“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)
The Light was founded in 1921 as the organ of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. The Islamic Review was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam, Lahore.

ISSN: 1060–4596
Editor: Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.
Circulation: Mrs. Samina Malik.

Contact information:
‘The Light’, P.O. Box 3370, Dublin, Ohio 43016, U.S.A.
Phone: 614 – 873 1030 • Fax: 614 – 873 1022
E-mails: aail@aol.com
Website: www.muslim.org

The main objective of the A.A.I.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

Islam seeks to attract the hearts and minds of people towards the truth, by means of reasoning and the natural beauty of its principles.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

International: It recognizes prophets being raised among all nations and requires Muslims to believe in them all. Truth and goodness can be found in all religions. God treats all human beings equally, regardless of race, nationality or religion.

Peaceful: Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

Tolerant: Gives full freedom to everyone to hold and practise any creed or religion. Requires us to tolerate differences of belief and opinion.

Rational: In all matters, it urges use of human reason and knowledge. Blind following is condemned and independence of thought is granted.

Inspiring: Worship is not a ritual, but provides living contact with a Living God, Who answers prayers and speaks to His righteous servants even today as in the past.

Non-sectarian: Every person professing Islam by the words La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that no prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, Mujaddids will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.
Introduction to Special Issue
By the Editor

From time immemorial, man has questioned his existence: How did we get here? Who is our Creator? What is our purpose in life? What happens when we die? There is an intrinsic calling for answers to these questions. Although religion has historically been viewed as a source of guidance on such existential queries, many in contemporary times view religion (the concept itself, regardless of which faith tradition) as unreliable and unrelatable. Some base this position on perceived conflicts between religious beliefs and scientific facts, religion being considered inferior to contemporary pragmatic thought. Others view religious principles as inherently exclusive, at odds with notions of fairness, equality and justice for all. And still others feel religious philosophies fail to nurture spiritual growth, it being an impediment to developing a personal connection with the Divine.

For Muslims, the Holy Quran provides a comprehensive manual on all aspects of life, one that both appeals to intellect and inspires inner spiritual contentment. And Sura Al Fatihah, referred to as “The Mother of the Quran,” encapsulates in its seven short verses a concise summary of the essence of the faith. It presents a message that is universal in scope and applicable to all; it enlightens on the nature of the Divine by beautifully describing God’s primary qualities and characteristics; and it expounds on the relationship between each individual and God, thereby offering insight to the very purpose of life.

This special issue of The Light and the Islamic Review includes the presentations from the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society’s 2021 annual symposium. The first five presentations explain the underlying spiritual significances to each verse of Sura Al Fatihah and provide a valuable lens through which the entirety of the Quran should be read and the religion of Islam should be understood. The next presentation focusses on Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s beautifully poetic writings on Sura Al Fatihah being compared to a rose. The final presentation addresses the practical work being done by the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society to spread these spiritual gems throughout the world, using current work on Mali as an example.

The papers presented from the online program are presented here in this special edition issue of The Light and Islamic Review. The video recordings of the presentations are available on the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society’s YouTube page at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1vKZ38bcvo.
Introduction to 2021 Annual Symposium

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

I begin in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. My dear elders, brothers and sisters, and children: assalamu aleikum (“may peace be upon you”).

I would like to welcome each one of you to the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society’s 2021 “virtual” annual symposium. Although the past couple of years has presented us all with many challenges due to the impact of the coronavirus, we are very grateful to still have the opportunity and resources to offer a program again this year, albeit in a different format.

As most of you are aware, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society – which is the US branch of the international Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement – has been holding an annual conference for over 30 years. Over the past dozen years or so, we have included a symposium in our annual conference tailored to addressing a topic concerning Islam that is relevant to current events. And the objective is to offer an educational opportunity to dispel misinformation about the Islamic faith, and also effectuate an appreciation for the valuable lessons to society that is available from Islam’s teachings. And we are absolutely thrilled with the participation from local friends each year, many of whom are clergy, academics and community leaders.

The other purpose for our symposiums is to offer our own members information that they are then able to utilize in their own engagements with others in their respective locales. And, just as a reminder, we have made available the presentations from symposiums over the past several years on our YouTube page, and we encourage everyone to make use of them and share them with others.

Because of the ongoing safety risks due to the pandemic, we felt it advisable to not have the normal symposium in a hall in Columbus, Ohio with a lot of guest attendees as we normally do. And we thought it would be a good opportunity to have an online program focused on a topic that will be informative to participants who are not Muslims, and also unique (and, hopefully, inspiring) to our Muslim attendees as well. Hence, the selection of the topic of Sura Al Fatihah.

Al Fatihah is the first chapter of the Holy Quran (the holy scripture of Islam) and is translated in English as “The Opening.” It consists of only seven short verses, but it is regarded as a summary of the entire Quran and the quintessence of the lessons contained in it. For this reason, it is referred to as “Umm al Kitab”, meaning “the mother (or basis) of the book”. The Quran elsewhere refers to Al Fatihah as “the seven oft-repeated verses” because it is repeated in every one of a Muslim’s daily prayers. The Holy Prophet Muhammad stated that no Islamic prayer is complete without the recitation of Al Fatihah. It is thus also referred to as Sura al Salat (meaning, the Chapter of Prayer) and “Sura al Dua” (meaning, the Chapter of Supplication).

Al Fatihah commences by introducing the reader in its first 3 verses to the essence of God, by relaying the 4 primary attributes (or qualities) of God. As you will hear in the presentations today:

The attribute of Rabb (or Lord in English) describes God’s universal providence for all of creation;
The attribute of Rahman (or Beneficent in English) describes God’s all-encompassing care for all living beings;
The attribute of Raheem (or Merciful in English) describes God’s unbounded love and mercy for mankind; and
The attribute of Malik (or Master in English) describes God’s assessment of deeds being based on total and absolute fairness (taking into consideration each individual’s circumstances) and weighted in favor of forgiveness (out of God’s abundant mercy).

Understanding the deep significances of these attributes provides a profound appreciation for not only the essence of the Divine, but also the nature of man and the relationship between man and God. This realization is expressed in the middle verse of Al Fatihah with the words “thee do we serve and thee do we beseech for help”, indicating an intrinsic recognition of “union with the Divine” being the grand purpose for which man was created, and an innate desire to strive towards achieving this goal.

The final 3 verses of Al Fatihah then go on to present a prayer for guidance to continue along this desired path. And by doing so, it offers practical direction for the moderate and balanced course one should strive to follow in life, in order to progress towards the ultimate goal of achieving closeness to God.

Maulana Muhammad Ali, the first President (Amir) of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, states the following in his famous translation and commentary of the Holy Quran about what is contained in Al Fatihah; he writes:
The fundamental principles of faith, the prime attributes of the Divine Being, which are the basis of all other attributes, the relation which ought to hold between man and his Creator, are all contained in their essence in the seven short sentences of which this wonderful chapter is made up. And to crown all, this chapter opens with the broadest possible conception of the Lordship of the Divine Being and the brotherhood of man, nay of the oneness of all creation, for the unity of the creation necessarily follows the unity of the Creator.

What we would like to do today is provide an introductory course on the seven verses of Sura Al Fatihah. And we hope that the insights shared today will provide a lens from which the entirety of the Quran should be read and the religion of Islam should be understood.

As for your presenters:

1 (Fazeel S. Khan) will be discussing the first verse of Al Fatiyah, Dr. Noman Malik will discuss the second verse, Dr. Ayesha Khan, will discuss the third verse, Dr. Haleema Saeed will discuss the fourth and fifth verses together, and Dr. Mohammed Ahmad will then discuss the sixth and seventh verses together.

We will then have 2 more presentations. One by Mr. Omar Raja, in which he will discuss how Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam) provided a beautiful analogy of Sura Al Fatihah having the spiritual affinity of a “rose” in a garden; a metaphor that is highlighted in the subtitle of the symposium today. And we will conclude with a presentation by Mrs. Samina Malik, who will provide a report on the practical work being done by the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society to promote the spread of the type of spiritual lessons that will be presented before you today (using Mali in West Africa as a case in point).

We appreciate each one of you joining us today and we really hope you will enjoy the program. But first, as is customary, we would like to begin with a recitation of the Holy Quran. And it seemed most appropriate to share a recitation of the Holy Quran. And it seemed most appropriate to share a recitation of Sura Al Fatiyah – which we will do now (along with an English translation).

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds,
The Beneficent, the Merciful, 
Master of the day of Requital. 
Thou do we serve and Thou do we beseech for help. 
Guide us on the right path, 
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favors, 
Not those upon who wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray.

Verse 1: “Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds”

By Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.

[Fazeel S. Khan is the Editor of The Light and Islamic Review. He is the Secretary of the board of directors of the USA branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. He is an attorney and arbitrator by profession and involved in many interfaith programs in Ohio. He is regularly called upon to speak on Islam and the Ahmadiyya Movement in various religious and academic forums.]

I will be discussing the first verse of Sura Al Fatiyah. The first verse states: Alhamdulillah hir rabbul alamin, which translates into English as “Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.” Although comprised of only a few words, this single verse manifests a number of profound concepts.

Meaning of “Allah”

As an initial point, it is rather remarkable that in the very first verse of the Quran, the author of the message introduces Himself by name – Allah. The word “Allah” is normally understood as simply the Arabic word for “God”. But the word “Allah” has a much deeper significance. It is literally defined as:

That Being Who exists necessarily by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection.

Hence, the concept of the unity of God and the very monotheistic foundation of the Islamic faith is inherent in the word “Allah” itself. And, so is the notion that “God is perfect”, which underscores the point that anything that is “imperfect” in any way cannot be God. Construing these two elements contained in the meaning of the word “Allah” together, leads to the inevitable understanding that: there is only one Being that is perfect, and that is God.

Another point implied in the word “Allah” is that because God is the “Possessor of all the perfect attributes,” to know God is to understand His attributes – that, it is through God’s attributes that one can understand and appreciate the nature of God. Now, the Quran teaches that God’s perfect attributes are limitless, and it presents 99 examples of these Divine attributes (also referred to as “names” of God). And these attributes (or names) of God are presented throughout the Quran, literally on every page, to not only enlighten the reader on the nature of God, but to also better explain the meaning of the narrative or lesson being discussed. The attributes presented in any given narrative in the Quran thus serve as a tool for interpreting the substance of that particular verse or lesson.
Noteworthy is that elsewhere in the Quran we are told that the particular name by which one refers to God is not critical, as it states:

… By whatever (name) you call on Him, He has the best names. (17:110)

Rather, what is important is the understanding that God comprises all of the attributes or qualities of perfection and is, therefore, not limited to any one type of characteristic or description. Hence, the appropriateness of the word or name “Allah”, which by its very definition indicates that God is all-encompassing of every good quality.

Significance of “Praise be to Allah”

The phrase “Alhamdulillah” or “Praise be to Allah” has an underlying significance that may not be apparent (one that is often neglected by Muslims themselves). The Arabic word translated as “praise” is hamd. And hamd signifies something much more refined than simple praise in the sense of liking something and acknowledging gratefulness or thanks (like when one claps after being pleased with a performance). Rather, hamd signifies that feeling of having so much genuine appreciation for a thing that one desires to be close to it or incorporate it into one’s own being. Like when a person accepts someone as a role model, there is a sense of not only admiration, but also a desire to replicate those characteristics within oneself.

Therefore, the term “Praise be to Allah” signifies that it is only God that one should truly appreciate and admire to the extent of wanting to incorporate it into one’s being, due to God being the possessor of all attributes of perfection. It is a subtle acknowledgement that because nothing other than God is perfect, God alone is worthy of such sincere admiration and appreciation.

And this phrase, at the very commencement of the Holy Quran, hints at the very purpose of life and object for which man was created: it is to seek, understand and emulate the Divine attributes. This notion is really at the core of every religion; every faith tradition aims at improving the spiritual condition of man. In the Quran, this understanding is emphasized right at the outset, thereby negating the superficial understanding and treatment of religion being tantamount to a “game,” where one “wins” if the correct creed is recited or the right number of rituals is performed. The phrase Alhamdulillah (“Praise be to Allah”) affirms right from the outset that religion is about the transformation of the inner self through developing an intimate relationship with the Divine.

This expression of the true essence of religion was beautifully conveyed by a famous female Muslim saint-Rabia al-Adawiyyah (of Basra, Iraq, d. 801); she stated:

O Lord,
If I worship you for fear of hell,
Burn me in that hell.
If I worship you hoping for paradise,
Make it forbidden to me.
But if I worship you only for your own sake,
Do not withhold from me your everlasting beauty.

The notion of becoming close to God by being more God-like in one’s personality is referred to in the spiritual tradition of Islam as seeking “union” with God (and is a common subject in writings and poems of Muslim saintly figures, like Rumi, whose poetry on spirituality has become very popular in the West).

The Quran refers to this concept beautifully by stating:

(We take) Allah’s color, and who is better than Allah at coloring (2:138)

The color of Allah obviously referring to the radiance of a personality that manifests the divine qualities. Prophet Muhammad expounded on this by stating: “Adorn yourself with the Divine qualities.”

Just briefly, as I believe this will be explained in later presentations, the Quran teaches that man is capable of developing the Divine qualities because man has been provided a “soul.” And the soul is the “spirit of God” that is breathed into each person. Having the “spirit of God” within each person means every person has the Divine attributes within them. And those who develop these attributes (by exercising them through displaying them in daily life) achieve closeness to God by becoming more God-like in their essence. The Quran illustrates this process by depicting the soul as being like a “seed.” The analogy being: just as a seed has certain ingredients within it, that if cultivated properly can grow into a lush garden, so too can the soul of man, if cultivated by developing the divine attributes within, attain the spiritual garden of closeness or union with the Divine.

The natural implication of this notion of the soul being the spirit of God breathed into each person is that God is not to be sought in some physical place – whether it be on a mountain top, or in a temple, or at the Kabbah in Mecca (where Muslims make pilgrimage) – but rather God is found within the essence of each individual. Maulana Rumi expresses this understanding in his poetry by stating:

My Beloved (God) grows right out of my own
heart. How much more union can there be?

Rabb (Lord)

In order to develop and emulate the perfect attributes of God within, one must first recognize what the Divine attributes are. And Sura Al Fatihah, right after introducing this concept, quite logically then proceeds to present the 4 primary attributes of God (the principle attributes from which all other Divine attributes flow).

The first attribute is “Rabb”, which is normally translated in English as “Lord.” But the word “Rabb” has a much deeper meaning. It conveys the idea that:

God is not only the Creator, but also the One Who fosters and nourishes creation in such a manner as to make it progress from lower to higher conditions until it reaches its goal of completion.

Thus, in the meaning of the word “Rabb”, we find a description of the law of evolution.

This reference to evolution at work in the universe is expounded upon elsewhere in the Quran; it is stated:

Glorify the name of thy Lord (Rabb), the Most High! Who creates, then makes complete, and Who measures, then guides.” (87:1-3).

In this verse, the fuller meaning of the word “Rabb” is clarified. The principle of evolution is relayed in the first two points relating to “creation” and “completion.”

The next two points reveal how this evolution is brought about: that, everything is made according to a “measure” (that is, certain laws of development are contained in everything created) and all creation is “guided” (by being shown the way to progress). The implication being that God does not only create, but also nourishes creation with guidance so that it reaches its goal of perfection.

Now, science proves this law is at work in the various stages of the creation of the physical universe. In particular, we know that modern man has evolved from its earliest ancestor approximately 50,000 years ago, which was the result of evolution of many primitive species of upright, man-like creatures over millions of years. But the important subtext to this notion is that God not only provides for the evolution of man in the physical world, but He does so also in the spiritual realm. The Quran presents this nexus between the physical and spiritual evolution of man in various ways. And, I’ll share just one. In 32:7-9, it states:

... and He (God) began the creation of man from dust.

Then He made his progeny of an extract, of worthless water.

Then He made him (man) complete and breathed into him of His spirit, and gave you ears and eyes and hearts; little it is that you give thanks!

Here, we are first told that man is created from dust (meaning, out of the earth). So, we are provided insight into the origins of man: that man evolved from the basic elements from which all life developed, and was not made separately or fashioned in some way independent from the evolution of all life on earth.

We are next presented with the law of procreation, as reference is made to the male agency’s sperm that is required for the fertilization process. Thus, after explaining the origins of man, the next verse explains how man spread on earth through the reproductive process.

The next verse goes on to state that “then” God made man “complete”. Now, the sequence in these verses – of man having already been created and having spread on earth prior to being made “complete” – indicates that the reference here is to modern man, and the earlier reference is to the various species of prehistoric man in the evolutionary process. In essence, our species of humans has “completed” the evolutionary process of man. And we are told the distinguishing characteristic between modern man from his prehistoric predecessors is that God “breathed into him of His spirit”. So, although prehistoric man and our species of humans originated from the same elements of the earth, spread through the same laws of reproduction, and have almost identical DNA, what distinguishes us is that modern man possess a soul, and that this is what truly makes man “complete.”

And, interestingly, the sequence then follows that after making us complete by breathing His spirit into us, God gave us “ears and eyes and hearts”. Prehistoric man also had these physical features, but because they are referenced after introducing the spirituality of modern man, they have been interpreted as having a spiritual significance. In the spiritual tradition of Islam, the ears, eyes and heart are metaphors for three levels of progressive faith in God:

The “ears” refer to having faith based on “hearing” the truth from another;

The “eyes” refer to a higher level of faith, based on “seeing or witnessing” the truth for oneself; and

And the “heart” refers to the highest level of faith, where one firmly believes and accepts the truth wholeheartedly without any reservation from one’s core.

So, in these verses, while explaining the physical evolution of man, we are given the parallel lesson on how
man progresses from lower to higher stages in the spiritual realm. And the connection is thus made between God being the Rabb (or nourisher unto perfection) of both the material and the spiritual worlds.

Alamin (“of the worlds”)

And this point is emphasized in the ending words of the first verse of Al Fatihah. We are told that God is:

Rabb ul alamin (meaning, Lord “of the worlds”)

The words “of the worlds” normally conveys that God is the Lord of all people, not just of one race or nation, thereby establishing the unity of mankind and brotherhood of all people. The clear implication being that there are no chosen people who have some special status with God, but that the means to achieve closeness to the Divine is available to all people equally. Hence, the Quran stressing that prophets and messengers were sent by God to all nations on earth with Divine guidance, no people being deprived of these spiritual blessings.

But, the term “Lord of the worlds” may be viewed not only in an expansive way (to indicate God’s providence for all people), but also at a micro level (to suggest God’s individualized connection with each person). This latter interpretation recognizes that every individual has their own world (made up of their own predispositions, their own childhood upbringing, their own life experiences, their own talents and strengths, and also their own limitations and weaknesses). So, the implication is that God is Knower of all, and His Rabbubiyat (or nourishment to perfection) takes into consideration each person’s individual needs and circumstances, so as to provide the particular type of guidance needed in every different season of his or her life.

Conclusion

To conclude this presentation, the first verse of Sura Al Fatihah provides that the goal to which we should aspire in life is to appreciate and emulate the Divine attributes. And it presents the first of the prime attributes of God, that of Rabb or “Lord” (which signifies providing nourishment so as to help a thing progress to higher and better stages).

So, the practical lesson learnt is that one should live their life with the intent of uplifting others — whether it be other people (by doing good to your neighbor), or animals (by fostering pets) or even the environment (by being an advocate for the preservation of our natural resources). Our personality should be developed towards being good stewards of the Creator in our everyday dealings.

I’ll end here, thank you for your kind attention.

Verse 2: “The Beneficent, The Merciful”

By Dr. Noman Malik

[Dr. Noman Malik is on the board of Directors for the USA branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. He is a retired pathologist, but he is most appreciated for being an invaluable wealth of knowledge on Islam and the Ahmadiyya Movement. He has also devoted most of his life working for the advancement of the publication work of the Movement.]

Bismillah i Rahman, i Raheem. Assalamu aleikum everyone (may peace be upon you). And thank you Fazeel for that kind introduction.

I will be speaking about the second and third attributes of Allah mentioned in verse 2 of the Sura Fatiha, which are Rahman (translated as Beneficent) and Raheem (translated as Merciful). Both the words Rahman and Raheem are derived from the Arabic word Rahma, which is usually translated as “Mercy.” In fact, a more nuanced and closer meaning of Rahma is revealed in the definition given by Imam Raghib, which is quoted by Maulana Muhammad Ali in his English translation of the Holy Quran. The definition of Rahma provided is: “Tenderness requiring the exercise of Beneficence.” In other words, the word Rahma signifies “to have so much love and tenderness for something that one is compelled to do good to it.” It comprises both the ideas of love and mercy.

This attribute of Rahma – of infinite unbounded love and mercy – typifies the relationship of God with His creation. All the other attributes spring from this attribute of unbounded love and mercy and for this reason many commentators consider this as the Prime Attribute of God. In the Holy Quran, God, the Most High, places special emphasis on His attribute of Rahma or Mercy by stating, not once, but twice, that He has made the attribute of Mercy (Rahma) “binding” on Himself:

The Holy Quran further states that God’s Love and Mercy (Rahma) is all inclusive. Nothing in creation is excluded from His Mercy, as is clearly explained in several verses of the Holy Quran:

And my (Rahma) Mercy encompasses all things. (7:156)

Your Lord is the Lord of all-encompassing mercy (Rahma) (6:148)

Our Lord! Thou embracest all things in mercy (Rahma) and knowledge. (40:7)

In fact, the creation of humankind itself is the result of
the Mercy or Rahma of God, as stated in the Holy Quran:

“… Except those on whom thy Lord has mercy; and for this did He create them.” (11:119)

That is, God has created people so that He may do good to them out of His abiding love. This point is emphasized in a Hadith of the Holy Prophet, which reports that God said:

*I was a treasure that was unknown, so I created man.*

Thus, the idea conveyed in the attribute of Rahma is that of infinite and unbounded love and mercy.

This Mercy (Rahma) of God is expressed in two ways – by way of Rahman (Beneficence) and by way of Raheem (Mercy) – which are the second and third attributes of God mentioned in the Sura Fatihah. As I mentioned at the outset, both words are derived from the same root word, Rahma, but signify two types of “mercy.” God’s goodness as the Creator and “nourisher unto perfection” (Rabb) applies to all creation, animate and inanimate. Next, God’s attribute of being Rahman applies particularly to all animate beings, and the attribute of Raheem has a special relationship with humankind.

**Rahman (Beneficent)**

Rahman is translated as “Beneficent,” but more accurately means that God, out of His love for His creation, provides it with whatever it needs to attain its goal of perfection without creation having done anything to deserve it. In the case of human beings, there is an added spiritual dimension to the application of the Mercy of God insofar as people’s souls are the spirit of God, which God has blown into them. Therefore, our souls possess divine attributes such mercy, kindness, truthfulness, justice, etc. However, these attributes are like undeveloped seeds that must be nurtured through practice in our daily lives.

This analogy of the seed is shared in the Holy Quran (91: 7–10) as follows:

And the soul and its perfection!
So He reveals to it its way of evil
and its way of good
He is indeed successful who causes it to grow,
and he indeed fails who buries it.

When a person dies, the body decays. On the other hand, because the soul is the spirit of God, it is possible for it to pass into the hereafter for an eternal life of peace and ceaseless advancement in the presence of God. This only occurs, however, if a soul has developed divine attributes within itself in this world.

As far as the physical world is concerned, God as Rahman, out of His infinite Love and Mercy, provides for all that is needed - not only for humankind’s physical development, but also for all creatures on earth. God therefore provides the sun, the air, the soil, etc. equally to all animate beings and to all people, regardless of ethnicity, nationality or religion. Even those who do not believe in God and those who actively oppose God and his messengers are not excluded from God’s attribute of being Rahman.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, describes the attribute of Rahman in his book The Message of Peace as follows:

Our God has not withheld His bounty from any people. The powers and faculties which He bestowed on the ancient peoples of India, have also been bestowed on the Arabs, the Persians, the Syrians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Europeans and the Americans. For all of them, the earth of God serves as a floor, and for all of them His sun, moon, and stars give light, and also perform other functions. All of them derive benefit from the air, water, fire, earth and other things created by God, and all of them use the produce of the earth, its corn and its herbs, its flowers and its fruits. These liberal ways of God teach us that we also should do good to all mankind, and should not be narrow-minded, nor limit our sympathy.

In the same way, God provides for all people’s spiritual development, which entails sending prophets, messengers, saintly figures, and revealed scriptures to all people on earth, regardless of race or ethnicity. For humanity as a whole and for every person individually this provision of divine guidance is without question the greatest good that God can confer on man. All physical things have an end, but it is the soul which passes on to the hereafter for an eternal existence of peace with God. This guidance from God has been granted to man ever since he was created, as it states in the allegorical story of Adam contained in the Holy Quran:

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

Furthermore, the Quran makes clear that this guidance has come to all people:

And (those) who believe in that which has been revealed to thee and that which was revealed before thee. (2:4)
And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them. (35:24)

To complete this act of goodness to humankind, God has sent His final, complete, universal and perfect revelation, the Holy Quran (in this sequence of revealed scriptures) and the holy Prophet Muhammad (as the last and final Messenger who serves as an excellent exemplar for humankind). As it states in the Holy Quran:

Al-Rahman’ (The Beneficent) taught the Quran. (55:1-2)

And We have not sent thee (Muhammad) but as a mercy to the nations. (21:107)

Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the Latter day, and remembers Allah much. (33:21)

So, what practical implications does this have for people to develop this attribute of the Rahman in themselves? Maulana Muhammad Ali, in his great work “The Religion of Islam” explains:

Just as God is Rahman, conferring benefits on man and showing him love without his having done anything to deserve it, the man who seeks to attain to perfection must do good even to those of his fellow-men from whom he has not himself received, and does not expect to receive, any benefit.

The Holy Quran uses the term “servants of the Beneficent” in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

And the servants of the Beneficent are they who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, Peace! (25:63)

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explained this term in the following way:

The true worshippers of the Rahman are those who walk on the Earth in humility and when the ignorant accost them, they answer back gently: Peace! In thus turning away wrath with gentleness and pronouncing blessings in return for vilification, they reflect the Divine Attribute of Rahmaniyyat, as the Rahman pours forth his Grace on all creatures, without discrimination of good or bad … His Mercy extends to everyone good and bad without distinction.

**Raheem (Merciful)**

The complimentary attribute of Raheem, normally translated as “Merciful,” signifies that God rewards (and multiplies without measure the rewards of) a person when he or she makes use of what God provides. Thus, in the physical world, if one plants seeds and makes use of what God has provided (like sunshine, rainfall and the nutrients in the soil), then tends to the crop, he or she will be rewarded with food to nourish physical development. So too, in the spiritual realm, if one makes use of the guidance provided by God by following His revealed scriptures and the example of His messengers, one is rewarded with the inner peace and contentment that results from soul-enriching spiritual development.

The rewards given by God always exponentially exceed the good that is done. In addition, the rewards that God Almighty bestows on people for good deeds continue to multiply forever, without end in the hereafter. Hence, God is called the Rahman of this world and the Raheem of the next. The Holy Quran refers to this multiplication of rewards in the following verses:

The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of God is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. And God multiplies (further) for whom He pleases (without measure). And God is Ample-giving, Knowing. (2:26)

Seest thou not how God sets forth a parable of a good word as a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are high, Yielding its fruit in every season by the permission of its Lord? And God sets forth parables for men that they may be mindful. (14:24-25)

Practically, this means people are given opportunities to better both their physical and spiritual conditions. As Maulana Muhammad Ali states Religion of Islam: “God is Raheem, making every good deed bear fruit; man must also do good for any good that he receives from another.” In other words, we must do a greater good than that which we receive.

Emphasizing the special relationship of the attribute of Raheem with humankind and how prayer to God is an essential component of obtaining grace from this attribute, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib states:

Out of His four attributes of Beneficence, God has reserved one, Raheemiyat, exclusively for man, and this attribute calls for prayer and supplication. It is thus emphasized that a particular type of grace is bestowed only in answer to prayer and supplication and is not attainable through any other means. This is the way and law of God admitting of no variation. It was because of this that all the Prophets (peace be on them) were constant in their prayers and supplications on behalf of their followers. Read the Torah and you will find how often the children of Israel were threat-
ened with Divine affliction for their having offended God, but the punishment was averted through the prayers, supplications and prostrations of Moses, though time and again God had threatened to destroy them. All this shows that prayer is not a meaningless form of worship that does not attract any form of Grace.

The truth is that prayer indeed attracts the grace that saves us and is named Raheemiyat, impelling man towards continuous progress. It is by means of this grace that a true worshipper reaches the stage in which Allah becomes his guardian, his faith acquiring the quality whereby he believes in Allah with such certainty as if he sees Him with his own eyes. Intercession is also rooted in the attribute of Raheemiyat. It is Divine Raheemiyat that demands that the righteous should intercede for the wrongdoers.

The Importance of the Phrase: “In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful”

The power of the attributes of Rahman and Rahim in bringing about spiritual advancement through the performance of good deeds and the suppression of low desires is so great, that it is recommended that every action be preceded by the words Bismillah (meaning, “In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful”). The Holy Prophet Muhammad said that there is no blessing in a work which is not preceded by Bismillah. The reason for this is easy to understand. The particle “ba” in bismillah, often translated as the word “in,” has a meaning closer to “with the assistance of.” Thus, in taking the name of God before undertaking a task, one makes God a partner in whatever one is about to do.

This has the immediate effect of making even the most difficult task less daunting; the word Rahman induces a sense of gratefulness for all the faculties that God has provided to perform the task, and the word Raheem inspires one to complete the task diligently and honestly. This phrase thus dignifies the work and the worker. It also reinforces the idea of equality in humankind for in the face of the infinite purity and greatness of the Divine, all work and workers are equal if God is a partner.

For this reason, each chapter of the Holy Quran (with the exception of the ninth) commences with the words “In the name (with the assistance) of God the Beneficent, the Merciful,” to emphasize the Beneficence (Rahmaniyyat) of God in providing the guidance in that chapter and faculties of understanding, sight etc. by which we can access this guidance, and by following this guidance are blessed through God’s attribute of Raheemiyat with the reward of goodness which is unceasing.

Thus, in this second verse of the Sura Fatiha, we have a perfect example of how the placement of words in the Holy Quran builds upon and reinforces essential truths. The word Rahma is perfectly placed between the word Rabb in the first verse and the word Malik in the third verse. The unbounded love of God described by the word Rahma merges with idea of nourishing and advancement of God’s creation in the word Rabb in the first verse, and the “mercy” invoked in the word Rahma leads into the attribute of Malik in next verse, which entails judgement of actions with forgiveness being the dominant attribute as it springs from the Rahma or Mercy of God. This is evidenced in the following Quranic verse:

O My servants who have been prodigal regarding their own souls, despair not of the mercy (Rahma) of God, surely God forgives sins altogether. (39:53)

May God Almighty give us the strength and resolve to incorporate the virtue of Rahma in our lives, and embrace the opportunity to develop these divine attributes in ourselves in order to uplift our fellow human beings and enrich our own souls. Ameen!

I will end here. Thank you for your kind attention. May God bless you all.

CALL FOR PAPERS!

The Light AND ISLAMIC REVIEW welcomes submissions of articles for publication. Preferably, articles should be between 5-10 pages long, single-spaced, in Microsoft Word format and submitted via e-mail. Authors from all faiths and denominations are welcome, the subject matter of the paper, though, must be substantively related to Islam.

Please contact the Editorial Board for more information on Editorial Guidelines.

(See page 2 for contact information)
Verse 3: “Master of the day of Requital”  
By Dr. Ayesha Khan

[Dr. Ayesha Khan is an Emergency Medicine physician at Stanford University. She devotes much time to non-profit work to better healthcare systems in developing countries. She is also an active member of the U.S. branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and a frequent presenter at its annual conferences.]

Malik-e-Yaum-e-Din, or Master of the day of requital, is the fourth of the names of God mentioned in the Fatiha. In order to appreciate the full weight of its significance, one must place it in the context of the three attributes mentioned before it. Each attribute is important individually, but when considered in sequence, they shed light on the journey of creation, because the manifestation of each relies on a creation passing through stages in its evolution.

The first of these is Rabb, the One who showers His Grace upon the entire universe and nourishes it unto perfection. Rabbubiyat demands for its manifestation non-existence. Every creation, animate and inanimate comes into being through its operation. Next is Raheem, the provider that continually provides for His creation all that it needs without distinction of good or bad, without the creation doing anything to earn what it needs for survival. Because Rahmaniyyat is grace showered in spite of a creation who doesn’t act to earn it, implied is that it requires for its manifestation any animate creation. Raheem, on the other hand, requires a creation who understands actions and asks of His Grace. Raheem is the One who blesses, manifold, because of a person’s special effort, forgives the wrongdoings of those who repent, and bestows on those who ask. Only humans benefit from this attribute as we have the ability of our conscious mind to distinguish between what is right or wrong about an action, based on contemplation of consequences and reflection on the past, not based on instinct. The good action, done after recognition of what makes it good, is rewarded in multiplicity. The wrong thing, reflected upon and repented for, is forgiven all together.

Lastly we arrive at Malik-e-Yaum-e-Din, or Master of the day of requital. This attribute manifests as accountability for our actions if our choices act in opposition to the nature of our souls.

Notably, “Master of the day of requital” differs from the other 3 attributes in two important ways. First, there seems a set time salient to its definition (day of Judgement). Second it is the only attribute that implies consequences for actions. This idea brings us to the commonly asked question, why does a merciful God demand consequences or punishment for actions at all – why not forgive all together? Is faith not enough to redeem a person? Or perhaps a savior may exist for redemption.

The answer to these questions lies in understanding what we are, what the purpose of this life is, and how we achieve this purpose. These questions may be the subject of volumes of philosophy but in this article, I will provide as abbreviated a version as I can.

Like many religions, Islam recognizes a human being as an animal that has a soul: flesh and blood, with the spirit of the Divine, breathed into him or her. This spirit reflects the attributes of God in their nascent form and the work of this life is to develop and strengthen those attributes so that the spirit undergoes a transition from a seedling, struggling to grow with only a potential to mirror God, to a soul, awakened with divine consciousness. Such is the idea of the words attributed to Allah below, from the verse of the Quran and a commonly held saying:

“And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should worship me.”

“I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known so I created the creations. …”

This awakening of Divine consciousness, then, is the purpose of life. Or stated another way, the purpose of life is to know God.

Maulana Muhammad Ali says, “The real conviction that God is, comes to man, not by belief in the outer world, but by the realization of the Divine within himself.” Thus, to really know God, a person must look internally, at the part of themselves that God breathed into them. This part of the self, also undergoes an evolution:

We start as the ruh, the spirit of God breathed into a human. This act is God giving us the potential of His attributes. Of note, in the Quran, the spirit after this starting point, is no longer referred to as the ruh, but rather the nafs – the soul which is vouchsafed to the human and is shaped through the actions of a person. This is the soul that has the potential to reflect God, depending on how we nurture it.

The first stage of this spirit is the animal soul, guided only by instinct and survival. Human action takes place in this state largely through response to stimuli, and for the purpose of benefitting the self. If it feels good, do it. If it feels scary or hard, run from it. God tells us of this state, “surely (man’s) self [or nafs] is wont to command evil, except those on whom my Lord has mercy” (12:53). Interestingly, this state of being corresponds to our lower brain centers, the reptilian and limbic brain,
which almost every theory of development espouses must be controlled to achieve self-actualization.

The next stage of spiritual evolution is to a thinking person – sentient, aware of skills and abilities, and able to choose how we use these resources. We can choose to spend our life aspiring to material greatness at any cost, or we can fight for the oppressed, feed the poor, nurse the sick, and love our neighbors. Our cortex gives us the ability to think about the future and the past. It enables us to contemplate the effects of our actions. Faced with a difficult decision, though, a person doesn’t always make the right choice. Our reptilian brain, wired for survival, is difficult to overcome. We may choose the easy path over the more selfless one. This state of the evolving spirit in the Quran is called the “self-accusing spirit,” because even though an incorrect action is taken, the person knows it was wrong and what was wrong about it. Like a toddler learning to walk, when the person falls, they get up and try again, and again, and again, until they are strong enough and walking is not a struggle anymore. In the same way, like a muscle, when a person exercises the attributes that reflect the Divine and act for the sake of others, the part of us from where these actions stem is strengthened, and it becomes second nature. There is no more struggle between the parts of us gratified by this world, and the part of us that can transcend that impulse. This last state of the nafs is called “the soul at rest.” God says of this state, “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). This state of being is the Islamic concept of Heaven. It is to be in a state of peace, to have strengthened the spiritual self, such that one is not fighting desire for material gain. The state where Divine consciousness is awakened such that one knows God.

What happens, though, if upon death, this stage of spiritual development was not reached? The attribute of Malik-e-Yaum-e-Din is manifest at this stage. Each of the attributes of God’s grace is for the progression of the soul from one state to the next. The Rabb creates from nothing. The Rahman provides without distinction between good and bad actions.

The Rahim rewards efforts and forgives those who repent. The Malik-e-Yaum-e-Din gives us recompense for our misdeeds.

Recall the discussion of this attribute started with the question, why does a merciful God demand consequences or punishment for actions at all – why not forgive all together? Is faith not enough to redeem a person? Or perhaps a savior may exist for redemption.

The Islamic Philosophy of the evolution of the soul holds the answer to these questions. Usually, it is a king or judge who presides over judgement as in the case of the Day of judgement. God, though, has referred to Himself as a Malik (or Master). The difference between these is a king or judge is bound by the laws of governance whereas a master is bound by nothing, except, in this case, mercy, the only thing God has made binding upon Himself. God does not need pain or penance. If the penance is not for God, then it follows that the penance must be for the benefit of the person. Unlike the common view of an angry God that punishes man for eternity with fire and brimstone, the notion of accountability in Islam has a discrete purpose. That purpose in death remains the same as in life. Just because the physical body has passed, the purpose has not changed. The purpose is still to know God, to awaken Divine consciousness. Any accountability, then, is to reform the soul and help recognize what is bad about badness so that we will desire goodness. The idea of accountability also builds on the previous two attributes of Rahma, or mercy/compassion, and Rabb al Alam, Lord of the worlds. “World” may signify the physical world, but a person also lives in a world of their mind. God knows each of our individual worlds. The life a person lives is influenced by their own personal world. The way they understand things, the circumstances that compels them, the responsibilities they have, all these nuances are considered when God holds them accountable. They will not all be called to account by the same broad law, but rather with God’s intimate knowledge of their intentions, means, compulsions and how these guided their actions.

The second part of the attribute is Yaum-e-Din, commonly called the Day of judgement (or requital). Yaum is a period of time, often translated as “day.” It is the day a person will be called to account for their deeds. For some, the time of this accounting happens in this life. For some, it does not happen till the next. But there is no deed that is not recorded. Meaning there is no action a person takes that does not leave its mark on their soul.

There are times a person is held accountable for deeds in this life but at times they are given leeway and not immediately held accountable. But the idea of a period of time coming to close means that there will be a day when all are held accountable. The Quran states that when God created the heaven and the earth, He set up the Balance. The balance implies that woven into the fabric of creation is equity and justice. Central to this tenant of equity and justice is the idea of accountability. Some people are given more in this life, but then it falls on them to use their means for good. On the other hand, there are those whose means are restricted, and they will be called to account accordingly. If a narrow view is taken, it seems there is a great deal of injustice in the
world. The disparity in economics, freedom and opportunity is intolerably unfair, unless a broader view is taken and a person knows that life goes beyond this world.

There is a story of the Prophet that illustrates this concept as follows: he asked one of his companions, a rich and noble man, to stand barefoot on a rock that had been under the desert sun and tell the Prophet what he had eaten for dinner the night before. The companion stands on the hot rock with his bare feet, and starts to list his meal. In accounting for all the dishes, his feet start to burn on the rock. The Prophet then asked another companion, one who was poor, to do the same thing. This companion jumps up on the rock, said he ate nothing, and jumps off, feet untouched by the heat. The lesson in the story is simple, the more a person is given, the more a person is expected to account for those gifts. Whether that day of accounting comes in this life or the next, it will come.

Such remembrance of accountability makes the repeated recollection of this attribute in the Fatiha very practical. The attribute is a reminder to be cognizant of one’s actions every moment in life and develop a deep sense of accountability for every deed and thought. Remembrance of this attribute and cultivation of the trait also means when a person is in a position to call someone to account, they should remember that compassion and mercy supersede judgement. In the Quran, God’s attributes of forgiveness are mentioned four times to once His attribute of retribution. Such should be the ratio with which others are forgiven. Similarly, a person should deal with others in a way that is conscientious of difficulties they may be facing or circumstances/experiences that may be impacting their world. Judgement should not be passed on others without giving them the benefit of the doubt. One must always try to be compassionate with others and not simply try to seek their faults.

Verses 4-5:
“Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help, Guide us on the Right Path”

By Dr. Haleema Saeed

[Dr. Haleema Saeed is an active member of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, currently residing and working in Pakistan. She devotes much time and effort in various programs for the Movement, both in Pakistan and for the USA branch. She is by profession a pediatric oncologist and dedicates time for service of others in humanitarian projects.]

The verses I will be speaking about today are as follows:

“Thee do we serve (iyyaka na’abudu) and Thee do we beseech for help (wa iyyaka nastaeen). (1:4)
Guide us on the right path (ihdena siraat ul mustaqim).” (1:5)

These are the fourth and fifth verses of Sura Fatiha and are a transition point in this chapter. Recall, the initial three verses set up an introduction to Who our Creator is and to Who it is we are addressing in this prayer. He is introduced as the Nurturer of the Universe (Rabb), the One Who gives without asking (Rahman), the One Who multiplies our rewards (Rahim) and the One Who has complete control over the consequences of our deeds (Malike Yaum-e-Deen). The first three verses are in the third person and create a mental image of an All-Powerful Being that is capable of answering our prayers. Then a transition is made to the first person in the fourth verse with the words “Thee (iyyaka) do we serve and Thee (iyyaka) do we beseech for help.” It is with these words we now find ourselves addressing that Lord of the worlds with the conviction that He has all the necessary Divine attributes to respond to our needs and to guide us on the right path. The word iyyaka in this verse means You and only You. So, it is a direct address to God Who has the qualities of Rabb, Rahman, Rahim and Malik-e-Yaumedeen.

A collective prayer

Iyyaka na’abudo and wa iyyaka nastaeen means, “we serve You and we ask You for help.” The point to note here is that we are made to speak in the plural, so it is a collective prayer. This emphasizes the importance of mutual compassion and fellowship of humankind which is the essence of Islam. Not only do we pray for guidance for ourselves, but we also pray for guidance and help for of all of humanity. So we pray with the same
spirit that includes all people in all our wishes and desires. This is explained by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in his writings as follows:

*This prayer is not just for the individual but encompasses his brothers too. It teaches mutual compassion, unity and friendship ... It is as if Allah orders; O my people! Give each other the gift of prayer, widen the circle of your prayers and broaden your intentions. (Karamaat us Sadiqeen)*

*This prayer has compassion for all of humanity because All humanity is included in this prayer (Ayam us Sulah)*

### “Thee do we serve”

As mentioned, in Surah Fatiha we have before us a description of God Who is *Rabb, Rahman, Rahim* and *Malike Yaum-e-Deen*. This description of these extraordinary qualities automatically creates humility in our hearts and a desire to submit to His will. We also feel our inadequacy and our dependence in our Creator. It is in this mental state, we then say the words “Thee do we serve” (*iyyaka na’budu*) in our address to God.

*Na’abudu* is from the root word *abada* (a derivative of *ibaadat*) which carries the significance of a complete submission to Him with love and humility. So, our *ibaa*da or serving of God is not restricted to acts of worship like the five daily prayers or fasting, but rather, includes submission to Allah’s will in all aspects of our lives. This is made clear in the following verse from the Holy Quran where daily prayers (*sala’at*) are mentioned as just a small component of worship (*ibaadat*):

*And they are enjoined nothing but to serve (derived from the Arabic root *abada*) Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience, upright, and to keep up prayer (*sala’at*) and give the due charity, and that is the right religion. (98:5)*

So, worship does not simply mean prayer (called *sala’at*) or a ritualistic bowing down but rather a practical submission to Allah’s will that is reflected in our actions and in how we lead our life.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad expressed this sentiment in the following words:

*Man claims to worship Allah, but worship is not just the physical acts of prayer; rather it is the extent of love and submission that man’s own self is lost in the love of Allah. (Haqiqat al-Wahy)*

Even the simplest things like how and what we eat is considered *ibaadat* according to the teachings of the Quran when done with sincerity and consistency (2:172).

### “Thee do we beseech for help”

After expressing our desire to serve God, we next address God with the words *iyyaka nastaeen* (“Thee do we beseech for help”), which implies asking Allah for help at every step of the way so we do not stumble. This is just as a parent holding a child’s hand who is learning to walk to prevent them from falling, and all the while, the child is dependent on the parent to gently guide him or her along.

As we seek out God’s help, it is important that we do so with patience, through heartfelt prayer and in a manner that is humbling. As the Holy Quran says:

*And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah]. (2:45)*

*O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient. (2:153)*

This concept of depending only on Allah and asking Him for help in every aspect of our life is the true spirit of Islam. This has been described beautifully by Maulana Nuruddin, a foremost disciple of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, in the following words:

*This phrase guides toward pure monotheism that only Allah’s help should be sought to get to Allah and no other helper is sought in the quest for Allah nor idols, nor other humans, nor intellect, nor knowledge and he turns only to Allah for all his needs. (Al-Badr January 1903, page 95)*

Islam teaches a combination of human effort and striving along with prayers for help from Allah. Both are incomplete without the other. Man strives to his utmost but realizes the ultimate power is with Allah in providing us with the guidance to make the right choices and to give us the strength to persevere. As such, we must remember our Creator is indeed:

*Rahman*, Who has given us the means and ability to follow His guidance;

*Raheem*, Who can reward our efforts;

*Malike Yaum-e-Deen*, with Whom rests the ultimate consequences of what we do; and

*Rabb*, Who can nurture and guide us every step of the way till we reach our ultimate goal.

It is the combination of our sincere efforts and seeking of help from such a God that can lead to success.
“Guide us on the right path”

Next in our address to God, we say ihdena siraat ul mustaqim. Ihdena means to ask God to be guided or shown the way while siraat ul mustaqim signifies the best possible way or the most direct way that is guaranteed to get the desired result. So, this is a prayer for ongoing guidance and support to stay consistently on the most appropriate path to reach our destination. In contrast, the opposite of guidance is to be left in darkness, so our prayer to be guided aright implies a request to God for us to be shown the light of guidance. The means for guidance is mentioned in the Holy Quran and includes:

The Quran itself which has been called al-Huda (72:13), that which guides or makes one attain the goal;

Our intellect as Allah appeals to us numerous times in the Quran to ponder and make use of our mind while also applying what we learn;

Divine signs and examples of prophets and saints that help guide us on the right path.

So, there are many levels of guidance, and there is unlimited progress to be made in the spiritual realm. Humankind must never stop asking for guidance. It is like climbing up a spiritual ladder; one good step leading to the next.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explained:

Guidance is a thing that can only be given by Allah and till Allah himself guides man he cannot be considered rightly guided. There is no limit on extent of guidance. Prayer is the ladder that can lead to guidance. One who leaves dua [prayer] loses his ladder.

In summary, the fourth and fifth verses serve as a direct conversation with God Who is Rabb, Rahman, Rahim and Malik-e-Yaumedeen. They serve as a direct, collective prayer to Allah for all humanity. The words na’budu (“Thee do we serve”) are expressive of our desire to submit with complete humility to His will and to follow His commands. The words iyyaka nastaeen (“Thee do we ask for help”) are expressive of our desire to seek Divine help, recognizing our own limitations as humans while still putting forth our best efforts. Finally, by praying the words ihdena siraat ul mustaqim (“Guide us on the right path”), we ask to be guided to the path that best leads to Him. The details of that guidance are given in the subsequent verses. May Allah guide us all on the right path.

---

Verses 6 and 7: “The path of those upon whom Thou has bestowed favors, Not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray”

By Dr. Mohammed Ahmad

[Dr. Mohammed Ahmad is a retired physician, by profession. He is the President of the USA branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and devotes much time to the practical work of the organization, including translating historic publications of the Movement. He is currently engaged in translating sermons by Maulana Muhammad Ali from Urdu into English.]

In this paper, Dr. Ahmad shares Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s views on the primary objective of his mission being to facilitate the inner reformation of the individual – that is, to provide for the spiritual development of the soul. The lesson being, the objective of the Movement is not to simply win theological arguments or academic debates, but rather to achieve closeness to God.

I bear witness that none deserves to be served besides Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah. After this, I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil. In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Assalamu aleikum and good afternoon. Verses 6 and 7 of Sura Al Fatihah state:

The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favors (1:6)

Not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray. (1:7)
As was discussed in the previous presentation, the prayer in verse 5 of Al Fatihah seeks for guidance on the right path. In the final two verses, details are provided as to what this right path entails and what it does not.

**Verse 6**

In Verse 6, the prayer implores for guidance on the path of those who had been granted “favors” from God. The persons who received these favors are righteous individuals who are revered by humanity at large, like the prophets and other saintly figures. These persons serve as role models for humanity on how to follow the Divine guidance and live a life in which one becomes “close” to God. The Holy Quran refers to such persons in these words:

And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, they are those upon whom Allah has bestowed favors from among the prophets, and the truthful, and the faithful, and the righteous, and a goodly company are they! (4:69)

The prayer in verse 5, then, is to be guided so that one follows the path of these spiritually elevated people who developed a close personal relationship with the Divine. This relationship is described elsewhere in the Quran as becoming a “Friend” of God. As it is stated in 2:257:

Allah is the Friend of those who believe - He brings them out of darkness into light.

And, using the Prophet Abraham (the Patriarch of Monotheistic religion) as an example, the Holy Quran states:

... And Allah took Abraham for a friend. (4:125)

So, according to Islam, the relationship one is to strive to achieve with God is that of an intimate “friend.” God is not to be viewed as some distant Being that is unreachable and unrelatable. This description suggests that just as friends have love for one another based on the characteristics they see in the other (which they admire, respect and emulate), so too is man to strive to know and love God through appreciation of His qualities and attributes.

Most people with a worldly outlook of life consider wealth and power as the greatest blessing. They make the attainment of material gain the goal of their life and consider this as the meaning of “success.” With very few exceptions, though, prophets and other righteous persons did not attain this type of worldly status. Even those who did, considered it as something very insignificant. Rather, the favors and blessings granted to the prophets and other righteous servants of God was the closeness they were able to achieve to the Divine. The Holy Quran explains this in 4:175:

Then as for those who believe and hold fast by Him, He will admit them to His mercy (spiritual blessings) and grace (worldly blessings) and guide them to Himself on a right path. (4:175)

These are the “favors” prayed for in Al Fatihah – it is a prayer for the spiritual blessings of attaining closeness to God. And, as previously explained, this closeness entails inculcating the Divine attributes in ones practice and personality. In another verse, the Holy Quran states:

And those who strive hard for Us, We shall certainly guide (hadai-na) them in Our ways. (29:69)

In the Arabic language, the word for “guidance” is hidayat, and it means not only pointing towards the right path, but also guiding along it gently until one reaches the intended destination. The prophets and other righteous personages received this blessing, and it is this type of guidance that the supplicant prays for in Al Fatihah.

Another point to consider is that a unique characteristic in the lives of prophets and other saintly personalities is that they were the recipients of Divine revelation. So, this favor of attaining closeness to God includes the gift of communication with the Divine. The Holy Quran makes clear this is a phenomenon that is not restricted to prophets, but is attainable by other saintly persons as well. The Quran specifically narrates how persons who were not considered prophets – like Mary (the mother of Jesus), the mother of Moses, and even the disciples of Jesus – also received direct communication from God. So, inherent in the prayer to be guided on the path of the prophets and saintly personalities is the desire to attain the level of closeness with God in which communication (as between intimate friends) is a part of that relationship.

And the significant implication of this understanding is that, according to Islam, God is not limited to old stories of certain persons’ spiritual experiences of the past, but rather God is a Living and Present Being that still speaks to mankind today. Sura Al Fatihah, therefore, explains that God should be understood as being accessible in one’s life even now.

Elsewhere in the Holy Quran, this point is further clarified. In 10:62-64, it states:

Now surely the friends of Allah, they have no fear nor do they grieve —

Those who believe and keep their duty. For them is good news in this world’s life and in the Hereafter …

The “good news” granted to the “friends of Allah” mentioned here refers to Divine revelation granted to those who achieve this position of closeness to God.
Verse 7

The final verse of Al Fatihah, verse 7, states:

“Not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray.”

After seeking guidance for the blessing of developing a relationship of closeness with the Divine, in the final verse one prays to not be of those who: 1) are subject to God’s wrath, or 2) who go astray from the right path.

Now, as a preliminary point, it is noteworthy that according to Sura Al Fatihah, the world is not to be viewed as being divided into camps of believers and unbelievers. As has been explained today, simply professing a certain creed (or following particular rituals) is not the goal at all; rather, the goal is to develop spiritually by becoming close to God (and that entails being more God-like in one’s daily interactions). And as for those who do not follow this guidance, we are told they are also not all alike. There are some who understand it and yet oppose it, in an attempt to extinguish the guidance and prevent others from benefitting from it. These are the people that are referred to as worthy of Divine wrath. But there is an acknowledgment that there are other people who do not oppose this guidance, yet – either due to not receiving this information or simply misunderstanding it – go astray. The Sura Al Fatihah clarifies this very nuanced point.

As to what “Divine wrath” actually means, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, explained it in the following words:

… the expression, ‘Divine wrath’ should not be construed to mean that God is enraged against a person. It means that because of his wrongdoing, man is alienated from God, the God of Holiness… The truth of the matter is that every human action is followed by a Divine reaction. When a person shuts all the four windows of his room, the Divine reaction is that room is plunged into darkness. This plunging into darkness is termed God’s wrath.

Hence, Divine wrath is simply the result of becoming distant from God. It is a natural consequence to depriving oneself of Divine blessings and is the opposite of achieving closeness to God. Just as achieving closeness to God is a spiritual condition that man can attain for him or herself, Divine wrath is a condition that is created by an individual who not only denies the Divine Light but opposes it to the extent of wanting to extinguish it.

As for the meaning of “those who go astray,” the Arabic word for “astray” is dhaleen. Interestingly, it signifies having excessive love for a person or a thing. So, it implies having more love for things than one’s love for God, or loving things to an extent that it interferes with one’s love for or relationship with God. As we learned earlier, in the very first verse of Al Fatihah, we are told that it is God Who is the possessor of all attributes of perfection, and it is to Him that we are to give praise by way of inculcating those attributes within ourselves.

This excessive love for things can entail being totally engrossed in pursuit of worldly gain, whether it be money or power or prestige. But it can also be excessive love for something otherwise considered good – like a family member or even a spiritual personality – when that love of some form of God’s creation becomes an object of affection that detracts one from love of the Creator Himself.

So, the prayer in Sura Al Fatihah is for being guided on the path of moderation. The “right path” is the one in which one is not influenced by a desire for extreme hatred (maghdoob), but at the same time not consumed by an extreme degree of love for any form of God’s creation. In this lesson, there is the understanding that emotions are by themselves neither evil nor good. Rather, they can both become virtuous deeds when displayed under the proper occasion. This applies to even the emotions of hatred and love. For example, in the case of witnessing injustice being done to another, hatred can be a virtue, while love can become detrimental. If hatred of the injustice causes one to act to stop the act and restore fairness and peace, the quality of hatred becomes a source of good. And if love (possibly for the person committing the unjust act) causes one to permit the unfairness to continue and the inequitable circumstance to go on unabated, the quality of love becomes a source of evil and wrongdoing.

Sura Al Fatihah teaches us that neither love nor hate should follow the path of extremism. One should have both these emotions within oneself (love for goodness and hatred for evil), but one should tread the path of moderation by controlling their use under the appropriate occasions. As the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the most excellent exemplar, mercy to all of mankind whose character was the Holy Quran said, “The best way of all is the middle course, which is the straight path.”
To end this discussion on the last two verses of Sura Al Fatiha, it should be remembered that it is a prayer for all of humanity to be guided aright, as it states: “Guide us on the right path.” It is a most excellent prayer for the moral and spiritual guidance of all mankind. It is a prayer that makes God a living reality in one’s life. It also establishes the high status and great spiritual potential afforded to man, something man unfortunately oftentimes neglects. And it provides practical guidance on what one should strive for in life and what one should avoid, clarifying the true purpose of life and the real path to success.

Spiritual Affinity Between Sura Fatiha and the Rose Flower

By Omar Raja

[Mr. Omar Raja, an Information Technology professional and resident of Chantilly, Virginia, is a member of the U.S. branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. Mr. Raja participates in various projects for the organization, including being an assistant editor for this periodical. In his presentation for the symposium, Mr. Raja discusses the writings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that bring to light the similitudes between the qualities of a rose and the opening chapter of the Holy Quran.]

Introduction

Just as a rose blooms and opens up our hearts and minds all around with its great beauty and elegance, likewise, Al-Fatiha, the opening surah or chapter of the Holy Quran, emblematic of universal truths, can potentially open a truth seekers soul to God in the most beautiful of ways: the pathway to spiritual life. It was Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, whom wrote that the Fatiha is similar to the wonderful qualities of this long-cherished flower, both outwardly and inwardly. His commentary on this subject was inspired by a Divine vision in which he saw a myriad of roses ascending rhythmically to his recitation of the Fatiha. He wrote:

I beheld myself holding Surah Fatiha, which had an exceedingly lovely shape in my hand. The paper on which it was inscribed appeared as if it was loaded with countless red and delicate roses. Every time this humble servant of Allah recited a verse of the surah, a number of these roses rose into the air with a sweet cadence. These roses were very soft, big, bright, moist, fresh and sweet-smelling, filling the heart and head with fragrance as they soared, thus inducing a state of ineffable joyousness in the mind altogether above and withdrawn from the world and all that it holds. This revelatory vision discloses the spiritual affinity existing between Surah Fatiha and the rose.¹

Before delving into his commentary on this subject, we should take the following into consideration with respect to comparisons and analogies:

They create powerful imagery to evoke certain feelings in our hearts and minds which is why the Quran often employs imagery of the natural world in its instructive analogies, to include imagery of gardens, rivers, trees, rain, fire and water.

They allow us to “see” hidden, underlying truths and bring to light deep, intricate moral and spiritual concepts.

Hence, the Quran speaks of parables or similitudes being conveyed for purposes of reflection² and mindfulness.³ For example, the Holy Quran, speaks of the parable of “a good word as a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches are high,”⁴ to show that any good that is done, by word or deed, will ultimately prosper and bear fruit; it will not fade or wither with the passage of time as it is rooted in goodness. In contrast, “an evil word” or deed is like an “an evil tree,”⁵ because it stands on shaky ground and will ultimately decay or become uprooted. Speaking of good and evil, elsewhere the Holy Quran says they are not alike and that repelling evil with good can be revolutionary, so much so, enemies may be turned into friends.⁶

These physical illustrations are intended to not only generate in our hearts and minds greater appreciation for these time-cherished moral and spiritual truths, but also create the urge within our innermost selves to live by them as well. And with due reflection we find that the great goal of aspiring to the greatest good and to a place where no wrong is done is epitomized within the Fatiha. The importance then of pondering over the verses contained in the Holy Quran cannot be understated, especially in the Fatiha, as the Holy Quran refers to this opening chapter as the “grand Quran”⁷ on account of the very essence of Islamic teachings being revealed therein, and the reason for which the Holy Prophet Muhammad referred to the Fatiha as the “greatest”chapter in the Quran. Also, as Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad said, the same aspects of uniqueness found in the Fatiha are also to be found in every brief passage of the Holy Quran.

Keeping this in mind, let us now consider how in this beautiful creation of the rose, gifted to us from our Divine Creator and widely hailed to be the masterpiece of flowers, has certain qualities, both outwardly and inwardly, that bear spiritual affinity to the Fatiha.
External Qualities of a Rose and Fatiha

What are some thoughts that come to mind when thinking about the outward, external qualities of a rose? We may think of its intricate yet beautiful design, lovely color, delightful fragrance, pure quality, its elicitation of positive feelings and even its association with rich symbolism throughout the ages. In discussing the external qualities of a rose, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad writes how this is analogous to the beautiful form of the Fatiha. In this connection, he writes:

First consider the diction and arrangement of the Fatiha. The easy, flowing style, the perfect juxtaposition, the purest classical vocabulary, the sweet cadence, the grace and majesty. Every feature compels admiration and evokes homage and praise. It is a perfect whole, complete and flawless. With all its overpowering charm and beauty the Fatiha is charged with truth and wisdom. Every phrase proclaims and induces righteousness. There is not the least suspicion of falsehood or a single false note. There is not the least redundancy. Yet nothing has been left out. There is no exaggeration nor any understatement. The beauty of form is complete and perfect, as in the rose, but in a far higher degree. These are the external qualities of the Fatiha.9

To elaborate further on the outward form and arrangement of Fatiha and some of the deep points of insight that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has brought to light in this regard, we may first consider that the Holy Prophet Muhammad himself spoke of the Fatiha as being divided into two parts: the first part relating to the Creator and the second part to the worshipper. As such, upon reflection, we find that the two halves have an intricate yet powerful connection between each other in terms of the Divine attributes of God mentioned in the first half correlating to the supplicatory verses of the worshipper in the second half. For example, in explaining the connection between the wording, alhamdu lillah (praise be to Allah), in the beginning part of the first verse to the supplicatory fourth verse, “You do we worship,” Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad writes:

The essence of worship is glorification of the Deity with utter humility, following His lead, taking on His colour and emerging out of self and self-assertion like those who are totally immersed in Him ... The verse: Thee alone do we worship; constitutes a commitment to the worship of Allah Who combines in Himself all the perfect attributes. That is why it has been placed in juxtaposition to Alhamdu lillahi (all praise belongs to Allah). Look deep if you are one of the discerning.10

Thus, the more a worshipper reflects upon their worship of the Creator Whom is colored with the most praiseworthy, perfect and beautiful attributes, the more the worshipper seeks to imbue the Divine coloring of God into their own lives and to the greatest extent possible on a human level. Hence, the worshipper says: “You do we worship.”

Further, we find that as the first verse qualifies Allah as being Rabbil-alameen (“Lord of all the worlds”), which signifies that He is the Author, Nourisher and Evolver of all existence, this naturally corresponds to the supplicant’s heartfelt plea to God, “You do we beseech for help,” because the worshipper seeks help from the One whom cares for and nourishes unto perfection all humanity.

And as God is Rahman (“The Beneficent”), an attribute manifested by His unconditional and universal grace to humanity, including the sending of Divine revelation and Prophets for people’s guidance, the supplicant thus says: “Guide us along the right path.”

Further, as God is Raheem (“The Merciful”), an attribute manifested with God’s gifting of humanity with His conditional grace by blessing people for their good efforts with goodly results, the supplicant thus prays: “(Guide us) to the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favors (blessings).” It was in recognition of this attribute of God that the Prophet Jesus said, “For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”11

Next, as God is Malik-i-Yaum-i-Deen (“Master of the Day of Recompense”), this serves as a constant reminder that all humanity must account for their deeds of this life and work hard towards their own salvation. Hence the supplicant’s plea in the last part of Fatiha to be guided to the middle path and not the path of the extreme nor the unblessed.

Truly, then there is great beauty to be found in the arrangement and style of Fatiha. Also, we find upon reflection, the middle verse “You do we worship, You do we beseech for help,” has purposely turned to the second person in people’s heartfelt address to God which connects the first three verses relating to God’s grandeur to the last three verses relating to man’s great goal in drawing ever closer to Him. These unique stylistic elements, altogether, are meant to stimulate heartfelt fervor for prayer and create enthusiasm in our hearts for the remembrance of God.

Internal Qualities of a Rose and Fatiha Compared

Let us now turn to the internal qualities of a rose and how they are similar to the Fatiha. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has written:
...just as the Lord of Absolute Wisdom has invested the rose with various properties beneficial to the human body, for instance, its tonic quality for the heart and its curative value in many ailments, so has the Beneficent Lord invested Surah Fatiha, as indeed the whole of the Holy Quran, with healing for spiritual ills such as is not to be found in any other source. ..."  

Indeed, the byproducts a rose hidden within its essence have long been acknowledged for their medicinal and therapeutic purposes. History reveals that physicians going back centuries recognized the use of roses and rose water for their health benefits. In a book about the history of the rose, *Rosa*, the author Peter E. Kukielski briefly mentions the use of rose products in Islamic medicine. For example, he writes that physician-philosopher Al-Kindi (801-873) recommended rose products for treatment of liver and mouth diseases as well as for stomach pain and ulcers. He also notes that the influential 11th century physician, Ibn Sina (980-1037CE), otherwise known as Avicenna in the West, wrote a five-volume medical book *The Canon of Medicine* whose work was translated from Arabic into Latin in the 13th century and was relied upon in Europe for hundreds of years. Avicenna noted that rose fragrance was calming and "highly beneficial for fainting and rapid heartbeats."

It appears that scientific studies today about the healing properties of rose and rose products are limited, however, in a recent research article, *Rose Flowers—A Delicate Perfume or a Natural Healer?*, published in the open access *Biomolecules* journal by Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI) provides a comprehensive literature review of pharmacological activities of four old rose species. The authors conclude that "essential oils, hydrolates, and extracts of these four old rose species, as well as their main compounds, have a promising biological potential to act as natural healers."

Now, just as the rose flower is found to have 'healing' properties, the same is true for the *Fatiha*, and the whole of the Holy Quran, albeit primarily in a spiritual sense for the "healing of spiritual ills," not only for the spiritual wayfarer but also for the one's steeped in darkness as a result their own actions. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has explained:

Its internal properties encompass remedies for grave spiritual maladies. It provides *healing for the ailments of mind and spirit*. ... It opens up vistas of sublime thought which had been closed to sages and philosophers. Its perusal fortifies faith in the heart of the spiritual pilgrim and *heals it of all doubts, misgivings and apprehension.*

Its brief blessed text is replete with numberless supreme truths so essential and invaluable for the perfect development of the human mind and soul.  

... These are properties possessed by *Surah Fatiha* and indeed by the whole of the Noble Quran in a manner that coincides with the unsurpassed qualities of the rose. In addition *Surah Fatiha* and the Holy Quran share a remarkable attribute which is a characteristic of this Holy word alone, and that is that its perusal with due care and attention and in a spirit of sincerity purifies the heart, dispels layers of darkness and expands the mind, drawing a seeker after truth into the very presence, as it were, of the One Lord-God, and invests him with such light and tokens as are characteristic of those who have attained nearness to the Supreme Lord and which cannot be acquired through any other device or plan.

In fact, these verities were revealed to the world like a timely rain of mercy to wash out, with full vigor, every kind of distemper and dispel every kind of darkness which had spread over the world ... The spiritual life of mankind depended on the descent of that life-giving water and not a drop of it came down but as healing for some ill with which mankind was afflicted. Mankind through persistence in error for hundreds of years had arrived at a state in which it could not itself devise a remedy for its ailments nor could it dissipate its own darkness without the help of heavenly light which should illumine the world and enable those to see who had never seen and impart understanding to those who had never cared to understand. That heavenly light did not only disclose divine truths of which not a vestige had been left in the world: but through its spiritual vitality it filled many minds with rich treasure of truth and wisdom and drew many hearts towards its winsome countenance and led many to heights of knowledge and conduct.

It was this healing or purification of the heart, that transformed the people of Arabia in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in less than a quarter century, giving rise to the spread of the spiritual light of Islam in the world; a healing which healed man of his ignorance, thereby sparking the Islamic golden age at a time when Europe was plunged in darkness, and thereby opening up all avenues of progress and advancement in the world for centuries thereafter. On the lips of every worshipper rising for prayer throughout the day was the *Fatiha*, the seven oft-repeated melody of verses keeping
God uppermost in one’s heart and mind; the most sublime prayer, mirroring and encapsulating the sublimity of the teachings of the entire Holy Quran; a Book that came to guide to the path of moral, spiritual and intellectual greatness and “heal what is in the hearts.”18, to heal, every “bad tree” of the heart, so to speak, including that of one’s egoism, racism, inner polytheism, unhumanitarianism, ignorance, notions of superiorism, selfrighteous mentality, pride and vanity. This it continues to do to this day and thus is the “True Flower” that never wilts. As Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote:

… how can anyone produce the like of the True Flower (i.e., the Fatiha and Quran), for which the Eternal Lord has ordained a perpetual spring, with permanent safeguards against the gusts of autumn and whose freshness, softness, beauty, and delicacy never change, and whose blessed being suffers no decay or decline? On the contrary, as it ages, its freshness and moisture manifest more and more, its marvels unfold more and more, and its verities and subtleties are appreciated by people in ever greater measure.19

Conclusion

To conclude, the rose flower bears a spiritual likeness to the Fatiha, both outwardly and inwardly. We may say that just as a rose flower attracts the heart and elicits positive feelings, so too does the Fatiha with its melody of grand words and verses relating to God and man’s aspiration to get closer to Him. Further, we may say that the fragrance of the rose flower is analogous to the fragrance of universal truths in the Fatiha; that its vibrant color is analogous to the divine ‘color’ of God with respect to His perfect attributes; that the delicacy and design of a rose is analogous to the Fatiha’s fine intricacy of structure and beautifully interwoven themes; that the inward, hidden qualities of the rose that are found to have natural healing effects bear spiritual affinity with the spiritual healing power of Fatiha, but only for those who actively seek to become a reflection of its grand ideals of goodness, like the good tree whose root is firm and whose branches are high. Let us pray then that this fragrance of Truth found in the Fatiha, this True Flower that never wilts, be breathed into our lives and generate the greatest blossoming effect upon our hearts and minds and all the deeds of our lives. Let it be that those whom truly seek to reflect the true ideals of the Fatiha, the essence of the Quran’s spiritual life force, themselves become spiritual forces of goodness in this world and thereby inspire a goodly, spiritually uplifting renaissance within the hearts and minds of all mankind.

---

3 Quran, 14:24.
4 Quran, 14:24.
5 Quran, 14:26.
6 Quran, 41:34.
7 Quran, 15:87.
8 Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Virtues of the Quran, hadith 5006.
9 Ahmad, Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Part IV, as quoted in Commentary on The Holy Quran – Surah Fatiha, p. 7.
10 Ahmad, Kuraamut-us-Saadiqeen by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, as quoted in Commentary on the Holy Quran – Surah Fatiha, p. 114-115.
11 Bible, Gospel of Matthew 7:8.
12 Ahmad, Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Part IV, as quoted in Commentary on The Holy Quran – Surah Fatiha, p. 12.
15 Ahmad, Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Part IV, as quoted in Commentary on the Holy Quran – Surah Fatiha, p. 7.
16 Ahmad, Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Part IV, as quoted in Commentary on the Holy Quran – Surah Fatiha, p. 10.
18 Quran, 10:57.
The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society’s Practical Work in Mali

By Mrs. Samina Malik

[Mrs. Samina Malik is the Vice-President of the U.S. branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and is the Director-in-Charge of Translations and Publications. In this capacity, she has instituted the Movement’s primary printing function for over 30 years, established a pipeline for the Movement’s publications in the U.S. and U.K markets, facilitated the distribution of the Movement’s publications in all corners of the globe and brought several translation projects of Maulana Muhammad Ali’s translation and commentary (as well as numerous other books by the Movement) to completion. In this article, Mrs. Malik provides a report on an important aspect of the Movement’s objective to promote the true nature of Islam to the world – that is, to collaborate with like-minded organizations in the distribution of our publications in local regions – and uses the work currently being done in Mali as a practical example.]

Hello and assalamu aleikum everyone. And thank you, Fazeel for the introduction.

Background

The primary focus of Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement’s work is on publication. This includes, translation projects, coordinating printing in various parts of the world, and developing strategies for distribution on the ground. Another aspect of our work concerns establishing centers to assist in the book distribution, and holding and participating in conferences which address the needs of local populations.

This idea of literature being the primary vehicle to bring about the correct understanding of Islam among both the Muslims and non-Muslims was advanced by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement – himself. This was also the lifelong desire of Maulana Muhammad Ali, who fulfilled Hazrat Mirza Sahib’s wish to translate the Holy Quran into English. Maulana Muhammad Ali expressed this desire on his death bed, when he said: “Our work is to take the Quran into the world; after that, the Quran will do its own work.”

Pre-World War II, the Holy Quran was translated into English, Dutch and German. The Movement established Centers in England (The Woking Mosque) and Germany (Die Moschsee) to facilitate the spread of these translations. After Maulana Muhammad Ali’s death in 1951, the propagation work languished and the Anti-Ahmadiyya laws in Pakistan restricted the activities immensely. The Central Anjuman, under the leadership of Dr. Saeed Ahmad of blessed memory, then decided to shift the publication and translation work from Pakistan to the USA Jamaat. I was placed in charge of the publication and translation work of the USA Jamaat in 1987. Since that time, Alhamdulillah, our worldwide publication and translation work has progressed substantially.

The full complement of our English books including Maulana Muhammad Ali’s English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran are now available throughout the world, in print, e-book, App, and in the case of the English Quran in audio format as well. The advent of the digital age has increased the exposure or our books greatly.

By the Grace of Almighty Allah, most of our literature has also been translated into the world’s major languages. Maulana Muhammad Ali’s English translation of the Holy Quran has been translated into, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Tagalo, Hebrew, Albanian, Turkish, and the commentary of the English Holy Quran has been translated into Arabic. The most recent addition to the published Qurans is the Chinese translation.

We have distributed for free hundreds of thousands of copies of the Holy Quran to libraries, universities and religious bodies in various countries, including the USA, Germany, Russia, India and Australia. We have also held conferences in several countries to establish our presence and develop relationships with local groups, including France, Holland, Turkey, Philippines, South Africa, Egypt, Russia, Nigeria, Ghana and Kyrgyzstan.

Current Practical Work by the USA Jamaat

With this background, I would like to now focus on our efforts in Mali, as an example of the practical work being done to spread the type of teachings that you heard from our presenters today.

Maulana Muhammad Ali once had a dream in which he saw that he was packing his suitcase to go to Africa. That trip, though, never took place. However, as events are unfolding, it appears that the significance of the dream was that although he himself would not go to Africa, his books would find wide acceptance there. We see this being the case particularly in Mali.

Mali is a landlocked country surrounded by the countries of Senegal, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Ivory Coast and Guinea. The combined population of these countries numbers in the hundreds of millions. The language of higher learning in this region
is French, as these were former French colonies.

Mali, like the neighboring country of Senegal, has a long history of Sufi Islam, which has traditionally been known for its peaceful and spiritual views. However, groups promoting militant and intolerant views of Islam are moving into Mali and other states from the north and east. For example, the bordering country of Burkina Faso saw the Parliament building in its capital recently attacked by these militants.

We believe the most effective way to counter this threat is to supply people in this region with literature that counters the toxic propaganda of the militants – literature that shows that the ideology they espouse has no basis in the peaceful teachings of the Holy Quran. Our work, therefore, is aimed at bringing about reformation by appealing to hearts and minds.

By the Grace of Almighty Allah, we have already translated, reviewed and printed 13 titles of our major books by Maulana Muhammad into French. We have sent a total of 60,000 French Holy Qurans to Mali since February of 2019. We have also printed and shipped 12,000 copies of each of the other French titles to Mali. In total, we have shipped 156,000 books to Mali to date. In addition, we have several other titles translated into French which are currently under review. We hope to have these printed and shipped to Mali as well very shortly.

Translation and publication of books, especially religious material, is a very difficult task. And even though it takes much time and dedication, it is only the first part of the process. The second part of the process entails creating the means to distribute the translated works. In some countries, like American and England, this requires creating pipelines through distributors to ensure our literature is available wherever books are sold. In other countries, especially Muslim majority ones, the work requires us to establish relationships with like minded groups who can get the publications into the hands of the local populations.

As I reported in my presentation at last year’s annual symposium, in Mali we have been blessed to partner with the Grand Sufi Sheikh Bilal Diallo to have our French translations gain widespread acceptance. Sheikh Bilal is a very influential and respected religious figure in Mali and other West African countries, who has followers in the millions spread over several countries in French speaking West Africa. Masha Allah, he is a great admirer of Maulana Muhammad Ali. And, he is determined to make this Quran translation the most widely available one in French speaking West Africa because he believes it is the most effective response to the extremist interpretations.

We have taken a multi-faceted approach in the long-term goal of establishing our literature and its message in Mali. First, Noman and I had the **Maulana Muhammad Ali Center for the Holy Quran Distribution** built for storing all of the books we ship to Mali.

Second, Noman and I had a large 12,000 square foot, two story building built to serve as an educational center, which we named **Maulana Muhammad Ali Institute for Quran Studies**. In this Institute, Maulana Muhammad Ali’s books are being utilized for the Islamic education of students. Classes, some of them conducted by Sheikh Bilal himself, are held daily in the Institute. Leading Sheiks, religious figures and Imams from the Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Gabon and Mali have visited the Institute to deliver lectures and take back with them our publications to use in their local communities. Our hope is that this Institute will serve as a prototype for how an entire generation of students in the region can be equipped with the knowledge to rebut the extremist ideologies being infiltrated into the region.

In addition to constructing the Distribution Center and the Educational Institute, Noman and I are also constructing the **Maulana Muhammad Ali Mosque** in Bamako, which is about a half mile away from the Institute’s grounds. As in the case of the Institute, the land for the mosque has been donated by Sheikh Bilal, and Noman and I are funding the construction cost. The Mosque will serve the purpose of facilitating prayer services and conferences, and be an additional venue from which our publications will be distributed.

Sheikh Bilal has also begun implementing our French Holy Quran translation and other books in the Islamic Studies curriculum of the Franco-Arab schools run by his organization. He intends to introduce these books to other schools as well. He is also promoting our Arabic translated works, as there are large areas in Mali and elsewhere in West Africa where education is in Arabic only.

Recently, we were sent videos and photographs of school graduation ceremonies in the city of Mopti, Mali. Our hearts were filled with joy and happiness at the sight of students seated at desks in their neat uniforms, together with the French Holy Quran and other books of Maulana Muhammad Ali. We pray these students will utilize this knowledge and be guided rightly. Ameen.

This year a lot of progress has been made in our work in Mali, which we hope will not only bring peace and prosperity in the region, but will also be an example for reformation in countries facing similar circumstances. I
will mention two recent events before concluding my talk.

One is a large Spiritual Assembly that took place in May 2021 in Bamako. Tens of thousands of people, from all parts of Mali and twelve other countries where Sheikh Bilal has communities of followers, attended. On the final day of the conference, a large-scale, free distribution of our French Holy Quran translation and the thirteen other French publications we shipped to Mali, took place. Many of the leaders of communities took our literature to spread far and wide in their respective regions.

The other event I will mention is the visit by the Prime Minister of Mali, Choguel Hoguel Kokala Maiga, to the Maulana Muhammad Ali Institute for Quranic Studies in July 2021. The purpose of his visit was to seek the blessings of the Sheikh Bilal and to visit the Institute, as Sheikh Bilal is well known for fostering a peaceful and tolerant understanding of Islam and for denouncing extremist elements.

From the Institute’s meeting hall, the Prime Minister spoke about his government’s general policy of promoting peace and stability in the north and center of Mali, and to organize free and transparent elections. Sheikh Bilal later commented on the vital role that the Institute plays in promoting a correct understanding of Islam through the French Holy Quran and other literature produced by Maulana Muhammad Ali. He further declared his desire to share this literature throughout West Africa to achieve this goal, elaborating on the extraordinary service rendered by Maulana Muhammad Ali in producing such accessible and enlightening Islamic texts.

In response, the Prime Minister said that if the work and spirit of such a man as Maulana Muhammad Ali were better understood in society, peace and stability would reign in all religions and the world would live in harmony. The Prime Minister then took 14 cartons of our French Holy Quran and other literature to distribute among all of this government staff.

Conclusion

I will end my talk here. Please pray for our continued progress in spreading the true, spiritual lessons of Islam in Mali and other countries in conflict. Thank you very much.

Selections from “Light from the Holy Quran”

By Naseer Ahmad Faruqui

[This article contains a few selections from the book “Light from the Holy Quran” by Naseer Ahmad Faruqui concerning the practical effects to understanding and applying the lessons from Sura Al Fatiha in one’s life. The book may be viewed online at: https://www.muslim.org/islam/less-qur/0.htm]

Testimony of a Righteous Servant of Allah

What a great blessing it is to attain closeness to Allah Who is the Possessor and Source of all excellence and goodness. Let us hear about it from the mouth of one who in this age of atheism and materialism, by following the Holy Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, was able to find God and establish communion with Him — this person being none other than Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Mujaddid (Reformer) of the 14th Century Hijra, who writes in one of his books:

“How unfortunate is that person who still does not know that he has a God Who is One and Who has power over all things. Our heaven is our Lord. Our greatest pleasures lie within Him, because we saw Him and found every excellence within Him. This treasure is worth taking even if one has to lay down his life for it. This precious jewel is worth buying, even if one has to relinquish his self for it. O deprived ones! quicken your pace towards this fountain, for it will quench your thirst. It is the fountain of life which shall save you. What should I do to focus your attention towards this good news? With what kind of drum beat should I proclaim in the streets that ‘This is our God,’ so that people would listen? What medicine should I prescribe for their ears so that they hear this message? If you become of God, then be certain that He is yours. While you are in slumber He lies awake for you. You will be unaware of your enemy, and God will be watching him, and destroy his plans. You do not yet know the Omnipotence of your God. If you knew about it you would never grieve for this world. One who owns a treasure, does he ever scream, or cry, or become despondent with the loss of a penny? If you knew about this treasure, that God will help you in time of need, why should you be besides yourself in pursuit of worldly gain? God is a Beloved and Precious Treasure. Be cognizant of His blessings, He is your Helper in every step you take.”
In another place Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad writes:

“The real motivator of my overwhelming concern is that I have discovered a gold mine, and I have been informed of a quarry of precious stones. I have been fortunate to find a shining and extremely valuable diamond from this mine, the value of which is such that if I distribute it amongst all my fellow beings, they would all become wealthier than that person who in the world today has the largest quantity of gold and silver. What is that diamond? ‘The Truthful God.’”

Searching for and finding Allah, therefore, is the greatest purpose for which man was created, the prayer for which is the essence of Al-Fatiha. There is a Hadith of the Holy Prophet in which he says that God informed me of this, “I was a hidden treasure, so I determined that others should have knowledge of Me, therefore I created man.” This is a manifestation of the excellence and goodness which is the meaning of the word Allah. Allah, Who is the Treasure House of all attributes and excellences, created mankind to give away these treasures. There could be no greater honor or benevolence for mankind.

The Perfect Model of Righteousness

Now only by following Islam, the guidance of the Holy Quran, and the living example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, people of different time periods can become closer to God to the extent that He communicates with them. In this age of materialism and atheism we have witnessed a shining example of this in the life of the Reformer of the 14th century, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. A living proof of this are the thousands of Divine revelations (ilhams) and true visions bestowed upon him, which are available in print. A great number of these were fulfilled during his lifetime, and there are many that continue to do so even today, after his death. It is essential to mention over here “those upon whom favors are bestowed,” and their leader, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who once again pointed out the straight path to the world. He was the one to whom the Al-Fatiha was revealed, and he reached his exalted spiritual status by acting upon its guidance. By following, “Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help,” he not only became the perfect exemplar of one who serves with humility, but also the best of mankind and foremost of all prophets. Who else is there who not only became beloved of God himself, but also led others in this direction? Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has described this beautifully in one of his Persian couplets:

“In the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, all excellences of prophethood have reached their full manifestation.”

Therefore, he is inevitably the last of, and the seal of, the prophets (khatam an-nabiyyin). No deficiency remains behind to be fulfilled by another prophet. Think about the difficult task that was accomplished by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. He became the best example for the whole of the human race, for all nations, and all ages till the Day of Resurrection. ‘O! Allah exalt Muhammad and those who follow him, and grant them peace and blessings.’

The Holy Prophet Muhammad was able to follow the straight path in this life and reach his destination with unparalleled success. The ultimate manifestation of this was the Mi’raj (grand vision of Spiritual Ascension) of the Holy Prophet in which he was able to meet Allah face to face. A poet has put this so well in an Urdu couplet:

“During the night of the Mi’raj you ascended above all the spiritual heavens, and the status you achieved was not attained by any other prophet.”

Also observe (by reading his life history) how well he imbued himself in the color of Allah’s attributes described in the Al-Fatiha. “All praise be to Allah” was not only a part of his physical recitation, but he became a living manifestation of it.

The Holy Prophet, according to Hazrat Ayesha (his wife), emulated the Divine attributes described in the Holy Quran to such an extent that: “His character was the Holy Quran.” If prophets before him described it as “coming of the Lord,” this was the reason for it. He manifested the coloring of the Lord of the Worlds (Rabb-il-aalameen) to such an extent that he became the mercy for all nations (Rahmat-un lil-aalameen). The spiritual and moral nurturing of the whole world for all times is now dependent on his example. This is because he had the unique distinction of being the only prophet who, out of his great concern for all of humanity, cried and supplicated day and night for their spiritual and moral welfare, and for their well-being in this world and the Hereafter. It is for this reason that Allah Almighty has said more than once in the Holy Quran, “Will you kill yourself with this grief (that they do not come towards righteousness).” This was mentioned in the Holy Quran also with the intent that if we want to follow the footsteps of this holy person, we should also borrow a spark from the fire of his yearning, to ignite this flame in our hearts.

Along with his great concern for the human race, the Holy Prophet also left behind a legacy of priceless treasures in the form of his sunnat (example) and hadith (sayings) for the benefit of mankind. This knowledge was acquired by him through his extraordinary spiritual and moral progress. He thus became col-
ored in the spiritual beneficience of Al-Rahman. His conduct was, therefore, purely selfless as the Holy Quran remarks, “I do not ask of you any return on this”. Despite being completely imbued in the coloring of Allah, he did not give himself, or allow anybody else to give him, a status beyond that of a humble servant. Other prophets, though lagging behind him in spiritual status, were elevated by their followers to the status of a God or an associate with Him. Despite being a virtual ruler of his community, the Holy Prophet still kept himself and his household in a state of poverty and hunger. He did not ask anything in return for his service and benevolence to humanity. This is the meaning of being a servant of Al-Rahman, who provides everything for His creation without asking anything in return. If He asks for obedience with humility in return, it is for the benefit of mankind. Unless man serves Allah with humility, He is unable to nurture him spiritually, just like the parents of a child are unable to contribute towards his development unless he follows their guidance. Now consider the manifestation of the attribute of Al-Raheem in his character. It is provided in its most excellent form for the believer, as the Holy Quran states: “To the believers (he is) compassionate, merciful” (9:128). Those who joined the Holy Prophet and followed his footsteps, definitely benefited from his bounteous nature and mercy. We also witnessed the manifestation of the Divine attribute Maliki-yaum-id-deen (Master of the Day of Requital) in his conduct. Thus on the day when Makka was conquered, the day on which the victor and the vanquished were to receive their due, he magnanimously forgave all his enemies.

A Comprehensive Prayer

Al-Fatiha is such a broad and comprehensive prayer that it is useful for man in all his conditions and times of need. For example, for a student, “The Day of Requital” is the day when he sits for an examination. “Those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favors” are the ones who qualified with flying colors. Those who do not succeed are the ones “upon whom wrath is brought down,” and “the ones who go astray” are the ones who qualify with marginal grades and stray around in life with the hope of achieving success. I would like to give one other example of the general benefit of the Al-Fatiha, and then close this discussion. In the case of a surgeon who decides to operate on a patient, the day of surgery for both of them is the day of requital. Those upon whom favors are bestowed would include the surgeon who is successful, and the patient who regains his health. The condition of those upon whom wrath is brought down would occur when the patient dies, and thus is a source of disappointment for the surgeon and ruins his reputation. For the relatives of the deceased it becomes a day of irrereplaceable loss and profound sadness. The state of those who went astray would occur when the patient did not die, but also did not fully recover.

Every individual has to face situations in life on a daily basis where he is at a loss in deciding the appropriate course of action. For example, in the case of a merchant making a crucial business decision, or a parent trying to decide to travel to a certain destination. If one considers these situations under yaum-id-deen and asks for guidance towards the right path to avoid wrong decisions and pitfalls, it becomes quite apparent how helpful Al-Fatiha is in everyday life. In applying this to one’s mundane affairs one should not, however, forget that the most excellent meaning of Al-Fatiha is prayer for the moral and spiritual guidance of mankind. The answer to the prayer “Guide us on the right path” comes subsequently in the opening verse of Al-Baqarah:

“I, Allah, am the best Knower. This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who keep their duty.”

The guidance asked for is thus provided by the revelation of the Holy Quran. One can, therefore, appreciate the immense spiritual grandeur of Al-Fatiha in answer to which the whole of the Quran was revealed.

Thus from whatever perspective we look at the saying of the Holy Prophet that “I have been given two blessings that no other prophet has received, Al-Fatiha and the last section (ruku) of Al-Baqarah,” it is so true. I have endeavored to comment only briefly on Al-Fatiha, otherwise it is a sea of spiritual knowledge and wisdom, the treasures of which are limitless. “Glory be to Allah, all praise is His. Glory be to Allah, the Great.”
Some of our publications

*World-renowned literature published by* Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam, Lahore (USA)

“*Probably no man living has done longer or more valuable service for the cause of Islamic revival than Maulana Muhammad Ali of Lahore. His literary works, with those of the late Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, have given fame and distinction to the Ahmadiyya Movement.*” — Marmaduke Pickthall, translator of the Quran into English.

**The Holy Quran**

pp. 1418. $26.95 HB. $20.95 PB.  
Arabic text, with English translation, exhaustive commentary, comprehensive Introduction and large Index. Has since 1917 influenced millions of people all over the world. Model for all later translations. Thoroughly revised in 1951.  
Also available in Spanish, French, Russian, German, Italian and Dutch.

**The Religion of Islam**

pp. 617. $24.95 HB. $18.95 PB.  
Comprehensive and monumental work on the sources, principles and practices of Islam.  
“*Such a book is greatly needed when in many Muslim countries we see persons eager for the revival of Islam, making mistakes through lack of just this knowledge.*” — Marmaduke Pickthall.  
Also available in German, Dutch and Indonesian.

**A Manual of Hadith**

pp. 400. $15.95 HB.  
Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad on practical life of a Muslim, classified by subject. Arabic text, English translation and notes.

**Muhammad, The Prophet**

pp. 200. $8.95  
Researched biography of Holy Prophet. Corrects many misconceptions about his life, and answers Western criticism.

**Early Caliphate**

pp. 214. $8.95  
History of Islam under first four Caliphs.  
“*Indeed two books (1) Muhammad The Prophet, (2) The Early Caliphate, by Muhammad Ali together constitute the most complete and satisfactory history of the early Muslims hitherto compiled in English.*” — Islamic Culture, April 1935.

**The Muslim Prayer Book**

pp. 90. $6.95  
Details of Muslim prayer, with Arabic text, transliteration and translation into English. Illustrated with photographs.

**Living Thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad**

Brief biography of the Holy Prophet, and his teachings.  
“*…so beautifully done by Muhammad Ali … should form part of the education of every person who aspires to know the life and career of a great historical personality*” — Times of Ceylon.

**The New World Order**

pp. 86. $6.95  
“*…makes a thorough analysis of the complicated problems of the world … examines the various solutions offered by Islam to the numerous problems of the modern world*” — The Dawn, Karachi.

**History and Doctrines of the Babi Movement**

pp. 115  
By M. Muhammad Ali. Deals with the Baha’i religion. $5.95

**The Teachings of Islam**

pp. 226. $7.95  
by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Highly-acclaimed discussion of the Islamic path for the physical, moral and spiritual progress of man.  
“The ideas are very profound and very true.” — Count Tolstoy, Russia.

**Muhammad in World Scriptures, v. 1**

pp. 412. $15.95  
By Maulana Abdul Haq Vidyarthi, scholar of scriptural languages. Prophecies about Prophet Muhammad in the Bible, with quotations in original Hebrew and Greek. HB.

**Jesus in Heaven on Earth**

pp. 471. $18.95 HB. $18.95 PB.  
By Khwaja Nazir Ahmad. Post-crucifixion journey of Jesus to Kashmir and identification of his tomb there.

**Islam to East and West**

pp. 142. $4.95  
By Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. His famous lectures delivered in various countries of the East and West during 1913 to 1926.

**Table Talk**

pp. 65. $3.95  
By Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. Religion for the rational thinker.

**The Ideal Prophet**

pp. 212. $8.95  
By Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. His character and achievements.

**Fundamentals of the Christian Faith in the light of the Gospels,** by Maulana Sadr-ud-Din pp. 62. $3.95

**Anecdotes from the life of Prophet Muhammad**

pp. 49  
By M. A. Faruqui. Life of Prophet Muhammad explained in question/answer format.

**Introduction to Islam**

pp. 66. $4.95  
by Dr Zahid Aziz. For younger readers and beginners. Basic Islam explained in question/answer format.

**The Meaning of Surah Fatihah**

pp. 16. $4.95  

**Al-Handu-li-llah**

pp. 18. $7.95  
By Fazeel Sahukhan. Illustrated, color, children’s book for under-fives to teach them ten basic Islamic phrases.