy Quran, and not become disunited by strife and sectarianism.

Somebody may point out at this juncture that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has stated “the difference of opinion amongst my followers is a blessing.” This only means that if in a certain matter a difference of opinion arises in good faith and is duly expressed, the benefit of expressing such opinion is that different aspects of the matter are highlighted. Its strengths and weaknesses become more apparent and such a discourse thus ultimately proves to be beneficial. If a controversial matter cannot be decided upon, Muslims should use the Holy Quran as the basis of settling such a controversy. The Holy Quran should serve as their Judge and law in such matters, and they are strictly forbidden to form sects on the basis of such a difference of opinion. Muslims, however, did exactly the opposite of this Divine command and formed separate groups and sects which labeled each other as having gone astray and heretical. Instead of deciding controversy on the basis of the Holy Quran, they chose to make their decisions on the basis of their own opinions, or the convictions of their forefathers. Continued emphasis on such controversy has led to a state of permanent civil war and dissent.

The lesson of history

Allah, the Most High, then draws their attention towards the corrupt state of the Arabs before the advent of Islam. It is stated, “And remember Allah’s favour to you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favour you became brethren. And you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes clear to you His messages that you may be guided.” The habitual infighting and strife amongst the pre-Islamic Arabs on trivial matters is a well known historical fact and I need not go into the details of this. I would like to quote only one statement from the book ‘Ins and outs of Mesopotamia,’ by an English author. He states in regards the Arabs, “A more disunited people it would be hard to find, till suddenly a miracle took place.” That miracle was the advent of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the revelation of the Holy Quran. This sacred scripture within a short period of twenty years led to brotherly love and unity amongst the most blood thirsty of enemies, an exemplary feat not met anywhere else in the history of mankind. A shining example of this was that when the followers of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) left Mecca and sought refuge in Medina, they were offered equal rights in their properties and wealth by their Muslim brethren residing in Medina although this was gracefully declined by the former. This miraculous change in the character of the inhabitants of Medina came about within a short period of a year or two of their acceptance of Islam. People who have experienced blood thirsty civil strife can really appreciate this change as being miraculous. If the Holy Quran was instrumental in bringing about a revolutionary change of such magnitude once, it can do so again. What is needed, is for the Muslims to accept the Holy Quran as their guide, to act upon it, and to solve their mutual controversies in the light of its injunctions. Thus they can avoid settling such matters on the basis of their own opinion or inflexible attitude, or the opinion of those before them. It was such controversy regarding the concepts of the jurists which led to dissension in the past.

Organization for the purpose of propagation

Where as the Holy Quran strictly forbids the formation of groups or organizations separate from the parent Muslim body, it permits the formation of one organization with the following mandate, “And from among you there should be a party who invite to good (*Khair*) and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful.” The Arabic word for good used in this verse is *Khair* which means Islam, which is the greatest good and the fountainhead of all goodness. In this verse not only is permission given to form such a body, but in fact it is made incumbent upon

Muslims to do so. The Holy Quran has also used the word *Khair* for itself as in the verse, “Neither those who disbelieve from among the people of the Book, nor the polytheists, like that any good (*Khair*) should be sent down to you from your Lord” (2:105). In the verses under discussion today whereas the word *Khair* has been used for Islam and thus the permission for the formation of a party to carry out this injunction for the propagation of Islam, the usage of the same word for the Holy Quran also indicates that the best milieu for such propagation is the Holy Quran. The world today is in dire need that the Holy Quran should be translated and presented to it, for it is dying spiritually without the life giving waters of this spiritual fountainhead.

This was the reason why the Reformer of this age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, formed an organization the Ahmadiyya Movement for the propagation of Islam, and made the propagation of the Holy Quran as its objective. Besides the propagation of Islam, the Holy Quran states two other responsibilities for such an organization, “who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.” This task of reformation has to be carried out amongst the Muslims at all times. It also includes the non Muslims who convert to Islam, for it is essential to teach them Islam which enjoins the right and forbids the wrong. The Reformer of this age realized this deficiency amongst the Muslims and reminded them of this Divine injunction they had forgotten. There can be no greater task than the propagation of Islam, which in former times was carried out by the prophets. With the advent of the Seal of the Prophets, Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) this noble task has been delegated to his followers. What the Seal of the Prophets has bestowed upon his followers, is certainly a great act of benevolence, for he has entrusted them to carry out the task which was previously carried out by the Prophets. Addressing the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed has thus expressed his thoughts in one of his poetic verses:

We became the best of the nations because of you, O! most excellent of the Prophets.

By benefiting from your spiritual advancement only, did we make progress.

Āl-‘Imrān (Ch.3)

(Quranic Lesson 61)

I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

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

When two parties from among you thought of showing cowardice, and Allah was the Guardian of them both. And in Allah should the believers trust.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ تَفْشَلَا
وَ اللَّهُ وَ إِلَيْهِمَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ
الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

(Ch.3 :122)

The true meaning of trust in Allah

I have chosen this verse, because it explains in an excellent manner the subject of reliance (*tawakkal*) upon God. Unfortunately, ordinarily it is misunderstood as a lack of individual effort, erroneously believing that in doing so one is relying upon God to accomplish all of one's undertakings. This interpretation is clearly against the decisive verse of the Holy Quran which states, "And that man can have nothing but what he strives for" (53:39). Does this mean that man should rely solely upon his effort? The answer to this question is, "certainly not!", for the Holy Quran also states, "And to Allah are all affairs returned" (3:109). The correct position in this matter is elucidated by the verse I have chosen for our lesson today. In this verse we are told to make a full and concentrated effort, even to the extent that if the need arises, one should be prepared to lay down his life for the cause of truth, and to rely on Allah regarding the outcome of one's effort. The believers are specifically informed in this verse, that Allah is the Guardian over them. Besides exerting oneself, it is therefore admissible to supplicate for Divine assistance. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed has given a very fascinating explanation for this. He states that prayer is also a part of an individual's effort to accomplish a task. He has illustrated this with an interesting anecdote. A certain fellow asked his son to remove a heavy stone which was blocking the thoroughfare. The young man tried, but was unsuccessful. His father asked him to try again, which he did unsuccessfully. After he had

been unsuccessful for the third time, his father addressed him thus, “My dear son, your effort is still incomplete, for in spite of trying over and over again, when you were unsuccessful, you should have asked for my help.” Asking someone for help is therefore also a part of the effort. Man should first exert himself to the fullest extent and then also ask for Allah’s help. Effort on part of the individual is, however, necessary before asking for Divine assistance. I have also explained this point in my commentary on the chapter *Al-Fātiḥah* (which is in fact the interpretation of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed) regarding the verse, “Thee do we serve, and Thee do we beseech for help.” In this verse service with humility is the prerequisite to beseech for the assistance of Allah. First man should exert his utmost in the service of Allah, and then ask for His assistance, admitting one’s shortcomings as a human being in this matter. One should implore Allah to rectify his deficiencies and impart him with the ability to serve with complete humility.

Example of the Holy Prophet and his companions in the Battle of Uhud

Now we are going to discuss the meaning of the verse, “When two parties from among you thought of showing cowardice, and Allah was the Guardian of them both. And in Allah should the believers trust.” Maulana Muhammad Ali’s (late president of The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement) commentary on this verse, in his *Bayan-al-Quran* is excellent, and I will reproduce it almost verbatim.

Before commenting on this verse, it is essential to understand its historical perspective. The disbelievers of Makkah, in the time of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), after being defeated in the battle of Badr, made a strong effort to destroy the Muslims, and thus make up for their embarrassing loss. The following year with an army of three thousand strong, they gathered at Uhud, a location four miles north of Medina. Their intent in not advancing beyond this point was to draw the Muslims into battle outside the confines of the city of Medina. Those familiar with defensive warfare know well that the Muslim position would have been easier to defend within the confines of the city. The Holy prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) conferred with his followers on this matter before deciding whether to stay within the city and fight, or go outside and meet the enemy. Some of the companions were of the opinion that the Muslims should remain in Medina and defend themselves. The same advise was given by Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the leader of the hypocrites. The identity of the hypocrites within the ranks of the Muslims was unknown at that time. The majority of the Muslims were of the opinion that

the disbelievers should be confronted in battle outside of Medina, so that they should not get the impression that the Muslims were intimidated by them. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself was of the opinion that the battle should be fought while remaining inside the city. He also saw three dreams, which he interpreted as indicating that the Muslims would suffer some loss in this battle, and one of them seemed to indicate that defense within the city would be better. Because the interpretation of dreams is a somewhat doubtful matter, and there was no clear cut Divine guidance in this regard, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) followed the consensus of the majority. This is true respect for the majority opinion which the Holy Quran enjoins in the verse, "And whose affairs are (decided) by counsel among themselves" (42:38). Such was the noble example of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who gave preference to the opinion of the majority against his own personal opinion. In fact contrary even to the interpretation of his prophetic dreams. Thus, accompanied by a thousand men, he left for Uhud where the enemy forces were encamped.

Action of the hypocrites and its consequences

At a certain point where the movement of the Muslim forces could be observed by the disbelievers, Abdullah ibn Ubayy along with his three hundred hypocrite followers turned back. His excuse for doing so was that his advise in this matter had not been accepted. The object behind his mischief was two-fold. Firstly, he wanted to show the disbelievers that he and his followers were with them. Secondly, he calculated that in this way, by seeing the desertion of a third of their fighting force, the Muslims will get demoralized. Such a detrimental influence on the morale of the Muslims did occur to some degree as indicated by the verse under discussion, "When two parties from among you thought of showing cowardice, and Allah was the Guardian of them both. And in Allah should the believers trust." The Holy Quran has not revealed the identity of these two groups and Allah, by His mercy, has thus covered over their shortcoming, for both these groups did not eventually desert the Muslim force and fought alongside with them. The companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were so honest and their love for Allah was so exemplary, that both these groups voluntarily disclosed their identity. The reason they gave was that they were happy that this verse was revealed, for in it Allah has said that He was their Guardian. In addition it also states, "And in Allah should the believers trust", thereby confirming them from being amongst the believers.

Actions of the Holy Prophet and his companions

The Arabic word for trust (*tawakkal*) is from the root *wakal*, which means giving up one's affair to someone, and laying one's trust upon him. If one presumes, as is the common misconception that it means inaction on part of man and giving up of one's affairs for Allah to carry out, then the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his companions would not have gone forth to battle, nor gathered intelligence on the movements of the enemy forces, or sent out Muslim forces over far flung regions to check the enemy advance. They would not have made sacrifices, collected money, or gathered equipment for this purpose, and remained armed and ready around the clock to confront the enemy. All of this they did in spite of trying circumstances and adverse climatic conditions, and laid down their lives to accomplish this goal.

Action and patience, essential components of trust in Allah

What then is the meaning of the injunction to the believers to trust (*tawakkal*) in Allah on this occasion? Two groups thought of turning back from confronting the enemy. Allah, who was their Guardian, because of their belief, gave them strength not to manifest such weakness and informed them that believers trust in Allah. This indicates that despite the difficult circumstances, fighting for the truth was manifesting trust (*tawakkal*) in Allah and not doing so would have been contrary to this spirit. The Holy Quran has, therefore, clearly indicated that trust in Allah is the utilization of means and not their rejection. In fact one who does not utilize the means God has created cannot be called a believer. The true spirit of trust in God is to fully utilize even one's weak and limited resources and then leave the result of one's endeavor in God's hands. It is man's duty to strive, while God is the One Who puts together the results of such action. Trust in Allah thus strengthens a man's resolve under adverse circumstances and saves him from despair. That is why the Holy Quran enjoins patience along with trust in Allah. It states in verse, "Those who are steadfast and on their Lord they rely" (16:42). Also in verse, "Excellent the reward of the workers. Who are patient and on their Lord they rely" (29:58-59). These verses clearly indicate that it is man's task to act fully, to remain patient, and to trust in Allah even under the most adverse circumstances.

The Hadith also indicates that leaving the outcome in the hands of Allah after fully utilizing the means at one's disposal is the true meaning of trust in Allah. A certain person asked the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) whether as a result of his trust in Allah, he should let his camel roam freely? To this, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) replied that he should tie its feet first with

a rope and then trust in Allah. Similarly to those people who would depart for the pilgrimage without making adequate provision, and said they were relying on Allah for their sustenance, the Holy Quran enjoins, "And make provision for yourselves" (2:197). Not utilizing the means at one's disposal is not the meaning of trust in Allah. Conclusions drawn contrary to this from certain Hadith are not correct. For example this Hadith which states, "If you trust in Allah as it ought to be, He will provide sustenance for you as He provides sustenance for the bird which goes forth early in the morning with hunger in its belly but returns in the evening with its stomach full." To draw the conclusion from this that it is not essential to search and strive for the provision of sustenance is absolutely against the meaning of this Hadith. If the Hadith had stated that God provides sustenance for the bird without it leaving its nest, someone could have drawn such a conclusion. The Hadith, however, clearly states that the bird searches for its sustenance from dusk till dawn, and God satisfies its hunger. This clearly means that if you struggle and make an effort like the bird, God will provide for your sustenance.

Trust in Allah, saves one from idolizing the means. Allah has created all the resources for man to utilize them in a manner similar to Allah. Allah thus carries out all His works through the creation of means although we may not perceive them at all times. Idolizing or relying totally on our resources is associating with Allah (*shirk*). For example, Allah has created a cure for every illness, therefore seeking such a cure is in accordance with the Divine scheme. It is, however, wrong to believe that only the medicine or the doctor is responsible for nurturing us back to health. The Holy Quran has stated this with reference to Prophet Abraham in verse (26:80), "And when I am sick, He heals me," indicating that real healing is the work of Allah. Reliance (*tawakkal*) in Allah means full utilization of the resources at one's disposal, and leaving the outcome upon Allah. Prayer is also a part of the means at one's disposal. It is therefore imperative to make a full and concerted effort, supplicate before Allah, and accept the outcome as it may be.

Āl-‘Imrān (Ch. 3)

(Quranic Lesson 62)

I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

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

And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden, as wide as the heavens and the earth ; it is prepared for those who keep their duty.

(Ch. 3:133)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ
عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

Forgiveness of the Lord and the Garden of Paradise

In this verse the Holy Quran has enjoined man to hasten. The question that needs to be answered is under what circumstances is the human behavioral pattern of haste manifested? We observe that man either hastens away from danger, or towards something that he keenly desires. Also, he may hasten to complete a task which is essential, but for which the time is running out. As human beings we face all these circumstances in our lives. Before I discuss these, I would like to point out that in the verse above two things are mentioned towards which man is enjoined to hasten, i.e., the forgiveness of his Lord and the Garden of Paradise. The real manifestation of this garden is prepared for man in his life after death in the heavens. He is, however, given the like of it in this world if he guards against evil and keeps his duty. This is the meaning of the verse, “it is prepared for those who keep their duty.”

I have mentioned earlier that man hastens away from extreme danger, for example if he is being pursued by a rabid dog, or is being attacked with a knife, or the city in which he resides is under threat of enemy attack, or it is in danger of being flooded etc. Such hazards, however, only occur periodically. The ever present danger is that of the devil and the *nafs-i-ammārah* or the animal soul of man. In the preliminary stages of man’s spiritual development his soul is liable to be overwhelmed by his animal desires. The devil and the animal soul of man are thus his worst enemies, consistently bent upon leading him astray and leading him to his spiritual

demise. The individual who does not therefore expeditiously enter the forgiveness or protection of Allah, the Most High, is in constant danger. This forgiveness or protection is of two kinds. Firstly, it is from the harmful effects of the sins already committed. Secondly, it is the seeking of protection from repetition of such behavior, for it becomes easier to repeat and keep on doing an evil deed. For example, a person who takes a bribe faces double jeopardy. He may be apprehended for his misdeeds in this world, but even if this is not the case, he certainly will face the consequences of his actions in the life Hereafter. Another adverse effect of such behavior is that it facilitates repetition. Thus, it becomes easier to accept a bribe the second time around. Even if no one else is, Allah certainly is a witness to man's sin. A thief or a murderer hastens away in desperation from the scene of crime to avoid getting caught by earthly authorities. In spite of this, man commits one sin after the other and fears not Divine apprehension. However, when Allah takes him to task, no worldly authority can save him. In any case, he has nowhere to flee from the grip of the angel of death sent by Allah. In this verse, the Holy Quran enjoins man that before he has to face such consequences, he should repent and seek the refuge of Allah from the devil, from one's own animal soul (*nafs-i-ammārah*), from the consequences of one's evil deeds, and from the danger of repeating them. This is the course of action taken by those who guard against evil.

The other situation in which a man makes haste is when there is something so attractive before him that he wants to acquire it as soon as possible. A mother's love for her child exceeds everything else. That is why if she has something good in her possession, she at once calls for her child to give it to him. Who has created this love for her child in the mother's heart? It is Allah, the Most High, Who has created such affection. If one were to gather all the love and caring that the mothers of this world have for their children, it would pale into insignificance before the love and affection of Allah for mankind. That is why He calls upon us to hasten so that we may acquire the good things such as His protection and the Garden He has prepared for us.

The Holy Quran then informs us that this Garden encompasses the heavens and the earth. The actual Garden of Paradise is in the life Hereafter. It is spread over the seven spiritual heavens where man is to advance spiritually in his life after death, for the moral and spiritual progress of man continues after death. Man can, however, also acquire a Garden in his earthly sojourn. The Holy Quran states, "And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two Gardens" (55:46). There is a consensus of opinion amongst various commentators that this refers to the Garden of this earthly abode and to that of the Hereafter. The paradise or Garden of the Hereafter will obviously include all those good things that the Holy Quran

describes in detail. In this world, however, the righteous seldom acquire such material comforts as mansions, gardens with flowing streams, fine foods and choicest fruits. There is one Garden though which comes in the possession of every person who guards against evil, and that is the serenity and contentment of the heart. The Holy Quran has frequently described this paradise as to where, "No fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve." Fear arises before the occurrence of an evil action, and grief follows it. For example, when a thief commits a robbery, fear of getting apprehended arises in his heart and when he does get apprehended or punished by the law, a feeling of grief overtakes him. We thus come to the conclusion that whosoever commits a crime or any other misdeed, the chastisement which he faces in this very life is the loss of serenity of his heart. A person who guards against evil, may go to bed hungry, but his sleep is restful. A thief, or a corrupt person, on the other hand may have his hunger satisfied, but his heart is devoid of contentment. In my Quranic lesson on the incident of Prophet Adam and Eve, I have pointed out that the Garden in which every human being is born is the serenity of the contented heart. This serenity is reflected by the innocence in the face of a child. The devil, by tempting towards evil and leading man astray, deprives him of this Garden of contentment.

Our youth who are under the influence of the western materialistic culture do not realize the worth of the serenity of mind. They are under the misconception that if the needs of their material comfort are satisfied, they have entered the Garden of paradise. As I have learnt, and so will they from life's bitter experiences that this is not so. If one has serenity in his heart he is in a Garden of heavenly bliss, even though he may be facing adversity in life and is deprived of material comforts. On the other hand, if a person's heart is full of grief, or it is consumed with the fire of greed, as expressed by the Quranic verse, "On the day when We say to hell: Art thou filled up? And it will say: Are there any more?" (50 : 30), he is in hell, although externally he may be living in the lap of luxury.

What accompanies man on his spiritual journey after death are not the luxuries of this worldly life, but the spirit that is within him. This spirit while inside the human body evolves through different stages as it is influenced by the effects of good and evil deeds and forms a personality of its own, which in Quranic terms is called the *Nafs* or soul. If this soul evolves to the highest level which is, the soul at rest or the *nafs-i-muṭmainnah*, it will enter the Garden as the Holy Quran states, "O soul that art at rest, Return to thy Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing, So enter among My servants, And enter My Garden!" (89 : 27-30)

In short, only the soul which in this worldly life is in a state of contentment, will enter the higher external form of paradise in the life after

death. The last verse of this lesson states that the Garden whether it is that of internal serenity in this life or of a more external and palpable form in the life after death, has been prepared only for those who keep their duty and guard against evil. I will discuss this more in detail and also comment further on this verse in the next lesson.

Āl-‘Imrān (Ch. 3)

(Quranic Lesson 63)

I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

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

And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden, as wide as the heavens and the earth ; it is prepared for those who keep their duty. Those who spend in ease as well as in adversity and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men. And Allah loves the doers of good (to others).

(Ch. 3:133,134)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ
عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

الَّذِينَ يَنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ
وَكَظِيمِينَ الْعَبْثِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ
وَ اللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Summary of the previous lesson

I have almost completed my discussion on the first verse of this lesson. In order to understand the remaining portion of this discussion, I will briefly summarize the points already discussed so that it is easier to understand the subject matter to be presented here.

This verse enjoins man to hasten towards a certain goal. Ordinarily man is inclined to hasten under the following circumstances.

- 1) If he is facing danger. Besides the ordinary dangers of physical existence which man has to face occasionally, there are two persistent threats to his spiritual well being. These include the devil and man's own animal soul or the *nafs-i-ammārah*. This is the beginning level of mans spiritual existence in which the soul is subject to control of his animal desires. Man is in constant danger of being overwhelmed and led astray, even to the point of spiritual demise, by the devil and his own animal soul. The Holy Quran informs us that refuge from both of these elements can be obtained by seeking the protection of our Lord, and urges us to hasten towards it.
- 2) Another situation in which a man hastens is when the task he has

undertaken is important and the time to complete it is short. Nothing can be of greater importance than man's own spiritual salvation and success. The time to achieve this great task is, however, very short and can run out at any moment.

- 3) Man also hastens towards something which is so very attractive and supreme par excellence as to be a great blessing for mankind. The protection of Allah is certainly such a blessing for man. Besides it, this invitation is also for the great blessing which is the Garden of paradise and is to be experienced in the Life after Death as seven levels of heavenly life. It can, however, also be acquired in this life in the form of the Garden of serenity of the heart. Whosoever has contentment of heart, he is in heaven, although he may not have the luxuries of life at his disposal. Moreover the one who achieves the serenity of heart in this life is also the one who enters paradise in the Life Hereafter.

The Paradise of the heart and the Hereafter only for the dutiful

This verse tells us that the Garden, whether it be that of the serenity of the heart or of the paradise in the Hereafter is prepared only for those who keep their duty. These are the ones who guard against evil. What an excellent Book of Wisdom is the Holy Quran! It tells us that if we desire the paradise of contentment of the heart in this life or its more palpable form in the Hereafter, the way to acquire both these states is only by guarding against evil. Evil, is what the Holy Quran forbids us to do, and that is why the Holy Quran is called the complete guide for those who guard against evil. When the evil elements are eliminated from a man's deeds, they becomes righteous. For example, man strives around the clock in pursuit of wealth which can be earned both by fair and foul means. If a person safeguards against dishonest practices, he will be earning wealth through honest means, which then becomes a righteous deed. Those who earn an honest living are the ones blessed with contentment, which is the paradise of the heart. Another aspect of the great wisdom that underlies the Garden of paradise being prepared only for those who guard against evil is that it would cease to exist as such if it were the abode of murderers, thieves, dishonest, corrupt and immoral individuals where they could commit such evil deeds. The Garden of paradise, will therefore, be free of crime and evil, without police or prisons, an abode where there will be peace and order, as the Holy Quran states, "And are met therein with greetings and salutation" (25 : 75). This would only be possible if entry to this dwelling is restricted to those who are so firm in the commitment to their duty that they cannot do criminal or evil acts. Such strength demands a striving of a lifetime. To achieve excellence

in the performance of one's duty is a difficult task and takes time. Man is therefore enjoined to hasten towards the protection of Allah, for he has a tendency to waste his life time in pursuit of evil, thus leaving little time behind for good.

Time for reformation is limited

Every human being is under the misconception that he is innocent and free of evil. Even those who are aware of some of their shortcomings, do not know what other faults are latent within them. These may show up only at the opportune time or when one is subjected to trial. To achieve perfection in guarding against evil, requires a lifelong effort and striving. It is not only that one may waste his life in misdeeds and remain oblivious to his spiritual calling, but also no one really knows how much longer he has to live. A child, a young person or an older individual, is unaware of when an accident, illness or death itself may strike. That is why the Holy Quran draws our attention to the immensity of the task of reformation, the very limited time we have at our disposal and urges us to hasten and seek the refuge and protection of our Lord (*Rabb*— One Who Nurtures us unto perfection). The one who has the good fortune of doing so, enters the Garden of serenity of the heart in this life. In fact, man was created in this state of tranquillity which we observe so manifestly in the innocence of a child. Involvement in worldly life, however, makes him lose this serenity. The question that comes to mind is how in this life can man remain in a state of contentment, or repossess such a state after its loss? The answer to this secret has also been unveiled by Holy Quran— the Book of Wisdom, in the two subsequent verses.

The Garden of Paradise achieved through spending of wealth

It states, "Those who spend in ease as well as in adversity," i.e., the dutiful are those who spend in ease as well as adversity. Ease and adversity are two extreme conditions within which are included all other states of variable intensity. Thus for example when we state that someone works day and night, it also includes the period in between.

The most time consuming affair of this world is the earning of wealth. Everyone spends his hours of the day and night in this pursuit. This desire for wealth may reach the degree of hellish proportions described by the Quranic verse, "On the day when We say to hell: Art thou filled up? And it will say: Are there any more?" (50:30). The greed of man for more and more is described as a sign of hell in the verse quoted above and is never satisfied. One who is earning a hundred thousand is anxious to make a

million and so on and so forth. This desire for material possession and consumption deprives a man's heart of its contentment. Thus we come to the conclusion that the peace of mind and contentment which are the signs of the Garden of serenity of the heart are lost by the unchecked desire for more and more material possession and consumption. Other religions have spoken against the earning of wealth and prescribed monasticism, nunnery and asceticism as a remedy to combat this illness. Such a course would, however, lead to the end of hard work, which is a great human asset, and lead to the demise of all human progress. Thus avoiding marital relationship which is part of this monastic commitment would cause the demise of the human race in a few years. The teaching of such religions to abstain from worldly life and earning of wealth cannot therefore be an appropriate one.

Islamic teachings regarding wealth — a unique means of spiritual development

Islam is the only religion that has sanctioned worldly pursuits and the earning of wealth by honest means. Even while earning wealth, the greed and fire for the acquisition of more and more can be ignited in the human heart. What then is the remedy for this? The answer to this question lies in what the Holy Quran has stated over here. It enjoins us to spend in the way of Allah no matter what our state of finances may be. The Holy Quran describes in detail all the matters in which such spending is enjoined. In the time of need, the companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would give all their wealth in the way of Allah. Hazrat Abu Bakr manifested this spirit of sacrifice by giving up all that he had in his house in the way of Allah on one occasion, leaving behind his house as he put it in the hands of Allah and His Apostle. Hazrat Usman, another noble companion similarly gave large amounts of his wealth in the way of Allah, including hundreds and thousands of camels for the use of the Muslim forces. The poor on the other hand would exhibit a similar spirit of giving and sacrifice. Out of the pittance in dates that they earned as wages for a days hard work, they would feed the family with half of it, and give up the remaining portion in the way of Allah. This was how the early Muslims complied with the Quranic injunction of spending in the way of Allah in ease as well as adversity.

Spending one's wealth only for the benefit of oneself, or one's wife and children is a basic animal quality. We observe that most animals share food with their mate and offspring. To rise from this animal to a human or a spiritual level is to spend one's wealth for the upkeep of widows, orphans, the needy, those burdened by credit and the sick, in other words to lessen the burden of the poor. Above all, to spend one's wealth in the way of

enhancement of the religion of Allah. Thus, practically give thanks to one's greatest Benefactor, Who incessantly provides for us throughout our lives. In the hearts of those who save their wealth only for their spouses and children, worship of low desires, niggardliness and the love of wealth ignite the quality of greed and hellish fire described by the Holy Quran as, "Are there any more?" (50:30). In contrast those who sacrifice the fiery elements of these low desires and open up their hearts for God and His creatures, their hearts are blessed with the coolness and joy which is the Garden of contentment of the heart. Thus, the earning of wealth which carries the risk of losing one's serenity not only becomes a means of enhancing it, but also at the same time puts out the fire of greed in one's heart.

Āl-‘Imrān (Ch. 3)

(Quranic Lesson 64)

I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

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

.. And those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men. And Allah loves the doers of good (to others).

And those who, when they commit an indecency or wrong their souls, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sins. And who forgives sins but Allah? And they persist not knowingly in what they do.

(Ch. 3:134,135)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ١

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ٢
وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ٣

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا
أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ
وَمَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ٤

Summary of the previous lesson

In my previous lesson I mentioned that the Holy Quran has promised two kinds of paradise for those who guard against evil. One of these is the garden or the external paradise of the Life Hereafter, the other being the garden of internal tranquillity with which the heart of such a person is blessed. This condition accompanies him in his journey to the Hereafter. The Holy Quran has unveiled some of the secrets of achieving and maintaining such a state. I also described in detail, how most of the human race is involved around the clock in an endless search to acquire wealth. This desire turns into greed for acquisition of more and more wealth in a man’s heart and is likened to the appetite of hellfire described by the Holy Quran as, “Are there any more?” (50:30). Other religions have proposed monasticism, nunnery and asceticism as a cure for this spiritual malady. Such a course if adapted by whole of humanity would not only spell an end to all human effort, hard work and progress, but without marital relationship, the human race itself would end. These teachings are therefore not practical. Islam has endorsed the earning of wealth by honest means. By laying emphasis on the

spending of earnest wealth for the benefit of others besides the spouse and offspring, and for other good works, Islam has attempted to elevate man beyond the animal stage and to create in him the attributes or coloring of the Divine. Detailed injunctions in this matter are mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Quran. Spending only for the benefit of one's wife and children puts man only at the basic level of an animal, for all animals instinctively share with their mates and offspring. Unlike the hellfire created by hunger for wealth and greed, spending in the way of Allah, irrespective of personal circumstances of poverty or abundance, creates within the human heart the coolness of the Garden of Paradise.

Suppression of anger the key to serenity

In the first verse under discussion today, we are made aware of another action on our part which can help us acquire and sustain this state of tranquillity. The Holy Quran states that those who keep their duty are the ones who, "who restrain (their) anger and pardon men. And Allah loves the doers of good (to others)." All human emotions and desires carry the element of fire within them, but in comparison with anger they are easier to restrain. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has done us a great favor by informing us that anger is part of the flames of hellfire. We have all observed that anger can burst like the flames of a fire and under its influence a man can totally lose control, turn abusive or violent and even commit murder. Even if it is not openly manifested, the desire to seek revenge burns inside a man. All forms of conflict, break up of relationships including divorce, wars between nations etc., are provoked by the feeling of anger. Psychiatrist may advise against the suppression of anger, but in my opinion such advise is absurd. All the adverse situations that I have mentioned above, arise as a consequence of such behavior. Anger instead of calming down smolders on, resulting in internal and external difficulties, in the form of grief within and the hellfire of suffering without. Just as a real fire if not immediately doused, tends to spread and results in great loss, the fire of anger progresses, if not promptly controlled. This fact has been described in the Chapter *Al-Humazah* (104) of the Holy Quran, where this fire is described as first appearing in the hearts of men, and then spreading into the external environment and engulfing mankind like huge pillars of fire. If anger which arises inside, is not controlled immediately, it can erupt outside and result in anguish lasting decades and affecting the hearts and minds of men.

Consequences of uncontrolled anger

It is the mistaken ideas of modern times which have caused the lives of men

to be a living hell. I want to discuss this in detail so that those who come across this writing or hear about it can spread the word that the real remedy for anger is the one which the Holy Quran prescribes. We observe that the closest tie of kinship is the one between parents and their offspring. It would be appropriate if the parents tremendous love, tenderness and numerous acts of kindness towards their children were reciprocated by them with respect and obedience towards their parents. On the contrary, we observe that most young people in this day and age are unhappy and dissatisfied with their parents. They claim that the reason for this rift is the gap between generations i.e., the difference between their ages and their likes and dislikes. Such a difference is not a new phenomenon and has always existed. Children have always resented parental interference and advise. Religious influence which existed in prior times, by its endorsement of respect for parents and parental guidance, made it more acceptable. There was also a certain amount of fear of God in the hearts of men. In this day and age, religion and faith in God are no longer there and the problem is further compounded by the advise that psychiatrists give to get rid of anger. What we observe, therefore, are the consequences of these actions. As a result, the great majority of children are unhappy with their parents, and rebel against their authority. In extreme cases, this has resulted in open enmity between them even leading to murder. Similarly parents also do not suppress their anger and mistreat or physically abuse their children. In short, this relationship of love and pleasure for both parties has turned into one of pain and grief.

The other relationship which is the closest and extends over a lifetime is that of a husband and a wife. The difference in temperaments which exists between two individuals has always been there. Also the nature of this relationship is such that there is frequent contact between the two. A difference of temperament can, therefore, result in dislike and resentment for the words or actions of the opposite spouse. In the past such differences were tolerated. The influence of western culture has, however, unbridled the inner animal of man which by its very nature is incapable of suppressing its anger. As a result of this, mutual tolerance has been replaced by daily conflict, open fights, and a high rate of divorce amongst married couples.

Within the household, besides the relationship of the husband and wife there exists an interaction between the master of the household and his domestic employees. In the past such employees would tolerate any action of their master even though they may have disliked it. This is not the case now. They immediately show their anger and become abusive and disrespectful. They threaten to leave the job and at times may even become violent and commit murder. A similar situation exists between employees and

owners in factories, offices, stores and on the farms. Mutual tolerance has deteriorated significantly as a result of which employee shutdowns and other undesirable actions are quite common. Once again, this is because the animal within man has been allowed to go unrestrained, and a beast by its very nature does not know how to suppress its anger. The only remedy for this is the one given in the Holy Quran, i.e., the injunction to suppress one's anger. How very true is the Holy Prophet's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saying that the real manifestation of strength is not to wrestle someone down, but the truly strong are those who can suppress their anger. This is a match of strength between a man and his animal soul (*nafs-i- ammara*).

Forgiveness and doing of good complement suppression of anger

On another occasion, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stated that whosoever suppresses his anger and forgives, Allah fills his belly with faith and security. The Quranic verse under discussion also enjoins us, not only to restrain our anger, but also to forgive the object of our ire.

How great is the wisdom in these words! If one only curbs his anger, he still seethes and burns on the inside, however, if this is also coupled with the act of forgiving, the fire inside one's soul is extinguished and is replaced with a sensation of coolness. If one goes a step further, and does good to the one who provoked his resentment, then the feeling of peace and tranquillity that is thus generated in his heart becomes in reality the Garden of Paradise on earth.

Suppression of anger a Divine Attribute

Is this teaching of the Holy Quran beyond man's capacity to act? This is certainly not so. In fact, it teaches man the great moral attribute which is manifested by Allah every day. Are the actions of man not enough to provoke Allah's wrath? For example, association with God is quite common. The Divine ire that this provokes can be experienced to some degree by a married person who experiences spousal infidelity. Similarly atheism has flourished under communism in recent times. Even in those countries where communism is not the dominant force, atheism is increasingly popular. It is being said that either God never existed or He is (may Allah protect us from saying so) now dead. Can there be anything more disrespectful than this to provoke Divine wrath? Indeed are all the sins, evil actions and deeds of depravity that are committed in front of His eyes not enough to make Him angry? They certainly are, however, Allah suppresses His anger

and forgives man every moment of the day as the Holy Quran states, “and He pardons much” (42:30). In fact, He continues to manifest His infinite benevolence towards mankind. His Grace encompasses those who associate with Him, the atheists, the evil doers and the morally corrupt. There is a well known anecdote about Prophet Abraham (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is related that every evening he would seek out a wayfarer, feed him, and give him shelter for the night in his home. One day, he noticed that a person he had brought in failed to invoke the name of Allah while beginning to consume the meal offered to him. On being questioned by Prophet Abraham, his reply was that he did not believe in God. This answer made Prophet Abraham very angry and he asked the stranger to leave his house. Thereupon, Abraham received Divine revelation stating, “ O Abraham this man has always denied My existence, has been disrespectful to Me, and has even tried to convince others to follow his footsteps, but I never stopped his sustenance.” On receiving this Divine admonition, Prophet Abraham hurried to find the wayfarer, asked his forgiveness and brought him back to his house to give him food and shelter. This is a practical example of creating the moral attributes of Allah within oneself, something which the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has enjoined. This is also taking the coloring of Allah in accordance with the Quranic teaching, for no one suppresses His anger more than Allah, or is more Forgiving and Benevolent than Him.

The life of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was an example of the manifestation of such High moral characteristics. There are innumerable incidents to illustrate his noble character. For sake of brevity I will refer to only two of them. During the Battle of Uhud, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) fell down to the ground after receiving numerous injuries from the volleys of stones, spears and swords directed at him. One of his companions asked him to pray to Allah at that moment for the chastisement of those responsible for these acts. Instead, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) supplicated before Allah with the following plea on their behalf, “O Allah forgive my people for they know not what they are doing.” This incident shows that not only did the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) suppress his anger, he forgave his enemy ,and in addition, bestowed a favor upon them by pleading for their forgiveness before Allah.

Also on the occasion of the fall of Makkah, he had opportunity to seek vengeance for twenty years of atrocities, crimes, murder and torture that he and his followers had been subjected to by the Makkian disbelievers. The bloodthirsty enemy that had committed all this barbarity against him and his companions, was now standing helplessly before him. They had killed and maimed many of his companions. For twenty years, they had made

every attempt within their power to take his own life. The woman who had arranged the murder of his beloved uncle, Hamza and committed the heinous act of chewing his liver in front of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was also there. It was also the opportunity to punish the savage who had murdered the pregnant daughter of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) with the thrust of a spear while she was riding a camel. How magnificent an example of suppression of anger, forgiveness and benevolence was set by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on this occasion! when he said, “No reproof be against you this day, may Allah forgive all of you,” with these words he exonerated all of them.

This is the high moral standard set by Allah and His Prophet. By meeting this standard man can rid himself of all his mutual conflicts, anguish, displeasure and anger. He can thus achieve the paradise of heart which not only blesses this life with true serenity and contentment, but also shows the way to the paradise of the Hereafter.