**January 8, 1915**

**The Meaning of Facing in the Direction of the Ka’bah (Purpose of the Ahmadiyya Movement)**

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.



“And everyone has a goal to which he turns (himself), so vie with one another in good works. Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together. Surely Allah is Possessor of Power over all things.” (2:148)



“And from whatsoever place thou comest forth, turn thy face towards (*shatar*) the Sacred Mosque. And surely it is the truth from thy Lord. And Allah is not heedless of what you do.” (2:149)



“And from whatsoever place thou comest forth turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque. And wherever you are turn your faces towards it, so that people may have no plea against you except such of them as are unjust — so fear them not and fear Me — and that I may complete My favour to you and that you may go aright.” (2:150)



“Even as We have sent among you a Messenger from among you, who recites to you Our messages and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the Wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know.” (2:151)



“Therefore glorify Me, I will make you eminent, and give thanks to Me and be not ungrateful to Me.” (2:152)

**Objection To Facing the Sacred Mosque in Makkah (*Ka’bah*) While Praying**

This subject of facing toward the Sacred Mosque in Makkah (*Ka’bah*) while praying is important. It does not, however, have the significance that people have generally attributed to it. There is one group that states that facing the Sacred Mosque while praying is similar to worship of others besides Allah. This is an objection raised by non-Muslims but some Muslims have also accepted it. They respond to it with the explanation that since it is God’s commandment, it does not fall under the category of associating with Allah (*shirk*).

**Importance Given by Allah and His Messenger to Praying in the Direction of the *Ka’bah* (*Qiblah*)**

There is no doubt that Allah and the Holy Prophet have attached great significance to this commandment. Allah the Most High has stressed its importance by dedicating three sections of the Holy Quran to this subject. The commandment, “And from whatsoever place thou comest forth, turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque,” has been repeated not once or twice, but three times. Muslims have thus been commanded that wherever they may be they must pray facing in this direction (*Qiblah*) for it represents unity of purpose amongst them.

The Holy Prophet has stressed its importance in these words: “Do not call those who follow your *Qiblah*[[1]](#footnote-1) (*ahl-i- Qiblah*) disbelievers (*kafir*).”

He has further emphasized this by stating that whosoever calls a Muslim a disbeliever, the disbelief reverts back to him. The Holy Prophet does not want a follower of the *Qiblah* i.e., the one praying in the direction of the *Ka’bah*, to be called a disbeliever. It is unbearable for him that any individual from amongst his followers be subject to such name calling. He who calls his Muslim brother a disbeliever has been punished by the disbelief reverting to him. This is indeed a grave admonition and chastisement for those who levy the charge of heresy upon fellow Muslims who follow the *Qiblah*.

**What is the Significance of Praying in the Direction of the *Ka’bah*?**

Remember that facing toward the *Ka’bah* is just like facing a certain direction while performing any task. The Arabic word *shatar*, which means direction, clearly outlines this meaning. Facing toward the *Ka’bah*, while praying, does not mean that the *Ka’bah* is the object of worship. This is explained by the Quranic statement: “And everyone has a goal to which he turns (himself).” Every individual faces in a certain direction no matter what he is doing. He certainly is not worshipping in that direction. Allah the Most High says that we have fixed a certain direction for you, to unite you toward one common goal. Remember that facing a certain direction is quite distinct from worship. Worship is done with the intent of seeking the help of the object of worship in order to fulfill one’s need. Does one seek the help of the sacred house or ask it for anything? This is certainly not the case. In fact, the name of the sacred house does not come up even once during the prayer. An individual with the excellences of the Holy Prophet was more likely to have become the object of such missives. Thus, if the Muslims were facing in the direction of Madinah where the Holy Prophet is buried, one could say that this was associating someone with Allah in our worship. Madinah was excluded from this discussion altogether although therein is the gravesite of the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet is not buried at Makkah to ascertain that not even the slightest semblance of association with Allah remains behind. This is, however, not the only meaning. A more elaborate meaning is conveyed by the words: “And everyone has a goal to which he turns (himself), so vie with one another in good works” (2:148). By everyone is meant every nation. The direction is the goal that they had before them and strived to accomplish.

The common purpose of the Muslim nation is to strive for goodness that requires a united effort. Thus unlike any other nation of the world, Muslims have this unique goal that has been designated as the direction for them. The word *Qiblah* means direction or a point toward which one turns his face. In this case, the *Ka’bah* was the only symbol of unity of Allah, the Most High. Thus, the purpose of facing toward the *Ka’bah* was a reminder of the real goal, the Unity of the Divine Being. This has been discussed further on and mention is also made of Abraham who is called upright. A Muslim is one who stands firmly on this principle without wavering to one or the other side. Making the house that Abraham had built for the worship of One God as the direction in which Muslims were to pray, is to remind them that their real purpose in life is to propagate the Unity of the Divine Being.

**Our Goal that we are Neglecting**

A man was chosen by God who told us that our real objective is the propagation of Islam, which is our common goal. Different societies of Muslims have different goals in front of them. Some strive to increase the literacy rate while others promote trade and commerce. There are those whose sole purpose is to improve the Urdu language, while still others stand for improving social interaction. Some look only after the interests of their own sect and clan, or have political objectives. Distinct from these, is the most excellent goal that Islam has set, and for which the Reformer of this age has taken a firm commitment from us. This goal is the propagation of the Unity of the Divine Being. Think about this, why did Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad say? “The real purpose of my coming is propagation of Islam.” Then ponder how far you have fulfilled this commitment? Your condition is like that of a person who is barely awake after seeing a dream. You are still far away from fulfilling this dream. Not only have you forgotten this noble vision but have indeed forgotten yourselves[[2]](#footnote-2). Before you is the example of a nation that lost sight of its real goal and acted contrary to the teachings of the Messiah Jesus. What happened to them? They strayed far away from the real objective.

I perceive the danger that your movement also may face the plight of the followers of Christ. You might ask me, how is this possible? How can an organization formed by one appointed by God go on the wrong path? I am telling you that the example of the followers of Christ is right there in front of us. Man can learn a lot from previous experiences. You might become incapable of performing the task for which you have been called to stand up. The followers of Christ were given the sermon of the Unity of God, which was deemed the very purpose of their existence. Instead of propagating Unity they chose to spread Trinity. Did they succeed in accomplishing their real goal? If they were unsuccessful, how can you then succeed when you start calling the followers of Islam disbelievers? They were assigned the task of spreading the principle of the unity of God. For you there is propagation of Islam. Both have the same meaning. The word Islam was chosen in your case so you would abstain from anything that is destructive to this sacred cause. My heart breaks with sorrow when I see that instead of spreading Islam, arrows are being thrown at it. You[[3]](#footnote-3) say ‘what was that Islam, did Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad bring it to the world?’ No! He was in fact a servant of Islam. Do you also not say that with his claim, Muslims have disappeared from the world i.e., those who reject his claims can no longer be called Muslims. What is it now that you call propagation of Islam? The implication of what you say is that the *kalima* (formula of faith, *la ilaha ill- Allah Muhammad-un Rasulu-llah*) the foundation stone of Islam, has lost its validity, for you call those who recite it, disbelievers.

**Refrain from Exaggeration in your Beliefs; do not Turn Metaphor into the Reality**

If you elevate the status of the Holy Prophet to that of God, then nothing of Islam remains behind. Similarly, if you raise the status of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to that of the Holy Prophet, you have utterly destroyed the Ahmadiyya Movement. For nineteen hundred years, the Christian nation had gone astray, deviated from the right path. Now Allah the Most High has shattered this idol of trinity and opened up a way for the Doctrine of the Unity of the Divine Being and you are trying to shut this door with your own hands. What was the basis of the Christian belief of calling Jesus ‘God’? They took the allegoric and metaphorical language and gave it the literal meaning. They can plead ignorance in this matter with the excuse that they were not informed that the language used in reference to Jesus was figurative and not literal. You do not even have this excuse, for your Messiah has been conveying this to you throughout his writings from the very beginning. See his last statement before his death in supplement to *Haqiqat ul Wahy* (page 64): “I have been called prophet of God only by way of metaphor and not by way of reality.” He calls himself a prophet in a metaphorical sense while you assign to it its literal meaning.

**Parting with a Life of Luxury is the First Step Toward the Completion of any Task**

A direction has been fixed for everyone, but to reach and fulfill its real purpose and goal, one has to part with a life of comfort and luxury. Observe any nation or society and you will realize the immensity of hurdles they have crossed in order to reach their desired goal. Those whose objectives are impure, also have to face difficulties to accomplish their goals. Just look at thieves and dacoits. In order to bring their plans to fruition, they also have to forsake their comfort. They have to face difficulties, and experience inclement weather, sleepless days and nights and put in great effort to reach their goal. This is true for all worldly schemes, whether they are good or evil. Notice how those who evolve these plans have to face hardship. Those striving to better their education, the vanguards of political and national leadership and their followers, political parties, all have to go through a period of difficulty and suffering. This is true even for the extremely dangerous group called anarchists who are a threat to peace. If you study their history, you will find out all the dangerous schemes they make and how they forego easy living in order to be successful. You tell me what life of ease and comfort have you given up in order to truly propagate Islam with the vigor and intensity it deserves?

**Strength of a Movement Does Not Depend upon Numbers**

If you say we are few in numbers, I say that you are many. A movement is always initiated by a single individual. He who wants to accomplish something is alone in the beginning and is unlikely to succeed without hardship and suffering. Hazrat Mirza Sahib has said, “there are many sharp thorns and thorny bushes that lie in the path leading towards me. He who is tender footed should part my company and not venture on to this path.” If you feel anxious because of the scarcity of your numbers, then why do you not allow the four hundred million or so Muslims to accomplish this mission? What was the need for you to part their company? Go and see the immensity of sacrifice that people make in order to accomplish even minor tasks. They readily give up and allow their homes to be torched in order to reach a single purpose and goal. Why is it that the great importance of the task and the duty you have undertaken to accomplish does not allow you to bear even minor inconveniences and difficulties?

**The Key to Success Lies in the Performance of Deeds**

I can only call upon you, for these are matters to be conveyed only to other human beings. I certainly cannot speak in this regard to the trees or leaves in the jungle. I have not been appointed by God, but I feel it is my duty to remind you of your duties. How far have you acted upon the principle of, “And everyone has a goal.”? You accomplish this task, then there will be no need for any exhortation. There are older individuals amongst you who know very well the purpose for which Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad came to this world. What was his mission and for what purpose did he form an organization? There are amongst you youth those whose hearts are full of such zeal and enthusiasm that inspires them to undertake the most difficult tasks. Why should I not call upon these young and old and remind them of their duties? Those who depend upon numbers cannot succeed. If you have doubt about this matter look at events in the past and see how those who did so faltered in accomplishing their goal. Even those who had gathered in support of God’s blessed messenger, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, suffered on one occasion when the thought of having a higher numerical strength made them proud. The Holy Quran refers to this in these words: “Certainly Allah helped you in many battlefields, and on the day of Hunain, when your great numbers made you proud” (9:25). Remember a thousand cannot accomplish the task accomplished by a single individual. Why do you feel anxious because you are few and do not strive to fulfill the task of thousands? If you think that the life of this world is forever, then you are entitled to entertain such thoughts. If this is not the case, why do you perform such deeds that instead of being a source of Allah’s mercy upon you, result in distancing you from Him? If you do not fully dedicate yourself in accomplishing the task that lies in front of you, future generations will curse you. They will say that you did not put into practice your word of mouth. Remember that there are hundreds and thousands who pass away after spending a limited time in this world and no one knows who they were or where they went. Thousands of ants and insects perish every day and no one is aware of their presence. Of what benefit is an existence that is worse than these lower forms of life? When you pass away, no one remembers you and you leave behind no trace of your existence.

**Pay Attention to the Propagation of Islam Wherever You Are**

“And from whatsoever place thou comest forth turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque. And wherever you are turn your faces towards it, so that people may have no plea against you except such of them as are unjust — so fear them not and fear Me — and that I may complete My favour to you and that you may go aright.” (2:150)

I also enjoin you that wherever you are, you might pursue different occupations or reside in various places in the world. Remember always to face the direction of the Sacred Mosque. Always keep in mind the goal that it is your task to propagate the Religion of Islam. Fulfill with enthusiasm and dedication all the tasks connected with spreading the message of the Unity of God, “so that people may have no plea against you except such of them as are unjust.”

**The Two Excellent Prayers of Prophet Abraham and Their Results**

What was this plea, to which the Holy Quran refers? It was this building of the Sacred Mosque that Prophet Abraham did with Hazrat Ishmael and settled him where the sacred mosque is located, “in a valley unproductive of fruit” (14:37). Now that prophethood came amongst the offspring of Hazrat Ishmael and a Prophet with the excellences of the Holy Prophet Muhammad was sent to them, why should they face another direction? Why was another direction not fixed for them? It was to this plea from the people that was to come to pass that Allah the Most High refers to and has appointed the Sacred house at Makkah as the direction toward which Muslims were to face during prayer, referring simultaneously to those who raise unwarranted pleas in the words “except such of them as are unjust — so fear them not and fear Me.” The intent of this Divine decision is expressed in the words — “and that I may complete My favour to you and that you may go aright.”

“Even as (*kama*) We have sent among you a Messenger from among you, who recites to you Our messages and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the Wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know.” (2: 151)

People have had great difficulty in understanding the Arabic word *kama* (even as) mentioned in this verse. It refers to, besides all the other favors that were to be given to this nation, to the very person of the Holy Prophet for whom Prophet Abraham had pleaded in these words: “Our Lord, and raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy messages and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them. Surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise” (2:129). Allah says here that He accepted this prayer of Abraham and raised that Prophet.

The other Prayer of Abraham was in these words: “My Lord make this a secure town and provide its people with fruits” (2:126). And “so make the hearts of some people yearn towards them” (14:37). Allah asks the question, why would He not accept this second prayer? That’s why He has appointed the Sacred House as the direction you turn to so that people do not raise the objection.

**Three Principles of Success: Teaching of the Quran, Purification of the Soul and Deliberation with Wisdom**

“…A Messenger from among you, who recites to you Our messages and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the Wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know.” (2:151)

Now a messenger (the Holy Prophet Muhammad, Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent to you with a threefold mission for your spiritual development and purification. It was to recite to you the messages of Allah, purify your souls, and teach you the Book and Wisdom. These are the three things that Prophet Abraham asked Allah for in his prayer. Which one of these teachings is still practiced? Nobody recites the messages of Allah. As for the purification of the soul, you can judge for yourself how much you have achieved. To whom should one teach the Book and Wisdom? The way people give respect to the Holy Quran is by wrapping it up in expensive covers of brocade and putting it on the shelf. It is said that there is an awakening amongst Muslims and they are ready to learn the Quran and are willing to do so in their spare time. This is a wonderful change, but we ourselves have experimented and have failed to perceive it. We teach the Holy Quran every evening. How many are there who show up for these classes? Remember, until each one of you carries the message of the Holy Quran you will not fulfill the purpose of the *Qiblah* nor will you be putting in the necessary effort to accomplish the mission of the Promised Messiah and be successful.

**Remembrance and Gratitude Result in Fulfillment of Allah’s Promises**

“Therefore glorify Me, I will make you eminent, and give thanks to Me and be not ungrateful to Me” (2:152). If you make the propagation of Islam your goal remember you and all the promises of success will come about by your hands. If, however, you make no effort, then beware those who forget the remembrance of Allah are left in a state of abasement. Allah says: “give thanks to Me and be not ungrateful to Me.” If you manifest gratefulness for the greatest blessing that Allah has given you in the form of Islam and carry its message to others, you will be raised to a position of eminence, otherwise you have to face a severe chastisement. Let us pray to Allah the Most High that we are amongst those who are grateful for His favors. We are not amongst those who reject and are ungrateful for His favors. To shed light on His attributes should be our aim and purpose of life and we work with full determination to accomplish this goal. Our comforts cannot become an impediment to this work and we must make every effort to spread this faith to all corners of the world, by the will of Allah, we are ready to sacrifice all pleasures for its sake. This is the path whereby we can succeed in gaining the pleasure of Allah the Most High.

1. *Qiblah* literally means the direction or point toward which one turns his face (LL} [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The reference here, and in subsequent sentences, is to the Qadian Section, which calls all Muslims who reject Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as non-believers (kaffir). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Maulana Muhammad Ali is addressing the followers of Mirza Mahmud Ahmad here. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)